

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 21**

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

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

## **Welcome**

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday. Today we look at the promise of the Holy Spirit and how it makes the love of God real in our hearts. We also see how this love motivated the apostle Paul in his missionary journey to Athens.

## **Scripture Passages**

*John 14: 15-21*

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

## *Acts 17: 22-31*

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

“The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him -- though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’

“Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

### **Reflection**

If I go to a park and meet someone I know from outside my own household I am now ‘all right’. I think. Provided I keep two metres apart. But what happens if another friend comes to the park and I wave to him or her from

afar. The second friend approaches us. Help! Should I have waved or not? Is a social gathering about to begin? What's the polite sign for stay away?

Such questions begin to occupy our minds as we move from the comforting if confining certainties of stay at home etc into a world where detailed and at times confusing decisions need to be made.

How do we sort these decisions out? Do we need lawyers? Hopefully not. Of course we can look at these decisions in a different way. What is God saying? When I pray about something I wish to do is there a sense of peace in my heart or of anxiety and foreboding? How do we love God and love our neighbours as ourselves?

Jesus and His disciples also lived in a world where there were moral and legal codes of bewildering complexity. It is said that the Pharisees had devised a system of no fewer than 613 laws designed to protect people from sinning. And yet into this world Jesus speaks to His disciples and to us with the promise of the Holy Spirit.

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments' Jesus says. In other words knowing what we should or should not do all begins with love. And Jesus promises us the Holy Spirit in the form of 'another Advocate, to be with you forever'. So Jesus' love and also His laws come to us not in the form of an external code but are written on our hearts. This is the fulfilment of what Jeremiah in the Old Testament prophesied, 'I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts' (Jeremiah 31:33).

In our reading from Acts we find Jesus' words and the promise of the Holy Spirit fulfilled in the life of one of His disciples, Paul. One of Jesus' commandments was to go and make disciples of every nation (see Matthew

28:19). And Paul obeying this commandment has gone to Athens to preach the gospel to those from a very different culture to his own.

But Paul's motivation is not just that he wants to do what Jesus has told him to do. For at the heart of his actions lies love, a love which he himself has received through responding to Jesus' great love for him.

And we find Paul's love demonstrated first of all in the way he respects the culture and upbringing of the people to whom he speaks. Rather than just writing off everything they knew, he spends time immersing himself in their surroundings. He goes round the city of Athens observantly taking in everything. He notices in particular an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' He reads their poets who speak about us being God's offspring.

But while Paul did indeed affirm what the Athenians knew he was also greatly concerned about what they did not know. There is a poignancy in the wording of the statue to an unknown god. Who is God and how might we find God? It is a question which many people are asking now as much as then. According to all reports, the pandemic has sparked off a renewed interest in faith and in prayer.

Paul uses a graphic image of people who search for God 'groping' around like someone who is blind or in the dark, desperately looking for some sign of the person whom they are seeking. Jesus also uses a striking image to describe our need for God. He assures His disciples that He will not leave them spiritually orphaned, without a parent.

So what does love do? If we found someone groping in the dark and we knew where they could find light would we not tell them where that light was? And

if we met someone who had lost his or her parent and we knew that this parent was in fact alive and could be found would we not say so?

For it is the motivation of love living in Paul's heart through the Holy Spirit which inspires him to give God's message to this people of a very different country and culture. And central to this message is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ which we particularly celebrate in this Easter season.

We may think that we have neither the gifts nor the opportunities that Paul had. We may feel shut in and confined by the restrictions of lockdown. We may lack confidence in our ability to explain the Christian message to others. But for all that the gift of the Holy Spirit has been promised to all disciples of Jesus not just remarkable people like Paul. And love is central to this gift. So what can we do in love right here and now? It may be something as simple as praying for someone who is on our heart or making a telephone call. For the truth is that no matter what our circumstances there is always something that we can do in love and the Holy Spirit will help us find what that something is.

*Tristram*

### **Why not try?**

- The Resurrection is central to our faith. But in a scientific age can we be confident of this message? This challenge is nothing new. Even some people who listened to Paul's message in Athens scoffed when he started to mention the Resurrection. So we may find it helpful to weigh up the arguments and evidence for the Resurrection. One book that I have found helpful is by Frank Morison entitled 'Who moved the stone?'. The author had set out to disprove the Resurrection but as he researched his subject further he completely changed his mind.

## **Hymn Suggestion**

One hymn which celebrates God's love in our hearts is 'A new commandment I give unto you'. Another which emphasises mission is 'I the lord of sea and sky'. Both can be found on YouTube if you type in the titles.

## **Points for Prayers**

- Thanksgiving for Jesus' resurrection and the promise of the Holy Spirit filling us with the love of Jesus
- Thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers and those in care homes
- Those suffering from coronavirus in hospitals, care homes and at home
- Need for further largescale testing
- Prayers for wisdom in implementing the 'roadmap' outlined for the lifting of the lockdown
- Funerals needing to take place under new restrictions with only family mourners
- Prayers for those affected economically by the lockdown, for businesses and those who have become unemployed
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

## **Diocesan weekly livestreamed services and reflections**

Bishop Peter and Bishop Ruth will be livestreaming a mid-week Eucharist each week and offering recorded reflections each Sunday.

For further details please see the Diocesan website.

## **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.

## **Premier Radio**

Available from Premier Radio (DAB radio and channel 725 via Freeview TV).

Sunday morning of sacred music, songs and teaching etc, 7.00am-12.00 noon includes 'Hearts and Hymns' by Pam Rhodes, 8.00 to 10.00am with great variety of hymns and accompanying information.

Bible studies on weekday mornings.

## **Some other streamed resources**

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.

## **An inclusive Communion celebrated on behalf of the benefice**

Ron and Pam will be celebrating Communion regularly in their home each Sunday at 10.00am. 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.

*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)