

Reading: Luke 6:46-49

We come today with heavy hearts as we are forced to say goodbye to our beloved Queen. The new Prime Minister of Britain, announcing her death, described the Queen as a rock on which the nation of Britain, and the Commonwealth, was built. A rock. If you asked the Queen what the rock was that she built her life on she would say, Jesus Christ. Her faith in Jesus was the rock which sustained her, the foundation for her life. She often said just that in her Christmas message. The Queen would pray a lot and go to church a lot. I read of one journalist whose job was to follow her around for a week and report on what she got up to. The journalist in her report said "I'm so pleased the week is over. I'm sick of going to church!" Once, when asked to agree to a new prayer book for the Church of England, the Queen said to the chaplain "before I agree to it, let's go and pray with it". So, she and the chaplain went and prayed the new matins. "Now I have prayed with, it I can agree with it," she said.

The gospel tells us of a man who doesn't build his house on a solid rock foundation. I can personally testify to the folly of a poor foundation. Traveling each day down the Dunedin motorway to school, we went past a suburb called Abbotsford. One rainy night, the whole suburb literally slipped with its mud foundations into a heap beside the motorway. It was a miracle that no one was killed as authorities raced to get everyone out just in time. Friends of ours rang from Canada. The media had reported that the whole of Dunedin had slipped into the sea.

Today, we gather to express our emotions at losing our beloved Queen, and to give thanks for her life and many achievements. For many of us, we have known no other Sovereign. Beginning as she did at a young age, for over 70 years she has been our Queen. After 70 years, it's as if she was always going to be there.

Queen Elizabeth II, a rock.

Her life, devoted to the teachings of Jesus Christ, showed Anglican theology at its very best. She was inclusive of all people. To be a Christian is not to be judgmental about other people, but to see the very best in them. The Queen did this. It didn't matter what faith you had, or none, she was your Queen. Her life also proved what Jesus said a lot: that a life of serving others can bring joy. In fact, I think her dedication to others contributed not just to her happiness, but also to her long life. The Queen also demonstrated that in public life you don't need to be embarrassed about your faith. She wasn't afraid to show her faith in public, as many of us are, even amongst our families. She also lived and showed that to be Christian you don't need to be grim and lifeless.

A friend of a friend is a chaplain at one of the Chapels Royal. A Chapel Royal is a church where the monarch has control, rather than local bishop. On one occasion the Queen was to visit for a service. The chaplain was getting reading things for her visit when he realized

he had forgotten his reading glasses. The verger saw his panic: "look, you haven't got time to go home. Her Majesty is just coming up the drive, I've got a box of leftovers. One of those will do." Quickly the two looked through the pile and found one that did the job. The service went well, and he greeted the Queen at the door. "Thank you," she said, "for a very good sermon," and just as she was turning, she said out of the corner of her mouth "Pity you had to look like Dame Edna Everage to preach it!"

As we are forced to say goodbye to the Queen, a rock who has done so much for so many, we can take comfort that her faith was built, not on a muddy foundation like Abbotsford, but on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ. He has promised that those that trust him will rest in peace and rise in glory.

For us the Queen's life leaves us a question - are we building our lives on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ, or is our foundation ready to give way any moment when the rains come? Have we chosen the rock of Jesus or some other foundation for our lives?

The Queen chose wisely to build her life on the foundation that lasts. May we do likewise.