

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 14**

**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020**

**‘Virtually Church but with some way to go...’**

## **Welcome**

Welcome to this midweek edition of Cutting Edge Camelot.

Last week I looked at some of the issues which readers had raised in response to the question of how God is working in our lives in this time of the coronavirus emergency.

In following up these issues we will for this and the next two midweek editions be exploring how faith, hope and love can grow in a time of crisis.

Today I look at faith in a time of crisis taking as my starting point Jesus’ cry from the Cross, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’

Several readers have mentioned they are responding to Anna’s challenge of reading the Bible and especially new and unfamiliar parts of it. This is interesting because as part of today’s reflection I look at the way knowledge of the Bible can provide us with strength and a different perspective particularly in a time of crisis.

## Scripture Passages

*From Psalm 22*

*v.1-10*

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;

and by night, but find no rest.

Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.

To you they cried, and were saved;

in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

But I am a worm, and not human;

scorned by others, and despised by the people.

All who see me mock at me;

they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;

“Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver –

let him rescue the one in whom he delights!”

Yet it was you who took me from the womb;

you kept me safe on my mother’s breast.

On you I was cast from my birth,

and since my mother bore me you have been my God.

*v.21-25*

Save me from the mouth of the lion!

From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.

I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;

in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:

You who fear the LORD, praise him!

All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;

stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted;

he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.

From you comes my praise in the great congregation;

my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

*Matthew 27: 45-46 (compare Mark 15: 33-34)*

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

## **Reflection** - *Faith in a time of crisis*

‘Where is God in all of this?’ It’s a question that has been raised many times in recent weeks as we witness all the different aspects of this pandemic unfold before us. It may even be a question that we ourselves have voiced, either in private or in public.

But would Jesus ever have asked this question? Or was His faith simply too ‘strong’?

In the gospels of Mark and Matthew we find recorded for us Jesus’ agonised cry,

‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’

We will never be able to plumb the inexhaustible depths of the meaning of this cry. However, at a very simple and natural level it is an expression both of anguish and of profound questioning of God. And this is not the only occasion on which we hear this note during the course of the Passion Narrative. In the Garden of Gethsemane, we are told that Jesus is deeply grieved and agitated and in prayer He questions whether the suffering that He is about to undergo really is God’s will.

And yet this cry from the Cross is not just an anguished cry, it is a quotation from Scripture. It is the beginning of Psalm 22. And in the first ten verses of this Psalm there is a kind of seesaw movement. It begins with this agonised questioning of God but it then moves on to remind us of God’s trustworthiness as shown through the way He has acted in the past. But then we return to a graphic description of the suffering of the present. Yet this in turn is followed by a reminder of how God cares for and protects life right from its very outset.

The second extract from Psalm 22 is drawn from its concluding phase. Time has now moved on. Rescue has indeed arrived from God just as He promised. And this rescue is now to be celebrated in words of thanksgiving and praise.

So this psalm knits together a response to God in past, present and future. Yes, the present circumstances are desperate and overwhelming. And yet the present is not the only reality that matters. We need to hold the present within the context both of what God has done in the past and of what God will do in the future.

So was the whole movement of Psalm 22 in Jesus' mind as He quoted this single verse in this time of crisis? It is a matter of interpretation, but we need to remember how firmly and deeply grounded in scripture Jesus was. Jesus did not know scripture simply in terms of isolated verses. Rather His understanding was grounded in a knowledge of the whole of scripture and its central message of the need to love and trust in God.

So in a previous time of crisis the devil quotes two verses from Psalm 91 to try to tempt Jesus to throw Himself down from the temple. Jesus counters this by drawing on another Old Testament book, Deuteronomy, which speaks of the need for wholehearted trust in God.

So what is faith in a time of crisis and what can we learn from Jesus? First of all, we do need to begin by acknowledging the reality of what is happening, its darkness and bewilderment. But if we are not to be overwhelmed by this we need at the same time also to hold on to a wider perspective in which we remember how God has acted in our lives in the past and in which we trust in what God will do in our lives in the future. And here we can be helped and challenged by Jesus to develop our own knowledge and understanding of scripture.

But perhaps there is one further lesson for us, one which relates to the nature of prayer. So often we feel the need to be strong in a crisis and perhaps we do need to be strong for the sake of other people. But do we need to be 'strong' in relation to God when we pray or might it be much better simply to be honest and to start where we actually are as opposed to where we might like to be?

Many of us find prayer in a time of crisis very difficult and we may even find that our normal patterns of prayer just break down. We may feel we have nothing to say to God or that we have no idea of what we might want to say. We may feel hurt, angry and confused. And yet to bring all of this in honesty before God is in itself a form of prayer. For if Jesus asked in prayer where God was at His time of supreme crisis so can we.

*Tristram*

### **Points for Prayers**

- Thanksgiving for and celebration of Jesus' resurrection
- Thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers
- Need for further largescale testing and PPE equipment
- Prayers for wisdom in government decisions particularly regarding the future of the lockdown
- Funerals needing to take place under new restrictions with only family mourners
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and those assisting in collecting and taking them to the foodbanks.

### **Updates**

- The May Excalibur is now online at [www.camelotparishes.co.uk](http://www.camelotparishes.co.uk) and can be downloaded from the homepage.
- Parishes Office now closed. Please contact Rob via email ([office@camelotparishes.org.uk](mailto:office@camelotparishes.org.uk)) or on 01749 850934.

*Growing as a worshipper, a servant and a family*

*We pray that 'we might live in love,  
as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us' (Ephesians 5:2)*