



## **Words of Queen Elizabeth II.**

*(For Reflection.)*

“I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong.

But I shall not have strength to carry out this resolution alone unless you join in it with me, as I now invite you to do, I know that your support will be unfailingly given.

God help me to make good my vow and God bless all of you who are willing to share in it.”

*(Queen Elizabeth’s Coronation vows and on her 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday.)*

“As I go about the country and abroad, I meet many people who, all in their own ways, are making a real contribution to their community. I come across examples of unselfish service in all walks of life and in many unexpected places.

Some people choose their occupation so that they can spend their lives in the service of their fellow citizens.

We see doctors, nurses and hospital staff caring for the sick; those in the churches and religious communities, in central and local Government; in the armed services; in the police and in the courts and prisons; in industry and commerce.

It is the same urge to make a contribution which drives those seeking the highest standards in education or art, in music or architecture.

Others find ways to give service in their spare time, through voluntary organisations or simply on their own individual initiative contributing in a thousand ways to all that is best in our society.

It may be providing company for the old and housebound; help for the disabled; care for the deprived and those in trouble; concern for neighbours or encouragement for the young.

To all of you on this Christmas Day, whatever your conditions of work and life, easy or difficult, whether you feel that you are achieving something or whether you feel frustrated; I want to say a word of thanks.

And I include all those who don’t realise that they deserve thanks and are content that what they do is unseen and unrewarded. The very act of living a decent and upright life is in itself a positive factor in maintaining civilised standards.”

*(Christmas 1980.)*

“Above all, we must retain the child’s readiness to forgive, with which we are all born and which it is all too easy to lose as we grow older.

Without it, divisions between families, communities and nations remain unbridgeable.

We owe it to our children and grandchildren to live up to the standards of behaviour and tolerance which we are so eager to teach them.

It is particularly at Christmas, which marks the birth of the Prince of Peace, that we should work to heal old wounds and to abandon prejudice and suspicion.

What better way of making a start than by remembering what Christ said – “Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.””

*(Christmas 1984.)*

“His (Jesus’) life thus began in humble surroundings, in fact in a stable, but He was to have a profound influence on the course of history and on the lives of generations of His followers. You don’t have to be rich or powerful in order to change things for the better and each of us in our own way can make a contribution.”

*(1986.)*

“Christmas is the traditional, if not the actual, birthday of a man who was destined to change the course of our history. And today we are celebrating the fact that Jesus Christ was born 2,000 years ago; this is the true Millennium anniversary.

The simple facts of Jesus’ life give us little clue as to the influence He was to have on the world. As a boy He learnt His father’s trade as a carpenter. He then became a preacher, recruiting 12 supporters to help Him. But His ministry only lasted a few years and He himself never wrote anything down. In His early 30’s He was arrested, tortured and crucified with 2 criminals. His death might have been the end of the story, but then came the resurrection and with it the foundation of the Christian faith.

Even in our very material age, the impact of Christ’s life is all around us. If you want to see an expression of Christian faith, you only have to look at our awe-inspiring cathedrals and abbeys, listen to their music or look at their stained glass windows, their books and their pictures.

But the true measure of Christ’s influence is not only in the lives of the saints, but also in the good works quietly done by millions of men and women day in and day out throughout the centuries.

Many will have been inspired by Jesus’ simple but powerful teaching; love God and love thy neighbour as thyself – in other words, treat others as you would like them to treat you. His great emphasis was to give spirituality a practical purpose.”

*(Christmas 2000.)*

“I know just how much I rely on my faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings and to put my trust in God . . . I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel.”

*(Christmas 2002.)*

“I hope that, like me, you will be comforted by the example of Jesus of Nazareth who, often in circumstances of great adversity, managed to live an outgoing, unselfish and sacrificial life.

Countless millions of people around the world continue to celebrate his birthday at Christmas, inspired by His teaching.

He makes it clear that genuine human happiness and satisfaction lie more in giving than receiving; more in serving than in being served.

We can surely be grateful that, 2,000 years after the birth of Jesus, so many of us are able to draw inspiration from His life and message, and to find in Him a source of strength and courage.”

*(Christmas 2008.)*

“Although we are capable of great acts of kindness, history teaches us that we sometimes need saving from ourselves – from our recklessness or our greed. God sent into the world a unique person – neither a philosopher nor a general, (important though they are,) – but a Saviour, with the power to forgive.

Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It can heal broken families, it can restore friendships and it can reconcile divided communities. It is in forgiveness that we feel the power of God’s love.”

*(2011.)*

“This is the time of the year when we remember that God sent His only Son ‘to serve, not to be served.’

He restored love and service to the centre of our lives in the person of Jesus Christ. It is my prayer this Christmas Day that His example and teaching will continue to bring people together to give the best of themselves in the service of others.

The carol, ‘In the Bleak Midwinter,’ ends by asking a question of all of us who know the Christmas story, of how God gave Himself to us in humble service:

‘What can I give him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

If I were a wise man, I would do my part.’

The carol gives the answer,

‘Yet what I can I give Him – give my heart.’”

*(Christmas 2012.)*

“For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, whose birth we celebrate today, is an inspiration and an anchor in my life. A role-model of reconciliation and forgiveness, He stretched out His hands in love, acceptance and healing. Christ’s example has taught me to seek to respect and value all people of whatever faith or none.”

(2014.)