**New Kilpatrick**

**8th September 2022**

**Psalm 23**

**Introduction**

Thank you for gathering in this way today, a shorter gathering to suit this time where we share a depth of sadness at the news this week of the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

It is in these times, we find ourselves reflecting and indeed finding a deep respect in our loss, for a person who has in many ways bound us together as a nation, steadied us, been fragile herself, yet knew she served in the position she had all her days, believing that to be her duty, and in doing so, lived the long-view, past prime ministers who came and went, through a number of generations, changing worldviews and attitudes towards each other.

The Queen has been a role model and a stateswoman the likes of which we probably need now more than ever in our world. And maybe we realise that only now she has gone.

But significantly, while she wasn’t originally born for this, what gave her strength in order to give a nation and commonwealth strength, was faith. She was very much someone who humbled herself through what she believed, and led the world as queen through that faith and hope.

Today we gather in the foundation of that faith, and find a place to pause and reflect on Her Majesty.

**Let us pray**

Loving God

As we find ourselves gathering

With so many others across our world

And as we sense the mood of something

Passing from us that has been a subtle stronghold

And as we pause and find silence

For a woman who has held us in the longview

In a world that seeks immediate answers

We give thanks

For a life well lived

And generously served

Thanks for the humility of a monarch

Who found grace

And humanity

Duty and faith

As a call to life

Everyday

And as we speak of you, O God,

Author and creator of all

Who levels those who laud power and wealth

Over the least

We give thanks for a monarch

Who found a connection

And was a support

For all she served

So may we reflect on how this changes us

Find the words that speak of how we feel

And the silences that invite the time

To humble ourselves, all,

And recognise who we are

And who we can become

Because of what our Queen has been for us

As we pray for her family, grieving

And nations, mourning

And a commonwealth, reflecting

And a world, pausing

In appreciation of her long reign

And deep humility and faith

So be it

Amen

**Reading Psalm 23**

**Reflection**

I wonder if we realised how much we have felt the queen has been that constant behind everything we have gone through and as still going through. I felt it on Thursday, and surprised myself. And it is a greater sense of loss because it isn’t a government or a prime minister who has passed measured in no more than 5 year intervals.

Here is someone who has outlived every prime minister’s tenure, every political party’s time in power, and indeed every monarch we have had, as well as more than 30% of US history, and there is a sense something that grounded us, shaped us, held us, tenaciously, lovingly, faithfully, serving us, has gone.

In these times of cost of living crisis and lack of trust in our leaders, we didn’t realise we were supported by someone who has seen it all before, and had the strength, and the faith, to keep going, because of service, yes, but more because of a sense of who she was for folk, a sense of being called to that role.

I say that, simply because that was the person I found in conversation when I found myself preaching in Crathie Kirk, and staying in Balmoral that weekend. Her Majesty was a woman of faith, who spoke of it with interest, intrigued by it, trusted it, and felt herself called by it to the role she had: and these are her words, not mine.

And in these days, perhaps the world’s leaders may discover and realise how leadership ought to be: tenacious, seeing the longview, being steady through every crisis, not patronising or in it for self, never lauded over folk and never taken for granted. Someone who certainly lived in a different context from the vast majority of us, yet could connect with those in every context because perhaps she did what she promised she would do.

And while there is a real sense of losing something tenacious and gracious, that constant carries on. “The Queen is dead, God save the King”. That sounds strange and even uncomfortable, but it is the constancy of some things that enables us to live through the change in other things.

This is the shape of faith. We have a God who is our greater constant, a God that Her Majesty worshipped and believed in, and, as she said so herself, was subject to, a God who is an anchor, tenacious, graceful and will hold us through all things, indeed, the passing of a monarch as much as the numerous crises of our nation and world.

What the queen embodied, is faith in a God, who is the greater constant, and who calls us all into an uncertain future, but with the strength that is found in trusting that which is tenacious, constant, steadfast and gracious.

The words the queen herself chose for her wedding speak of that: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord, for ever.

**Music**

**Prayer**

Loving God

We bring our world

And pray

For peace

For hope

For leadership

For service

We pray for all in our nation

And community

And commonwealth

Who feel that sense of loss

That comes from the death of the Queen

And in an age where there is so much flux

And uncertainty and mistrust

We pray for all those who seek something stable

That is tenacious through all crises

As the monarch has been

And ask all leaders to learn from her sense of duty

Call, and service to us all

Who rose above the petty

And held onto that which was faithful

And brought meaning

And hope

Loving God

We pray for the royal family

We pray for our own families

All those who need support and strength

To hold them through illness and worry

And trust you

O great God

To be the glue

]the love

The grace

That brings us all together

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**