

A Reflection: Hope in Life and Death

Death is part of life. It seems strange to state this so starkly but it is true. From the moment we are born, we are on a journey through life that is redolent with our mortality. We are taught what to avoid (fire, venomous creatures, etc.); to be careful with that which can do us harm (including tobacco, drugs and alcohol) and to consider the risks when driving or hill walking (for instance). The NHS and the Health & Safety Executive do all they can to keep us alive but, one day, we will experience death just as Queen Elizabeth II experienced it on 8th September. And so, 2022 will be remembered as the year when Queen Elizabeth died.

In the Old Testament there is a reference to the death of a king. Uzziah was a king of Judah who, like our queen, ascended the throne at a young age and reigned successfully and well for over fifty years. His death was a significant moment because so many only knew one king. When Isaiah had a vision of God in the Temple, he anchored it in the year that King Uzziah died' (Isaiah 6:1). And our lives are earthed in time from the day we are born until the day we die.

For Christians, death is not the end but the beginning of a life when time is no more. We declare a 'sure and certain hope' of being raised to eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:51f). Our hope rests in Jesus who died that we might live. The Queen's faith in God, through Jesus her Saviour, gave her - and gives us - great assurance. Jesus invites us to die with Him that we might also rise with

Him (Romans 6:5-8) and, when we make a Christian commitment, we die to self and seek to live the life of Jesus, eternally.

Our nations are mourning because our Sovereign, whom we honour and have come to admire and to love as a child of God, has died. We grieve with tears and smiles. Our tears are for our loss whilst our smiles are for happy memories and the joy of eternal hope. Our Queen believed in eternal life and we also believe and trust in Jesus who said, 'I am the resurrection and the life, those who believe in me, even though they die, will live' (John 11:25).

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