

Covenant Weekly - September 9, 2022

Examples of Service

Yesterday morning, bright and early...actually, still dark and early...Angie and I got up to watch the funeral for Queen Elizabeth II. I did so for two reasons. The first is that this was a historic moment in that most people alive today have never witnessed the funeral of one of our heads of state. I know the monarchy and the empire and all that the Queen represents are controversial, and many things around the funeral reminded me of why, but it was still a historic event that I was interested in witnessing. A second reason I was interested in watching the funeral is that I was very interested in the service itself. I have never been to an Anglican funeral and one of the things I read leading up to the funeral was that there would be no eulogies because the overall emphasis of an Anglican service was to be on the resurrection to come, not on the life that *was* lived. In addition, a key part of the service was to be a sermon delivered by Rev. Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Welby's route to ordination was rather unusual and to say that he was an unexpected Archbishop of Canterbury would be an understatement. In the chances I have had to hear him speak, read his writing, and even hear him in conversation on podcasts, I have been so impressed by his humility, his heart for Jesus, and his desire to lead the Anglican church in emphasizing the way of Jesus. I was very interested in hearing his sermon on such an occasion.

I was not disappointed. Speaking of a leader who had spent 70 years in service and in front of world leaders whose lives have been committed to grasping for power he said, "The pattern for many leaders is to be exalted in life and forgotten after death. The pattern for all who serve God – famous or obscure, respected or ignored – is that death is the door to glory." Pointing to Christ as *the* example of ultimate service, he continued, "People of loving service are rare

in any walk of life. Leaders of loving service are still rarer. But in all cases those who serve will be loved and remembered when those who cling to power and privileges are forgotten.” He concluded, again by pointing ultimately to our hope in Jesus, by saying, “Service in life, hope in death. All who follow the Queen’s example, and inspiration of trust and faith in God, can with her say: ‘We will meet again.’”

[You can read the entire brief sermon at <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-sermons/sermon-given-at-the-state-funeral-of-her-majesty-queen-elizabeth-ii>]

I am grateful to be a part of a church family where people are committed to service. So many of you devote so much time to showing care and love to so many others. Thank you for your example of following Jesus in service in ways that are often unseen.

My only exhortation to myself and others as we consider lives of service is something St. Paul wrote about twice. Once to the church in Galatia and another time to the church in Thessalonica. He exhorted them not to “tire or grow weary of doing good.” I know *what* service we can do changes over time, but may we be men and women who live that life of service as long as we can in whatever ways we can, with the joy of Christ in us. Please hear me on this...if you’re listening to this and your current limitations prevent you from doing what you used to do, this is not meant for you to feel guilty about it. Please serve *as you can*, and if that way of service is through prayer, then pray. If it is through caring for a loved one who is your primary responsibility, care for them. But retirement from service simply because “I think I’ve done enough and it’s time for me to sit back while someone else takes their turn” isn’t a posture seen in the example of Jesus or his first followers.

So, Covenant family, dear brothers and sisters, let us not grow weary in doing good. Let us continue to serve *as we are able*, continually inviting and sharing in service with others who come along, as long as God gives us strength and breath.

Announcement & Closing

On this note of service, I want to mention one service opportunity. It relates to our youth. The first relates to our youth. As we mentioned on Sunday morning, we had *over 55* students make it to youth this past Wednesday. We also have a Jr. High retreat coming up on the first weekend of October. The cost of the retreat is \$125, but in today's economy in a place like Penetang, that could be prohibitive for some families. This is an amazing opportunity to introduce kids to Jesus and to build Jesus-centred relationships with some students. I had an amazing conversation with someone in our church who rightly said, we should do whatever we can to bring down the financial barrier to kids participating in something that could introduce them to Jesus. It was a beautiful and powerful reminder. We don't want the cost to prevent any student from participating. The other factor in this is that, while we have funds available to help families, it can often be easier to give another reason why their student can't go than it is to ask for financial help. To avoid this challenge, we have decided to only charge students \$65 for the retreat and we want to invite those of you who can serve financially to help pay the rest of the registration cost. Those families who *can* afford the full \$125 are welcome to pay it, but we aren't going to insist on any family paying the full amount. Again, we simply want to bring down the barrier for kids to get involved in something where they could meet Jesus. If you would like to contribute to subsidizing this amount for kids to participate in the retreat, you can contribute by getting money directly to Brent or putting it in the

mailbox or donation box at the church and writing "Youth Retreat" on it. If we get more than enough money for this retreat, any surplus will be used for the same purpose for a Sr. High retreat in the new year. This is an amazing way to serve our youth and kids in our community who need Jesus.

Regardless of where it is you serve, I pray today God will give you strength. I especially pray for those of you who are in serving professions or who are full-time caregivers for loved ones. You are a living example of following in the way of Jesus. Thank you for what you do. May God strengthen your hands as you offer the love of Jesus in the multitude of ways you do so today and each day.

Peace to you on this day and through the rest of the week.