

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 4

Wednesday 1st April 2020

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

Welcome

Thank you to all readers who responded to Sunday’s question about how God is working in their lives since the Coronavirus emergency. I am drawing these answers together and will publish a summary of the points which have emerged in the edition of Cutting Edge Camelot to be published in the Wednesday after Easter. Meanwhile do keep these contributions coming in. They have been very encouraging.

Scripture Passage

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry.

He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.”

Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

“Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.”

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them.

Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.”

I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD.”

Reflection

Ezekiel 37: 1 - 14

Here we all are, under virtual house arrest, and nobody is telling us how long it will all last. So I guess you’re wondering when normal life might resume, and what does the Book of Ezekiel have to do with it?

This bit of Ezekiel isn’t about what you think it is. It is 586BC. The Jews had been defeated, and all the educated ones had been taken to Babylon, in exile. Their kings and leaders had been killed, there was no cultural life, no worship in the Temple, and the land was being run by what we might call a skeleton staff. Essential services, and that’s it. And coming across the site of a battle, where the unburied bones of warriors still littered the valley, Ezekiel wonders, *can these dry bones live? Can the nation be invigorated?* We might ask the same thing. Shops shut, churches locked, even dropping in for a coffee with your neighbours, and to cap it all, *the pubs are shut!* Can we turn this around? Is there a way out of this situation to a more orderly society? Ezekiel had his answer. *With the power of God, yes.* You might not know, but the same word in Hebrew means breath, wind, and spirit. *Ruach.* (Don’t try saying it out loud- people will think it’s a cough.) So Ezekiel is granted a vision. There’s a sound like the wind, God breathes his Spirit into the dry bones, and there is a rattling sound,

and the toe bone's connected to the foot bone, the foot bone's connected to the ankle bone...
now hear the word of the Lord!

This promise is about national resurrection, and the inner renewal of the community. It will happen. We'll get through this epidemic. And remember, here in Somerset, all the restrictions aren't down to the virus, but the *fear* of the virus. There's a difference. And we need to remember that one aspect of resurrection is something we don't have to wait for until we die. Resurrection happens here and now in the inner rebirth of individuals and communities, when we allow the Holy Spirit to move among us.

Some people might take the promise of resurrection literally. When I say, in the Creed, that "I believe in the resurrection of the body", I personally don't envisage this body I travel around in coming back to life. I mean, I believe I will be individual, and recognisable, not just a disembodied floaty essence. I believe I will be embodied.

There are a few examples in the Bible of people being raised from death. Not many, but enough to open our eyes to the possibility. Elisha and the widow's son. The daughter of Jairus. The widow's son at Nain. Lazarus. Tabitha. Euticus (the chap who fell asleep on the window sill while Paul was preaching, and fell off). I might have forgotten some, but that's all I can think of right now. They were demonstrations, really. Jesus wanted us to understand that we can begin to experience heaven here and now, if we trust him.

But this reading comes in Passiontide, when we're thinking about the death of Jesus, to remind us that death leads to new life. Lent is actually from the Old English word for spring. Spring is full of signs of new life and growth after winter's death; young animals and birds, the fresh growth of the plants. A preacher once told his congregation, *every blade of grass is a sermon*. Next day, a parishioner saw him mowing his lawn. *That's right, Vicar, he said. Keep your sermons short!*

Points for Prayers

- Funerals needing to take place under new restrictions with only family mourners
- Couples whose weddings have been postponed
- Finding new and creative ways to celebrate Easter in the light of the current restrictions
- Those wishing to return to this country from abroad
- Those suffering from anxiety as a result of self-isolation
- Wisdom and divine guidance for governments of this country and all across the world.

Why not try?

- Asking yourself how you have seen God at work in your spiritual life since the emergency e.g. perhaps greater trust in God?
- On Sundays lighting a candle near dusk and placing it in your window as a symbol of Christ the light of the world.
- Keeping a journal, spending time in silence with God or reading a new or unfamiliar book of the Bible.

Updates

- Churches now closed following Prime Minister's announcement on Monday. No weddings and only emergency baptisms (child's life in danger) at home or in hospital. Funerals restricted to immediate family at graveside or crematoria (subject to local crematoria rules). Further details on Church of England website.
- Current Excalibur gives details of network of community volunteers now in action across the parishes.
- Parishes Office now closed. Please contact Rob via email (office@camelotparishes.org.uk) or on 01749 850934.

An inclusive Communion celebrated on behalf of the benefice

Ron and Pam will be celebrating Communion regularly in their home each Sunday at 10 am. Please be aware of this because even though no-one can join them they are praying for us all and hope that you will feel included in this act of Communion.

Some streamed resources available online

Here are a selection of some streamed resources available online which you may find helpful:-

- The Royal School of Church Music website provides a Hymn of the Day and Sunday Self-Service with music, readings and prayers.
- The Prayer Book Society has details of online streaming of BCP services.
- Spring Harvest is not being held live this year. However, there is full online coverage of this Christian festival available from 13th to 17th April. Simply go to Youtube and enter in 'Spring Harvest Home'.

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)