

### **Imitating Christ**

Since her accession to the throne in 1952, the Queen has continued the practice of her father and grandfather by broadcasting each Christmas Day to the Commonwealth of Nations. These broadcasts began on radio but were televised from 1957 onwards. On five other occasions, she has broadcast to the nation – at the outbreak of the Gulf War (1991), after the death of Princess Diana (1997), after the death of the Queen Mother (2002), at her Diamond Jubilee (2012), and during the COVID-19 crisis (2020).

Her messages are marked by several common themes that mattered greatly to her: a commitment to the Commonwealth as a partnership bound by friendship and shared goals; a determination to serve people irrespective of rank, situation or circumstance; a love of her own family across its different generations; her devotion to the example of Jesus; a sense of the common good of the peoples of the United Kingdom; and a conviction that the most important people were often those who worked faithfully for their local communities.

### **We are now going to listen to Excerpts from the Queen's Christmas Day speeches.**

Our reading from Philippians that Susan read for us is an encouragement from the Apostle Paul to imitate Jesus's humility.

Paul writes, “In your relationship with each other, have the same mindset as Jesus” and then he goes onto describe what that mindset looks like:

- a. Jesus had a position of greatness – being in very nature God did not consider to use this to his advantage.
- b. On the contrary, he took on the nature of a servant.
- c. Which led him to the ultimate sacrifice on the cross
- d. Which resulted in God exalting him to the highest place.

Today as we mourn the life of Queen Elizabeth II, we can look back, as countless other people are doing all over the world today, and say that she was someone who imitated Jesus.

She had a position of greatness and yet she didn't use it to her own advantage. From Day One, she nailed her colours to the mast, when she said, “I shall dedicate myself anew to your service. I want to show that the crown is not merely an abstract symbol of our unity, but a personal and living bond between you and me.”

She saw her great position as an opportunity to serve and she followed the way of Christ.

Four words flashed into my mind immediately when I heard the news of the Queen's passing, and I would like to use them to pay a short tribute.

### **Constant**

Since her passing, this word has been used by many people. Queen Elizabeth has been a constant figure and force in the life of our nations. On Friday, I had the privilege of speaking to our oldest member who is in hospital at this time. Margaret Young, who will be 103 on Valentine's Day and I asked Margaret about the Queen and her eyes lit her up and she said, she was a great person. For Margaret and many people, the Queen was a constant in their lives. Margaret said, you always thought that she would be there, you never imagined her dying and that speaks of her constancy. What gave her this constancy? I believe her relationship with God through Jesus gave her the strength to stay constant. She had a North Star to guide her.

### **Consistent**

The mark of a truly great person is consistency. We can all start a race well, but it is how we finish that's important. She started her race well when she became Queen as a young, beautiful, "perhaps" (in her own words) "rather green, young woman". She said to the nation, "I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service." In retrospect, we can say *well done your majesty* or in the words of Jesus, *well done good and faithful servant*. She stayed focused on the task before her, to serve the nation and she had many highs and lows, many joys and sorrows and yet she remained true to her calling, to be consistent in each event of life, whether it be war or times of peace, she knew that consistency was an enduring value.

### **Considerate**

A mark of our Queen was how considerate she was of others. She recognised the contribution that other people, common people, had made to this world. She loved young people and encouraged them to make a difference to our world and she was concerned with the challenges that young people face today. Of course she would be - as a daughter, grandmother and great-grandmother, she faced many challenges with her own family, and she used these challenges to be considerate of the challenges that we all face, whether rearing young people or being a young person. She was considerate towards women and pushed for them to gain greater participation in public life. She saw how women have made a difference to our world in our struggles against inhuman prejudice, squalor and disease. Again, she

followed the example of Jesus and she knew of his influence in the lives of the saints but she saw his influence in the good works quietly done by millions of men and women, day in and day out, throughout the centuries. She considered his teachings, love God and love your neighbour, treat others as you would like them to treat you, and those qualities shone from her life.

### **Compassionate**

The fourth word that flashed into my mind was *compassionate*. One of the great teachings of Jesus was his story of the Good Samaritan, and that story was one she used on several occasions. It's a timeless story of how we can reach out to help others, who are different from us. The Samaritan was the one who helped his enemy the Jew. The Samaritan saw his enemy lying crumpled in a heap at the side of the road, and he knelt down and helped him. This resonated with our Queen and she saw in it a way forward for us as human beings and in her own words, "I know just how much I rely on my own faith to guide me through the good times and the bad."

Constant, Consistent, Considerate, Compassionate.

Four qualities that our Lord Jesus Christ had in abundance. Four qualities that shone from the Queen, that made her the person that she was and is. What I love about the Queen's faith is its simplicity. She was a church-goer and she would have heard many sermons in her day, I believe those sermons and her own devotions were at the heart of who she was.

You will hear many fine tributes over these next days to the Queen. Be thankful for them, many will point to Jesus and say, she was a humble follower of the Son of God.

At the end of the race, when the good fight has been fought, the Bible tells us that there is a crown laid in store for us. She has replaced her human crown with an even greater crown. A crown that will be placed on her head by the Lord Jesus himself, a crown of eternity. But she will not need to rule any longer, she will be one amongst the others but she will be at peace, walking with her family and friends along the banks of that great river that flows through the streets of Heaven and on each side of the river is the tree of life and its leaves are for the healing of the nations.

Thank you, Your Majesty, for your constancy, consistency, consideration and compassion and thank you for walking in the footsteps of Jesus and for the example that you have left for us to follow.