

Jesus is sometimes called the Servant King. Servant and King? Yes. Look at the life he lived, the compassion and care he lavished on those around him without pride, prejudice or hesitation and the justice he demanded from those in authority over others.

On the night before he died, he said to his disciples, after washing their feet as a servant would, *'I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.'*

An example. To serve one another.

Today, as we experience the profound sense of loss that the death of Queen Elizabeth has brought to us as a Nation and as individuals, we remember her incredible life of devoted service to her people over seven decades. What an example she has tirelessly set over those years. The tenor of her reign has its roots in her deep personal Christian faith which provided the underpinning of her never-failing concern for her people. No wonder there has been such an outpouring of love and such a sense of loss. She kept the faith. She cared. She served.

She has been the Queen. Our Queen. All around us on stamps, coins, banknotes, pillar boxes. Daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother: the family lady who drew us in too.

But there was so much more.

She went to Aberfan many times over the years, her presence a comfort.

She delighted in her Commonwealth.

She made us laugh at her antics with James Bond and Paddington Bear.

She broke our hearts by her courageous, solitary mourning at Prince Philip's funeral.

What a Queen! What a life she lived.

This precious life we've been given...short or long...brings with it the demand that if we are truly followers of Jesus then we too must be focussed on the needs of those around us. We may not be Servant Kings or Queens, but being Servants of God is something to aspire to daily.

Before the news of the Queen's death, we had plenty to occupy our minds and our news cycles. The overwhelming mood was of gloom and despair as food prices rocket, people suffer and die in floods or war and a truly difficult winter is predicted with energy to heat, wash and cook with becoming, for many, scarily out of budgetary reach.

Do we allow ourselves and our communities to be overwhelmed by all this? Or do we rise to the challenge of supporting each other in any and every way we can? Practically, emotionally, spiritually people are crying out for Hope to be reborn. As Servants of God, it is our task to think and act compassionately and creatively to ensure that hope again comes into people's lives. To feed the hungry, warm the cold, hold hands with the lonely, encourage those in despair, wipe the tears of those who weep.

We need, like her Majesty, to shoulder our responsibilities unflinchingly and hold out helping hands to those around us. Hands not closed into fists of fear or challenge, but open in love and service. That is Jesus' example. It was The Queen's way. Think how many hands she shook over her seventy years. How many charities she supported. How many lives were changed through her trusts and schemes. How many hearts warmed by that smile.

So: Hearts Open to God's loving inspiration, Palms Extended as we say 'How can I help you today' to those around. Hope can be reborn through our actions and interactions, with God's help.

Who will be servant to others? Who will follow Jesus' example? We will.

Now, as Jesus' Followers and fellow servants of the Kingdom of God, let us pray, using the words of the Nunc Dimittis:

*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word.*

*For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*

*Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.*

*To be a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of thy people Israel.*

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;*

*As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end.*

*Amen.*