

The Life and Faith of Queen Elizabeth II

A Lectio 365 Special

In response to the announcement about the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, today we mark the end of an era by focusing our prayers on the passing of one of the world's most famous and faithful Christian leaders.

Wherever we may be, and whatever we may think about the institution of monarchy, today millions of people are lamenting the loss of a woman whose public service and Christian witness shone brightly for more than seventy years.

Pause

And so, as I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly, to re-centre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

King of Kings, we give You thanks today for the life and faith of Your servant, our sister, Elizabeth. As countless people remember her life and legacy, may we be inspired anew to live for You in the service of others for as long as we may live. Amen.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in the sure and certain hope of resurrection, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the famous words of Job 19:

*I know that my Redeemer lives,
and he will stand upon the earth at last.
And after my body has decayed,
yet in my body I will see God!
I will see him for myself.
Yes, I will see him with my own eyes.
I am overwhelmed at the thought!*

Job 19:25-27 (NLT)

Pause and pray

On Christmas Day 1952 the new, 26 year-old monarch of the United Kingdom and 14 other Commonwealth nations, spoke for the first time to the world in what was to become her annual Christmas broadcast:

'Pray for me,' she asked, 'that God may give me wisdom and strength to carry out the solemn promises I shall be making, and that I may faithfully serve Him and you, all the days of my life.' *

It was a prayer God answered. Elizabeth would make a series of solemn promises six months later at her coronation, which she kept faithfully for the next seventy years. The newly crowned Queen promised three things: to govern appropriately, to maintain justice, and to profess the gospel of Christ. All this she surely did until her final breath.

In her Christmas broadcast of 2000, the Queen reflected on the millennium year with complete candour about the importance of her own personal faith:

'For me the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life.' **

Almost twenty-two years after that speech, more than seventy since Elizabeth became Queen, we witness contemporary leaders failing and falling all around us at an unprecedented rate. Notions of duty, of promise-keeping, and of accountability to God can seem antiquated and even naive. But at such a time, Queen Elizabeth's lifelong example of consistency in private faith and integrity in public service is both startling and inspiring.

Ask

I think now of someone who's hurt me by breaking their promises. It could be a leader who's lost my trust, or a loved-one who's let me down badly. I talk honestly to the Lord now about any feelings I may have of disappointment, anger or pain.

Pause and pray

I take time now to pray for Archbishop Justin Welby, leader of the worldwide Anglican Communion, as he prepares to officiate at Queen Elizabeth's funeral, seeking to bring comfort and hope whilst pointing a vast global audience towards Jesus.

Pause and pray

Yield

At her coronation the Queen was presented with a Bible as these extraordinary words rang out in Westminster Abbey, and around the world:

*'We present you with this book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is wisdom, this is the royal law, these are the lively oracles of God.'****

She was wearing a priceless golden crown adorned with 2,901 precious stones, she was sitting upon a throne in a thousand year old vaulted abbey, and yet God's Word was recognized as 'the most valuable thing this world affords'. Thousands of years earlier the Psalmist put it like this:

*'Oh, how I love your law!
I meditate on it all day long.
Your commands are always with me
and make me wiser than my enemies.
I have more insight than all my teachers,
for I meditate on your statutes.'*

Psalms 119:97-99 (NIVUK)

As I meditate each day on God's statutes with Lectio 365, I ask You Lord to renew in me a sober reverence for Scripture, to sharpen in me a genuine hunger for Your Word, and to give to me, as You gave to the Psalmist and to your servant Elizabeth, an ever-deepening love for Your Law.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Thinking now of someone known to me who is grieving the loss of a loved-one, I pray for them a special prayer used at the funeral of Queen Elizabeth's father King George VI:

*ALMIGHTY God, Father of all mercies and giver of all comfort;
Deal graciously, we pray thee, with those who mourn, that casting
every care on thee, they may know the consolation of thy love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *****

Yielding Promise

And now, on this day of mourning, more mindful than usual of life's transience, the Lord who loves me reassures me with these words:

...I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die...

John 11:25-26 (NIVUK)

Closing Prayer

**Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.**

This devotional was originally posted on Friday 9 September 2022 on the Lectio 365 app.

* <https://www.royal.uk/queens-first-christmas-broadcast-1952>

** <https://www.royal.uk/christmas-broadcast-2000>

*** *Anglican Liturgical Archive: The Form and Order of Service that is to be performed and the Ceremonies that are to be observed in The Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in the Abbey Church of St. Peter, Westminster, on Tuesday, the second day of June, 1953*

**** [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:Book_of_common_prayer_\(TEC,_1979\).pdf/505](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:Book_of_common_prayer_(TEC,_1979).pdf/505)