

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
DUKE OF EDINBURGH
10 JUNE 1921 - 9 APRIL 2021



“During these years as your Queen,
the support of my family has,
across the generations, been beyond measure.
Prince Philip is, I believe, well-known for
declining compliments of any kind.
But throughout he has been
a constant strength and guide.”

11 April, 2021

**It would be remiss of us
to ignore the significance of the death of
HRH Duke of Edinburgh
aka Prince Philip.**

Much has been said about his gaffes and other humorous statements and very little about him as a person.

Several reporters have commented on him being a committed Christian, serious about his faith, inquisitive to know more and always wanting to explore theological aspects.

Our worship today, pays tribute to this man, whom many thought was his goal in life to insult people.

Our message from John 5 harnesses his single most enduring quality, that to respect authority even when every social stereotype says otherwise.

Thank you Your Royal Highness for setting this example

OPENING PRAYER

Eternal God! You have given us life and we gather as people on the journey of life. There are times our journey takes us through exuberant faith in you, and there are times we journey with the weight of doubt. We do good and we sin. Father! You made us perfect, but sin makes us imperfect in your sight. Yet Eternal God, you love us without conditions or restrictions. We are not worthy of such love.

As we gather this morning to worship You, we are mindful that you are waiting for us to quiet our minds and know that You are God! ... In you Lord is our comfort from the pain and agony of this world.

Accept our feeble attempts to worship You Father. Draw us closer to you that we may know You better and hear You clearly. **AMEN.**

HYMN **O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come**

READING **Psalm 91**

PRAYER for HRH DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Heavenly Father! Thank you for the life of Prince Philip and his rich legacy. You gave him birth and life, saw him in difficult circumstances during his childhood, carried him through to adulthood, and gave him many, many years to help and benefit those who had no hope, for whom society had switched off the light at the end of the tunnel.

Comfort Her Majesty the Queen, the Royal Family and those around the world who mourn his passing from among us. Grant them the assurance that the gateway to Christ's promised new life is through death, which He has conquered for us. In the Name of Him who made this possible for us, Jesus our Christ. **AMEN.**

HYMN **Guide me O Though Great Jehovah**

READING **Gospel of John 5:16-30 & 39-44**

PRAYER

Heavenly Father! Your Word teaches us many lessons. Help me to focus on Jesus and not become obsessed with my own troubles and difficulties, which entraps my mind and causes me to dwell on my present woes, rather than on my future hope. Keep me alert to Your leading and ready to listen to Your voice, in every situation of life, and thank You for Your amazing grace, that through faith in Jesus, I have not only been forgiven of my sin, but have been given all I need for life and godliness.

It is so easy to fall into legalism and hypocritical thinking. Keep me from narrow-minded, hypocritical religious thinking and may I act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with You all the days of my life - to Your praise and glory, this I ask in Jesus name. **AMEN.**

HYMN

Open our eyes Lord! We want to see Jesus

MESSAGE

Easter is behind us; the 7-week countdown to Pentecost has begun! I try to imagine the Disciples emotions during this time, a true roller coaster ride: from the celebration of Jesus' triumphant entry, to the peaceful and intimate setting of the Passover meal, followed by jarring emotions of betrayal by a colleague, mock trials and floggings, secret denials (Peter), the prolonged agony of Jesus' crucifixion with His mother and others broken and distraught at the foot of the cross, unable to conduct a proper burial as the Sabbath had set in. Then a long 24-hour wait, not knowing what was going to happen. On the *third day* standing bewildered at the empty tomb, then stunned when Jesus met them in the upper room; told to go to Galilee, there spent 40 days with Him, asking questions, learning, sharing, praying and praising God, watched Jesus taken back to Heaven and returned to Jerusalem and waited, as instructed.

I often ask myself, as a Disciple of Jesus, how would I have handled these events and managed my emotions!

Imagine now the life changing words heard by a man, lame for 38 years, *Stand up, pick up your bed-roll, and walk!* What followed his healing defines the problem surrounding Jesus' life and ministry, and strangely resonates with the life of Prince Philip, and the disciples' experience.

In his Gospel, John uses "*the Jews*" referring to Jewish leaders, the religious establishment, those in the Sanhedrin who were a law unto themselves. It did not refer to the people in Jerusalem associated with the name: Jews.

These "Jews" objected, *"You cannot work on the Sabbath! The Law does not allow you to carry that sleeping mat!"*

The man was not breaking God's law on the Sabbath, but breaking the rabbi's interpretation of God's law, a practice which continues to this day. In April 1992, an Israeli newspaper reported on people living in an apartment in an Orthodox neighbourhood in Israel, whose house caught fire. They contacted the Rabbi to know whether a telephone call to the fire department on the Sabbath violated Sabbath law. In the half-hour it took the rabbi to decide "yes", the fire spread and devastated two neighbouring apartments!

