

Script for 'Reflecting upon Queen Elizabeth II'

Feel free to read this or the audio file this coming Sunday as a launch into reflecting with your children on the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

You will know by now that probably the most famous lady on planet earth, Queen Elizabeth, has died at the age of 96. She's been around all my lifetime and probably yours too. Someone said on the news that she felt like a grandma, even though she never met her! She was certainly a colourful character with a good sense of humour.

We will have different feelings today, some of you may have met her, others will have waved a flag in front of her Buckingham Palace home once or twice. I loved it during the 2012 Olympics when she parachuted down into the stadium with James Bond (was it really her?) or perhaps you saw her at the Jubilee Celebrations not long ago, sitting opposite Paddington Bear and enjoying marmalade sandwiches and rocking out by tapping on a beautiful teacup with her expensive cutlery.

It always feels strange when somebody we know has died. They disappear from our lives and we can feel a bit odd for a bit: Who do we talk to? What has really happened to her? Where has Elizabeth gone? If I'm honest, I don't like these times but I'm learning that life has ups and downs, and that there's a time for everything. Listen to what the Bible says :

Everything on earth has its special season.

There is a time to be born
and a time to die.

There is a time to plant
and a time to pull up plants.

There is a time to kill
and a time to heal.

There is a time to destroy
and a time to build.

There is a time to cry
and a time to laugh.

There is a time to be sad
and a time to dance.

(ICB, Ecclesiastes 3: 1-4)

Today it's time to have a five-minute think about when I mostly saw the Queen – on stamps. Have you ever posted or received a letter? I know it's a bit 'old school', but if you have, it's actually quite exciting. You stick your stamp on the envelope, post it in the box, and hopefully it arrives at the address you wanted it to. And just before you say goodbye to your letter, who's face is on the stamp? Nine times out of ten, it's been Queen Elizabeth for as long as I can remember. So the letter leaves my hands and departs on its journey, but without the stamp it won't get there. The Queen's face is essential for that journey to be completed; I don't see the letter anymore but I just trust it has arrived safely.

Amazingly, thinking about stamps, the Queen was rather fond of The Salvation Army too. There were stamps made in 1965 celebrating the hundred years since the Army began in the East End of London and guess who's face was on it – yes, Queen Elizabeth's. This may be because she trusted in Jesus, like Christians do, and Jesus came up with some wise words to help us at times like today. When Jesus was about to leave his friends, he said:

My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am (John 14 v2-3, NIV)

What about that! Jesus (who we know died on a cross and rose again to life three days later) made the journey to God's house ahead of us. Like the letter being posted, he promised to go on ahead, prepare a place for us to be with God, safe and sound; a place for those who trust in him, like our Queen.

I also like the idea of many rooms, that must be a bit like Buckingham Palace; grand corridors, posh table cloths, thick carpet, cosy beds, marmalade sandwiches? - yes please! But it also tells me that Jesus wants us to know where we're heading and that he's got it ready. So when people die, we don't need to worry about where we go or how, because Jesus promised a place.

So this weekend, there might be a time to be sad and a time to dance, a time to laugh and a time to cry, but like the Queen, I'm choosing to look at the King of Kings. Because with his face on the journey, I know that I will definitely arrive one day.