

WD September 12, 2022

“A Royal Homecoming”

As I speak to you, things are unfolding in regards to the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II. As you mostly like know the news is wall to wall with the 70-year history of her unlikely reign. A great deal of attention, with lots of expensive pomp and circumstance, including centuries of tradition that will play out with much hype for a funeral fit for royalty is unfolding. Eventually the Queen will lie in state in Westminster Abby for four full days before her funeral on Monday 19 September, allowing members of the public to file past and pay their respects. The queen's coffin will rest on a raised platform, known as a catafalque, beneath the 11th Century hall's medieval timber roof. Each corner of the platform will be guarded by soldiers from units that serve the Royal Household. Hundreds of thousands of mourners will wander through and pay their respects to their late queen.

Closer to home another member of royalty was also called to his rest. He is my neighbor, Herman. His home was his castle. He didn't live a pampered life. He didn't have specialist who decided his wardrobe each time he went out in public. His claim to fame was being a faithful husband, father, grandfather, hard-worker, and charter member of his church. He was a hard worker and always kept busy even when he eyes dimmed and cancer came knocking. The man could still spit more firewood at 86 then I could at 48. He had simple tastes and was as humble as they come.

There won't be long parades, royal guards wearing red uniforms guarding his casket, nor will there be any television cameras documenting every detail of his funeral as famous people attend his funeral service. However, his family and friends will gather at a church in a building much younger than Westminster Abby. The Word of God will be preached, hymns will be sung, and many of us will celebrate his 90 plus years. But I say to you that the Lord will be watching. And yes, he is royalty too. Like Queen Elizabeth, Herman believed in Jesus the Lord who died for His sins on the cross. His hope was in Jesus' resurrection. That is a game changer in the eyes of heaven.

The crowning of any royal member of Jesus' kingdom begins in his/her baptism where we covered with the righteousness of Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:27), royal garments from the King's closet. From there it just gets better. We are also connected to the Lord Jesus. Where the King goes, we go not as subjects but as prince's and princesses of the royal family.

Take a listen to Ephesians 1:18-23. “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the *hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people*, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20 he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

As a royal you are rich in God's grace. The power of God that saves you also raised Jesus from the dead and seated Jesus at the right hand in heaven above all other kings and authority who will one day confess Jesus as Lord and every knee will bow (Philippians 2). All times and in all ages past, present, and future; that includes King Charles and prince William, even those who were once famous will bow. We are made part of the royal family in our connection with Jesus.

And consider 1 Peter 2:9-10 which famously calls those like Herman “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

But now...you are His special possession, we are a people of God. But now you have mercy. But now you are a member of Jesus' royal family. This world may not pay attention or notice those like you and me. Lord knows that the rich and powerful often disregard us. We don't have royal titles here on this side of creation. Sometime this week my friend and neighbor, Herman will be laid to rest. Yet, I tell you heaven is shaken with celebration for Herman as it is for each one of God's people.

Jesus always notices his people. The woman in the crowd in Mark 5—Jesus noticed and celebrated her. The Centurion of Matthew 8—Jesus noticed and celebrated his faith. The widow who gave two little mites in faith in Mark 12—Jesus notices. Jesus will leave the 99 for the one and all of heaven rejoices with each one who makes into God's glory.

I know I'm giving you a lot. But I also hope that you will understand today that heaven makes a big deal about all of heaven's royalty, namely all of you who believe in Jesus. So, let me round things out with one last thought. In my last visit with Herman, I talked about 2 Corinthians 4. Like many Herman's eyes were dimmed by macular degeneration. It occurred to me that although his eyes were as weak as Isaac's in Genesis 27, he could see just fine. Consider this last scripture.

“6 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” We fix our eyes of faith on the eternal things because the eternal glory outweighs all else.

Herman could see with eyes of hope as we all do. So, I ask you to see something special too. Today Herman stands next to Elizabeth as equals. Imagine that! All of Britain's drama, all of Herman's struggles, gone. Heaven has welcomed them both with great celebration. Someday Jesus promises to welcome all of us in like manner. And there we will all live in a huge house, wearing royal garments.

Pastor Matthew Woods
John 3:30