In John 5, the Jews' focus was not, *"Who healed you?"* They wanted to know, *"Who told you to carry your mat? Who is this person who has the gall, the temerity to challenge our well established laws and encourage another to break it?"*

This is the problem: to "ensure justice", we have established a maze of laws and declare these to render justice, **over and above the Law of God!**

The man healed of his inability to walk, might well be wondering, *"I was carried to the pool today, and if I were not healed I would need to be carried home. That's a lot more work than me carrying my little bed-mat. In healing me and sending me home, Jesus was saving work on the Sabbath, not making more work."*

This is the paradox we live with: To the religious leaders, *Jesus broke Sabbath rules*. To the healed man, *Jesus made me well*. Throughout human history, there have been people who define how the human race should live by creating their own laws, modifying laws and misinterpreting God's law, blinding people from seeing God at work, experiencing His love, discovering His grace and the power of forgiveness and restitution!

I grew up hearing, *Money is the root of all evil!* When someone fell into difficult times, the cause of their misfortune was money! Timothy cautions his readers, *people who long to be rich, fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.*

Ananias and Sapphira¹ fell into this trap: their **love** of money led them to retain some of the proceeds from the sale of land, and let everyone believe they were giving everything they received, *craving money, (they) wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.*

In our generation, we have made "laws" to please God by enforcing modes of dress and fashion, music, films, etc. Trying to keep up with these "man-made" laws can be exhausting as we try to please people, and not God!

To those who wanted to know, *Who made you break our Sabbath rules?*, speaking in Rabbinic language His listeners were familiar, Jesus offered the following:

- *My Father and I are always working (v.17)*. First, Jesus did not claim equality with His Father, He asserted his unity with the Father in a relationship that could be described as sonship. The Bible tell us, God does not need sleep or rest: *He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep*². God rested from creating, but not from *preserving* and *governing*

¹ Acts 5:1-11

² Psalm 121:3-4,

that which he had made. God **cannot** keep sabbaths! If He does, then nothing can continue to exist without the continual energy of God!

- *The Father shows the Son everything he is doing and shows Him how to do even greater things than the healing of the lame man (v.20).* Jesus acts in full submission to His Father. Jesus would have drawn an analogy from his own boyhood experience in his father's carpentry workshop, when he learned to imitate the things he saw Joseph doing, thus serving his apprenticeship.
- The Father-Son relationship points to a time that is coming soon (v.25), when this finite world defined by death, will transition into God's world in eternity. Those who listen to my message and believe in the authority of God, have already passed from eternal death to eternal life. The Father has granted the Son this life-giving power, but with this power comes judgement. *I judge as God tells me. Therefore, my judgement is just because I carry out the will of the One who sent me, not my own will (v.30).*
- Finally, Jesus tells His questioner, *You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life, but the Scriptures point to Me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life (v.39-40)*

Listening to extended programmes about Prince Philip's life, whether he modelled it after John 5 we don't know, but he knew his wife was the reigning Monarch, and that he was her subject! Everything he did (not necessary said!) was subservient to the plans and desires of Her Majesty the Queen.

This passage, the life and times of Prince Philip, and the emotional roller coaster ride the Disciples went through, point to one thing this our generation has difficulty with: **authority**, particularly the absolute authority of God.

Now, God tell us and the Bible teaches us, to obey the laws of land we live in, and respect the authority of those who are our leaders. But we struggle

with absolute authority as in God, because those who set themselves up to exercise absolute authority over us (dictators, despots, tyrants), use and abuse us and betray us for their own gain and pleasure.

By setting our minds to accept God as Sovereign, whose power and authority is absolute and as Jesus says, *His judgement is just (v.30)* we begin to see the dictator, the despot, the tyrant as mimicking God, and failing miserably!

Verse 44 is our challenge today: *I (Jesus) have come to you in my Father's name, and you have rejected me. Yet if others come in their own name, you gladly welcome them. No wonder you can't believe! For you gladly honour each other, but you don't care about the honour that comes from the One who alone is God!*

Shall we make it our goal to get to know the One who is perfect in every way, and His Son Jesus our Christ, because the Son is only one who teaches about the **REAL** Father God, and is the **ONLY** One who will take us into His presence when this world transitions into God's perfect world?

AMEN

PRAYER

Eternal God and Gracious Master. Forgive us the times we want You to measure up to the world live in, making an idol of You, of all You are not. Give us the courage to make Your Law, Your Commandments the guiding principles of our lives. This we ask you grant us, by the power of the Holy Spirit and in the Name of Your Son our Saviour, Jesus the Christ. **AMEN**

HYMN

Lord of the Church, we pray for Your Renewing

BENEDICTION

The Father sent His Son to defeat death which He has done for you and me. Go now and live this life of freedom, free from worry about the future, free from worry about the present, free from worry about what people think. Release us among Your people, to be salt and light for Your Glory. **AMEN**