

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 18**

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

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

## **Welcome**

Where is love in this time of crisis? And where indeed is God? George reflects below on these questions using as a starting point the selfless love of Ruth and Naomi which is recorded in the Old Testament.

## **Scripture Passage**

*Ruth 1:1-18 (abridged)*

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi. .... Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives: the name of one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, both [sons] also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons or her husband.

Then [Naomi] started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab ... She set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, ‘Go back each of you to your mother’s house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband.’ Then she kissed them and they wept aloud. They said to her, ‘No, we will return with you to your people.’ But Naomi said, ‘Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still

have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? ...' Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

So she said, 'See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.' But Ruth said, 'Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God ...'

When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

## **Reflection**

### *Love in a time of crisis*

The story of Ruth starts with a crisis. Ruth, Orpah and Naomi have all been widowed. Naomi, now living in a foreign land with no man to protect and provide for her, and no relatives nearby, decides to leave Moab and return to Bethlehem. Orpah and Ruth say they will go with her. That will no doubt be a great comfort to Naomi, and they set off. Naomi then realises that it will be far better for Orpah and Ruth to return to their mothers and marry again, this time to Moabite husbands. She urges them to do so. Orpah eventually agrees, but Ruth insists on staying with Naomi, putting herself in the very situation from which Naomi is anxious to escape. At a time of crisis, both Naomi and Ruth act out of selfless love for someone else in ways that are against their own interests.

Covid-19 has brought a time of crisis for all of us in this country, and for people across the world. For some, the crisis has led to disaster: perhaps a death in the family, or redundancy, or their business or professional practice collapsing. For all of us, it is a time of great uncertainty: for how long will the lockdown continue? What will happen when it ends? When will a vaccine be

discovered? Meanwhile, will we, or someone we love, catch the virus? Will we be able to make ends meet? Covid-19 hangs over us like a black cloud.

Some days ago I sent an email to friends in which I said that I thought this black cloud had some bits of silver lining to it. One was the wonderful way in which so many people in our villages have responded to this crisis by offering to help their neighbours - by buying food, collecting prescriptions, or taking parcels to the post, to quote just three ways in which Libby and I have been helped in our self-isolation. It has been done at some inconvenience (but no mention of that, of course). It has been an example of practical, selfless love, like the love shown by Naomi and Ruth and the love shown by the Good Samaritan, if on a smaller scale.

In Old Testament times, Covid-19 would have been seen as a pestilence visited on us by God to make us repent of our sins and turn back to God. If it makes us think seriously about our shared responsibility for the many things that are wrong in our world, and the unChristlike things in our own lives, and resolve to do something about them, that will be a silver lining too. But I don't myself think that the virus has been sent by God to make us repent.

So where is God at this time of crisis, God who is almighty, whose very nature is love (1 John 4.8), and to whom we pray that he will deliver us from evil? The answer is that God is both "out there", our Maker and the Creator of our world, and also "in here", the God who comes to make a home in us (John 14.23). Yes, God does deliver us from evil, more often than we probably realise, but not always. Christ experienced human suffering, made all the more painful by the injustice of it. God doesn't exempt us from it, but suffers it with us, giving us the strength and guidance we need to cope with it. Why we live in a world in which there is so much undeserved suffering we don't know. What we do know is that nothing can separate us from God's love in helping us to come through it.

*George*

## **VE Day Suggestions**

Do look at Big Picnic for Hope as publicised on the website [bigpicnicforhope.com](http://bigpicnicforhope.com). This suggests that we have a picnic at home on VE Day in order to raise monies for the Trussell Trust who support a nationwide network of foodbanks and provide emergency food and support to people locked in poverty.

On VE Day itself I will be circulating some material to help us in our thoughts and prayers. This will include the Last Post and Reveille recorded by a local musician based in Galhampton.

## **Points for Prayers**

- Thanksgiving for and celebration of Jesus' resurrection
- Thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers and those in care homes
- Need for further largescale testing
- Prayers for wisdom in government decisions particularly regarding the future of the lockdown
- Marking VE Day on Friday
- Funerals needing to take place under new restrictions with only family mourners. Ron is taking a funeral on Monday.
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

*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)*