

Sermon at the funeral of Lucy Cooper

It's almost impossible to think that it should come to this. Lucy's light shone so brightly but all too briefly. And now we are here to say farewell when instead she should have been planning for so many other things yet to come.

But despite that overwhelming sense of loss and the waves of sadness crashing onto the shores of so many lives, everyone wants to hold on to the beauty, charm and grace of this wonderful young woman. We have already heard so much that speaks powerfully of Lucy's life and the impact that she had on everyone. Thank you to all those who have been so brave to share words and music in honour of Lucy.

Katie and Simon also wanted me to mention a few things that are so important to them. Many of you have mentioned in letters to them and in Facebook posts that Lucy lit up any room or space she entered and they felt that too. Everyone knows that Lucy was beautiful but it should also be noted that she was not vain – it was never all about her!

There are many friends from Lucy's schools – Bute House and Notting Hill & Ealing. Her parents want it to be known that Lucy was happy at both schools and loved what both of them gave her and the amazing friends she made at both. Thanks to the friends and teachers for coming today.

Lucy was the ultimate "All-Inclusive Girl". She knew she enjoyed many advantages in life but she hated snobbery and exclusivity. She always reached out to draw people in and she wasn't interested in status or privilege. Everyone loved her from every background; and she loved so generously too. She was always there for people when they were sad or hurting in anyway. Her smile and her hugs made very many people feel better. She was there for everyone which is one reason why it is so painful to think that no one could reach her in the moment when she needed that love. No one will ever

understand how that came to be when she was surrounded by the love of family and friends.

And most of all Lucy grew up in a loving family – they loved her and she loved them. There are so many wonderful, happy memories and these will remain strong forever, cherished by Katie and Simon but also Aunty Manda, with many others in this loving family who have received such a devastating, crushing sadness.

But all of these things are a reminder that Lucy should be and will be remembered for so much more than the manner of her death. Her legacy is not her premature death but the qualities and character that she demonstrated when she was alive. All these incredible photos speak of that and not of the loss and sadness. These must be cherished and I know they will be.

And how each of us, each of you, makes some sense out of all of this will differ from person to person. Some have faith and some have none. Some see meaning and purpose in this life and others believe that there is no more to this life than what you can see with your eyes and comprehend with your mind. Whatever beliefs you hold, it is clear that we need a philosophy of life which is compassionate and generous and which helps us to walk on this fragile earth amongst frail and vulnerable humanity with kindness and forgiveness.

Christians believe that every human being is first and foremost a loved child of God. And we hold that we are made to love and to be loved – by God and by one another. The reading that Katie and Simon chose for this service speaks of that fatherly love. It's not a passage to be taken literally, of houses containing rooms, but rather to see that Jesus paints a picture of a final destination for us which is more than a state of nothingness but rather a condition of being that is *personal, unique* to each individual in which love

continues to reign because the centre of the universe is the true essence of love.

Well, that's as maybe! What is clear from the reason we are all here and from even a cursory glance at the state of our world is that we have to choose whether selfishness, cruelty and loneliness will prevail in our world or if we can find a way to live with our differences and to wage an ongoing revolution of loving kindness so that we may yet find a way to create a better world than the one we currently seem to be creating.

I think Lucy lived that life of loving kindness but perhaps omitted to find a way to let others shower her with the love that she needed when things got too much. But Lucy has left a gift for us all – it is to live that same fun and generous way that she lived so spectacularly until the day it all ended. And the best legacy to honour Lucy's memory would be for each us to find a way to capture and share that as powerfully as each of us can muster in our own lives.

But please, however you go about it, however you express your life, please do not doubt that you are loved and that life is always worth living. At the very least you are a child of a loving family and or possibly or, cherished by loving friends: and no one wants to lose you! And perhaps even more than this, you are also a loved child of God who desires your very best in this life and you are never alone and never without hope. Please all look after each other and look after yourself. May God bless you!

*And now to him who is able to keep us from falling,
and lift us from the dark valley of despair
to the bright mountain of hope,
from the midnight of desperation
to the daybreak of joy;
To him be power and authority, for ever and ever. Amen.*