

**Sermon for the Service of Commemoration  
for Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II  
Grafton Cathedral**

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Dr Murray Harvey

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.... God has made everything suitable for its time ... (Ecclesiastes 3)*

Our late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II was no doubt familiar with these verses. She herself spoke often about the need to take “the longer view”:

*I know that the only way to live my life is to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God.*

The long view acknowledges that in God’s good time (which mightn’t be our preferred time, that we’ve scheduled into our diaries) but in God’s time, we will eventually see things in perspective, even if right now, events might seem hard to fathom.

This thing we call time is a gift from God and we travel through it by, and in, his grace.

The Queen's personal Christian faith commitment helped her understand and interpret the events of her life and the events in the world:

*I know just how much I rely on my faith to guide me through the good times and the bad... For me, the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life ... I draw great comfort in difficult times from Christ's word and example.*

*Billions of people follow Christ's teachings and find in him the guiding light for their lives ... I am one of them, because Christ's example helps me to see the value of doing small things with great love (spoken in 2000 and 2002).*

This should give those of us who are Christians the encouragement we need to speak openly, as she did, about the faith that is in us, and about the difference it has made in our lives.

We gather here to grieve, to share our grief, to pay our respects as a community to our late sovereign, and to look towards the future.

My own grandmother lived until she was 103 – I remember even as a child when she was in her 80s,

thinking that she was going to live on and on for ever. She had always been there, and it seemed hard to imagine life without her.

Queen Elizabeth has been on the world stage for over 70 years – the only monarch that most of us have ever known in our lifetimes. She offered us stable, constant and steadfast leadership.

But of course, we all knew that we'd be here one day.

Yet, *“Grief is the price we pay for love”*.

Despite the fact that most of us never actually met her personally, her annual Christmas broadcast, delivered straight into our living rooms, was spoken as if to us personally; a personal message to encourage us and our family. So our grief is real and personal. It's almost as if we've lost our own mother or grandmother.

Yet as we begin to look towards the future, we are all the stronger for her example of outstanding leadership.

We live in a “me” culture, where me and my rights, my opinion, what I need and what I can get, are all

important. “Me” is most important – it’s all about me. In many ways it’s a narcissistic culture, and it certainly has produced a lot of narcissistic leaders. Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump (I could name more but I better stop there). It’s all about them.

Queen Elizabeth was the polar opposite.

My wife and I had the privilege to be invited to Buckingham Palace to attend a summer Garden Party in 2004. There were hundreds of invited guests. We didn’t get to meet Her Majesty but we came close! We observed her though, moving slowly through the crowd, graciously welcoming people, listening to people and their stories, learning about their cultures, their organisations, their interests.

Those who met Her Majesty were always struck by her ability to make them feel as though they were the most important, the only person in the room, the only person in the street, in the crowd.

It wasn’t all about her. For her, it was all about ‘the other person’: she had a deep interest in people and a love for people.

Hers was a life of duty and of self-giving service to others, for the Common Good of all.

She found her identity and purpose in the God of Grace – this an identity and purpose larger than our own tribe or interest group, an identity that we haven't had to invent for ourselves on social media, it's not concerned with rights or with what any one individual or group can get out of life, but dedicated to the Common Good and to the glory of God.

A new hymn has been written, on the death of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II - entitled 'Tears and Celebration'. It is a song of remembrance, assurance, and thanksgiving, giving voice to the hearts and minds of people all over the world at this time.

The words help us give thanks for the Queen's life and faith, speak of her powerful example of discipleship, and pray each of us will be able to make a difference through Christ in the same way.

I finish with two of the verses in the hope that they will help to heal our grief, and invite us to participate in God's work in all of life as Elizabeth did.

*We see tears and celebration,  
For this life so dignified,  
Bearing thanks and hearts of sadness,  
To the God of death and life.  
As he takes her to his promise,  
Of an audience with the King,  
We remember all she gave us,  
Wreaths of gratitude we bring.*

*In these days of change and trial,  
Be the rock on which we stand,  
When we fear in this new season,  
Hold us firmly in your hands.  
May we rise to her example,  
To be humble, kind and fair,  
Swift to pray and slow to anger,  
Choosing faith and not despair.*

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Rest eternal grant to her O Lord and may light  
perpetual shine upon her.

