

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 16

Wednesday 29th April 2020

'Virtually Church but with some way to go...'

Welcome

Welcome to this midweek edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. Anna in her reflection looks at the theme of 'Hope in a time of crisis'. I have also received some helpful comments and suggestions from readers which I have set out below.

Some readers' comments

Several readers have commented on how much they have missed singing congregational hymns together. Although we cannot replicate in these current circumstances, I have been prompted to include in future Sunday editions a suggested hymn which might accompany the reading and reflection. There are some excellent sung hymns on Youtube so that, even if we cannot be together when we sing, we may at least know that we can all sing from the same hymn sheet (or website address as the case may be)!

On slightly the same lines please see later in this edition details of a new initiative launched by the Archbishop of Canterbury concerning a telephone service in which you can listen to some well-known hymns. This may be particularly helpful to pass on to people who do not have an internet connection.

Other comments concern how relevant and appropriate the Collects are. Last Sunday Anna linked the Collect for the Day to her reflection.

Another reader finds the words of the Collects for peace and grace as said at Morning Prayer that we may be defended in 'all assaults of our enemies' and that 'all our doings may be ordered by thy governance' very helpful when thinking about how to respond to this coronavirus emergency.

He sees a need to ask where the Holy Spirit might be working in practical terms both in enabling the practical supply of goods as well as sustaining national and global management systems. However, alongside recognising God's workings we need to exercise our own responsible free will so that we are indeed defended from 'all assaults of our enemies'. And in keeping with the spirit of the Emmaus road narrative we need to be alert to God's messages when we are about our daily business. All of this is very different from looking for people to blame which sadly can at this time become a preoccupation.

Scripture Passages

Romans 5.1-5

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Hebrews 6.13-20

When God made a promise to Abraham, because he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, "I will surely bless you and multiply you." ¹⁵And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. ¹⁶Human beings, of course, swear by someone greater than

themselves, and an oath given as confirmation puts an end to all dispute. ¹⁷In the same way, when God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it by an oath, ¹⁸so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. ¹⁹We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, ²⁰where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Reflection

Hope in a time of crisis

I wonder what you think of when you hear the word ‘hope’? Perhaps you’d like to take a moment and reflect on what words or images come to mind.

If you look up ‘hope’ in the dictionary, you will find it is defined as ‘to want something to happen or to be true, and usually have a good reason to think that it might’ – like the child who hopes for a puppy for their birthday, and becomes even more hopeful when they spot a packet of puppy food at the back of a cupboard! Or the person who hopes they get offered the job they were interviewed for, when they know they performed well at interview.

In both our Bible passages, hope is found to grow and strengthen in response to challenges. In the passage from Romans, Paul confidently asserts that we know that “suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope”. Hope is not seen as resulting from things being easy, but the exact opposite. It is as we face suffering and are forced to endure it that our character develops and we become more hopeful; more filled with an expectation and desire for what is to come; more filled with trust in God.

Endurance is also mentioned in our reading from Hebrews: “Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise”. Despite the fact that Abraham and Sarah were too old to have children, Abraham continued to have hope that God would keep his promise. He continued to trust in God. And just as Abraham continued to hope for God’s promise to be fulfilled, we are “strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us” and to trust that God will keep his promise to us too. And what is this promise? It is the same promise that God made to Abraham: that God will bless us. And as we read in Revelation 21: “God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away”. We can have hope in this promise.

Through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, we have a relationship with God, who promises to bless us: “we have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul”. Tom Wright explains this image of an anchor beautifully:

“We are attached to [Jesus] as though by a great metal cable. He is there, in the very presence of God, like an anchor. And as long as we don’t let go of the cable, we are anchored to the presence of God; all the winds, tides, and storms that may come can’t shift us.”

(Tom Wright, *Hebrews for Everyone*, page 66).



We may well feel that we are enduring high winds, surging tides and dreadful storms at the moment, personally, nationally or even globally as we live through this pandemic, but we can be confident that God’s love is sure and steadfast. We can have hope. We can trust in God, and we can trust that the high winds, strong tides and storms will pass, but God will remain sure and steadfast. In a time of crisis, we may see even more clearly and know even

more deeply how faithful God is, and our hope in him and all that he has promised will deepen.

In reflecting on the theme of hope, I've been thinking of Shakespeare's Sonnet 116, the most famous line of which is probably, "love is not love which alters when alteration finds". And I've been thinking that it would be just as true to replace the word 'love' with 'hope':

Hope is not hope

Which alters when it alteration finds,

Or bends with the remover to remove.

O no! it is an ever-fixed mark

That looks on tempests and is never shaken.

A 'tempest' is a violent, windy storm, but as we have read in Hebrews, our hope in God is "a sure and steadfast anchor" that will hold fast in even the most violent of storms.

So, in this time of crisis, we can continue to have hope in the God who is with us even in the midst of the storms of life, like an anchor of the soul.

Anna

Points for Prayers

- Thanksgiving for and celebration of Jesus' resurrection
- Thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers
- Need for further largescale testing
- 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. Ron is taking a funeral on Monday week, 11th May.
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Church of England Daily Hopeline

The Archbishop of Canterbury has launched a new telephone service, 'Daily Hopeline'. If you ring the free number 0800 804 8044 you can hear a recorded message and can also listen to well-known hymns along with prayers and a reflection based on a hymn.

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)*