

Readings for the Sunday Following the Death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth

11th September 2022

First Reading: Lamentations 3:22-26,31-33

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
“The LORD is my portion,” says my soul,
“therefore I will hope in him.”

The LORD is good to those who wait for him,
to the soul that seeks him.
It is good that one should wait quietly
for the salvation of the LORD.

For the Lord will not
reject forever.

Although he causes grief, he will have compassion
according to the abundance of his steadfast love;
³³ for he does not willingly afflict
or grieve anyone.

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:4

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling— if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Gospel: St John 6:35-40

Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing

of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.'

A Reflection for the Sunday Following the Death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth

To my surprise, I felt rather as if the rug had been pulled out from under my feet this week. The announcement of the death of Her Majesty the Queen left me with a sense of sadness that I really hadn't expected at all, and I wasn't alone in that feeling.

The Queen has been there all my life. Even for the more mature among us, the Queen has been there for the majority of our lives. She was a constant, when all the other circumstances of life have changed, that I didn't recognise until it was taken away. We all knew she would die sometime but I just didn't expect the sense of loss.

Of course, I didn't know the Queen. I think I probably saw her in the distance a couple of times when I was young. Once I remember was on one of her Silver Jubilee tours – a glimpse of a distant figure as her car went by. And yet, we all felt we knew her. Whatever we may think of the institution of monarchy, the Queen was a woman who somehow transcended that and underpinned our national life. Somehow, she was a part of all of us.

Much, almost too much, has been said about the Queen in the last few days. Of her sense of duty and dedication to her task, her strong work ethic; her steadfastness; her dignity and integrity when too many others seemed to be losing theirs; the sense of continuity she provided, and her years of accrued wisdom appreciated by those in government. Ordinary people who met her spoke of her humility and compassion. She had a sense of humour that caught us by surprise and made us smile, and a great love of this country, Scotland.

Hers was a life lived very much in the public eye and constantly surrounded by others who ordered so much of it. How she must have cherished those rare moments of true privacy. And now, her family will grieve her loss in public too, so let us remember to keep them in our prayers in the coming weeks.

Also well-known was the Queen's deep Christian faith which sustained her through thick and thin. As the Bishop of London, Rt Revd Dame Sarah Mullally, said in her sermon from St Paul's Cathedral on Friday evening (I paraphrase): Christians believe that death is not the end and this faith gives us hope in the worst of times. This is not to deny the sense of fear, loss and anguish we experience when someone dies, but we have the assurance of God's presence in the midst of the world's pain.

In this time of adjustment for the late Queen's family, for the nation and for the Commonwealth, we are invited into the healing love of God. Our readings today remind us of that Christian hope, and of God's promise of eternal life.

And so we keep on keeping on in that hope – and in our tradition that means we keep on celebrating the Eucharist. This week, a friend reminded me of part of Dom Gregory Dix's commentary on the Eucharist in his book *The Shape of the Liturgy*, published in 1945, which I would like to share with you.

"At the heart of it all is the eucharistic action, a thing of an absolute simplicity— the taking, blessing, breaking and giving of bread and the taking, blessing and giving of a cup of wine and water, as these were first done with their new meaning by a young Jew on the night before He died. He told His friends to do this henceforward with the new meaning 'for the [remembrance] of Him,' and they have done it always since.

Was ever another command so obeyed? For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and country and among every race on earth, this action has been done, in every conceivable human circumstance, for every conceivable human need from infancy and before it to extreme old age and after it, from the pinnacles of earthly greatness to the refuge of fugitives in the caves and dens of the earth. People have found no better thing than this to do...”

In all the circumstances of life – and death – there is no better thing than this to do.

May Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth Rest in Peace.