

# **SHE BEING DEAD STILL SPEAKS: BUT ARE WE LISTENING?**

## **(Sermon Summary)**

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**Sunday Morning, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**Reading: Hebrews 11:1-12. (v11:4)**

Abel received the testimony from God that his sacrifice was right in His sight, an indication that the man himself was right in His sight. Only a blood sacrifice could bring Abel before God and result in his person being accepted. Cain failed to do this, an indication that his heart was not right before God. So the record remains in Scripture and, although Abel is dead, yet what he did and the man that he was still speaks to us to this day. In fact, we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 11 who, though they are dead, yet still they speak to us until this very day. It is said of Mary, who anointed the Lord for burial, that what she had done would be recounted through the ages (Matthew 26:10-13).

The Queen indeed is dead, but she planned her own service. We might think that she was intending still to speak to us through that service, though dead. What she 'said' has the backing of a credible person who demonstrated sterling qualities of self-sacrifice and service. She attended a place of worship every Sunday and was able to quote the Bible, especially Psalms, and quote hymns. She may have been unable to be the Defender of the Faith through the constraints of her office. Likewise, she was unable to confer the same qualities and beliefs upon her children and grandchildren. But the funeral service, both in Westminster Abbey and in St George's Chapel in Windsor, had the power to speak to us, if we were willing to listen.

### **1. Funerals are poignant moments.**

In our day, funerals are often trivialized. Preachers at funerals often 'send everyone to heaven'. The Queen's funeral was solemn but filled with hope. It pointed away from herself towards the Lord. Sometimes people are moved at funerals when they are faced up with death but then suppress the truth later. They might weep but learn little from their grief.

If we subtract the pageant from the Queen's Funeral, we will find that it was packed with Scripture. References to John 11, Job 19 and Revelation 21 were made in what was sung by the choir at the beginning. A portion of Psalm 42 was sung and, later, at St George's Chapel, Psalm 121 and a portion of Psalm 103. There were readings from John 14:1-9 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-58. Some fine evangelical hymns were sung. It was viewed by a peak of 37.5 million people in the UK and 4.1 billion worldwide. What was done, whatever the spiritual state of those speaking or singing, pointed to the glory of God. Perhaps the Queen desired, through the funeral service, to communicate what were her beliefs and her hopes.

## **2. Did people listen?**

There was perhaps something very poignant about the way so much Christian truth was broadcast, unedited, across the nation and across the world. We cannot say exactly what time we might be in as a nation or, indeed, as the world. But there was a sense that this might be a highly significant moment for us as a nation, that God was granting us to hear His word. Perhaps much of the truth could not be heard because of the marching soldiers and sailors, because of the sense of ceremony, and because of the occasion itself being so over-powering.

We will have to see in the days ahead whether our neighbours are changing. We will see what is reported among those who preach in the Open Air, ourselves included. Will we have felt the power of Christian truth but then revert to suppressing it? Will we be like Felix, who trembled when Paul spoke to him, but there is no record that he ever responded to what he had heard.

## **3. Time of decision.**

It was a time of decision for the people when the Lord came into Jerusalem. For us as individuals, the Bible challenges us as to what we will make of what we have heard.

Our nation must not fritter away opportunities that the Lord might be affording us to repent. We read that He is patient and long-suffering with people, even wicked people (1 Peter 3:18-20; and 2 Peter 3:9,15). But He will not wait forever (Romans 2:4-10). We might be exhausting His patience with us as a nation. We have had warnings such as COVID-19, the cost-of-living crisis, and the tense international situation we are experiencing. He has given us opportunities, such as Brexit, but there is little evidence we have used these moments to properly review who we are.

So we must pray that the Lord would yet extend mercy to us as a nation. We should cry out (See Joel 1:13-14; and Joel 2:12-14). We should be vehement and earnest in our prayers, looking to move away from being self-absorbed. We should cry out for the church. There were fine words to be heard, for example, in the prayers, but did the

wider Anglican Church really believe them? How many of its Bishops and Archbishops, clergy and laity, believed those things that were said at the funeral?

We must pray for ourselves. Failure is not an option. Too many churches, church leaders and Christians in general have disintegrated and lost their savour. We must not fail.

We must give thought to the people we are seeking to reach. We must aim, as far as possible, to be 'people people'. We need to learn to talk to them and not at them. We must learn to speak to them of important gospel issues and of the needs of their souls.

This may be an important moment in our nation. We must rise to the challenge.