

140 Liverpool's Cinderella

Cilla Black's funeral was held in her home city of Liverpool on Thursday 20th August. For those of our overseas readers who have never heard of "our Cilla", her life was a literal "rags-to-riches" journey leading to a fifty-year career in show business as a singer and television presenter.

Cilla grew up in a decent working-class Roman Catholic family in Liverpool's Scotland Road, renowned as being one of the toughest parts of a tough city. She was a typical bubbly teenager in the "swinging sixties", blessed with that extraordinary sense of fun and humour which seems to be a speciality of true Liverpudlians - no wonder around Cilla there were always, in her own words, a "lorra laffs". But she was also blessed with a good voice, and when working in the cloakroom at the Cavern Club in the early days of the Beatles, her potential was spotted, and the rest as they say is "history".

For her life and character, her talents and staying-power, Cilla did become, in that over-used phrase, "a national treasure". Thousands lined the streets as her coffin was driven to the church - many were the flowers thrown on to the hearse by the waiting crowds, and many were their tears.

But now she is gone - the eulogies are spoken, the "show-biz stars" have left the scene, the flowers wither and their messages become blurred in the rain. From our biblical perspective, what may we learn from Cilla's life, and death?

We see for a start how significant for any of us is our family background and upbringing. As we know, the Roman Catholic faith, of which Cilla's parents were members, unfortunately falls short over several central biblical doctrines, but in her family home Cilla would at least have grown up with a sense of God's presence over their lives, linked to a natural sense of Right and Wrong. In tough surroundings, she learned the importance of strong family ties and loyalties, a sticking together and a keeping cheerful together - lessons which stood her in such good stead in adult life.

We might pause to think back over our own upbringing, or consider any upbringing we may have provided, or still are providing, for our own children. We can go to the Lord with thankfulness, or with repentance and resolve where necessary - for "little children" have a very special place as far as the Lord is concerned! (eg., Matthew 19.13-15).

Secondly, we see that Cilla knew who she was and kept to who she was. Through thick and thin she held to her roots, beliefs and values, in the midst, no doubt, of many temptations to "become someone else" as fame and wealth came her way.

Her home life was happy and stable, unusual in itself in the world of show business. She was evidently one of those "what-you-see-is-what-you-get" people - natural, genuine, honest, equally at home in humble or lofty surroundings, and with a real ability to mix with all sorts of people and put them at their ease. To stay true to herself over the years in the turbulent world of show business and television must go down as a rare achievement indeed.

And what of us and our own self-knowledge and self-acceptance? The Lord assures us so often in His Word that His redeemed children are deeply precious to Him - even down to His knowing the ultimate details of our hairstyles (Matthew 10.29-31)! His door is always open.

Finally we take note that no-one, least of all Cilla herself, had any expectation of her death - which came "out of the blue" on just another normal, happy day for her. Therein lies a quiet reminder for us all of Psalm 31.15 - "our times are in thy hands, O Lord". We don't know what lies ahead, or how, when or where the Lord will call us home: but the Lord knows all of these things - and He knows and loves each one of His children.

So from the life of "Liverpool's Cinderella", Cilla Black, we can reflect on who we are and how we are doing as far as the Lord is concerned. May we always know in our own lives that "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5.1) - one of the many blessings showered upon us as we place our simple faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

As we get that part of the picture right, whether we work in a cloakroom or a television studio, all else falls into place.

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