

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 29

Sunday 14th June 2020

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot on this first Sunday after Trinity. We continue our encouragement to a renewed prayer life as Ron looks at the parable about persistence in prayer which follows Luke’s version of the Lord’s Prayer.

Scripture Passage

Luke 11: 1-13

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”

He said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.”

And he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.’

“And he answers from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’

“I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

“So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

“Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Reflection

When his disciples asked him to teach them to pray like John taught his disciples, Jesus really didn't want to. John the Baptist's message had been of repentance, in line with the Old Testament prophets. John was telling people to flee the wrath to come. And Jesus didn't want to be associated with that sort of religion. How John taught his disciples to pray, we don't know, but we find Jesus giving his disciples the least prayer he can get away with.

We've taken the Lord's Prayer, and we've tried to enlarge it and expand it, and make it a model for all prayer, but the fact remains that the Lord's Prayer is pretty basic. Due praise to God. The bare necessities for our daily life. And by far the longest sentence is the heart of Christian life - forgiveness of sin accepted and passed on. Jesus actually uses the words *debt* and *debtor* - because it's a good analogy. We forgive sins like writing off debts. If somebody can't pay us, we might just as well write it off. God forgives us because he might as well. We can't make up to him what we've

offended him. Throwing us into hell won't make him any happier. So we're forgiven. So forgive.

And don't let us be tempted. Not so much tempted to sin, because I pray this several times a day, and I'm still tempted to sin. Praying that we won't be tempted to sin would be asking for too much. The temptation we pray not to be led into is the temptation to think we've got it made, and we can manage without God. The temptation to think that we can make our own lives better, or longer, rather than trust in Jesus - not in his life, but in his death.

For Jesus, *teach us to pray* was like asking *teach us to breathe*. Apart from the basics, there is no doing it better, or more thoroughly.

Which leads Luke on to the story of a man knocking up his neighbour in the small hours to cadge a loaf of bread. Now what I say about parables is that there's someone in there in the role of God, and the God character in this story is quite plainly asleep. And asleep, for us, is the nearest we get to being dead - as in *The Big Sleep*. (Good movie - it's got Humphrey Bogart in it.) So the God we're appealing to is Jesus in his crucifixion and his death. And this isn't me horsing around with the scripture. Three times in this little story, the word used for *get up, rise* is the same Greek word used for Jesus rising from the dead. And note, in passing, that Jesus didn't rise from the dead because anyone asked him very reasonably if he would. He rose because he could, and he rose so he could raise us, too.

In the parable, there are all sorts of reasons for the man asking for bread - all very reasonable - the bread isn't for him, it's for someone who's just turned up, which is why he's asking at such a bad time, and it was all unexpected. And there are good reasons why the friend won't help. The door is locked, the kids are here in bed with me, I can't get up.

And yet. The man gets his bread. Not because he is his friend, but because of his shamelessness in asking. His bare-faced admission that this is his only hope. What Jesus wants from us is to trust just in his death, and to realise that there is nothing we can do, or come to think of it, nothing we have to do, nothing we can offer, bring, or bribe, just accept.

Most of us could tell stories about prayers not being answered. *Ask, seek, knock*. That last bit of the passage sounds like a cast iron assurance that God will give us whatever we ask for. It's often held up as an example of how we need to be persistent in our prayers. Persevere! And so we fall into the trap of thinking we didn't persevere enough. And yet we all know people who asked till they were hoarse, sought until they were asleep on their feet and knocked till their knuckles bled, and somebody didn't get better, their wife didn't come back to them and they weren't offered a job.

So is this me saying prayer doesn't work, or God doesn't keep his promises? No. Trust me. If you take this saying at face value, you don't need me to point out its shortcomings. If you take this saying as a way of conning God into giving us whatever we want, making our lives more comfortable, better, longer, it doesn't work, does it? But as an invitation- a command - to bring our deaths to his death and find our resurrection in his, it's solid gold.

So maybe we should stop thinking of prayer as asking God for anything, but simply as keeping in touch - reminding ourselves of his presence with us. We don't pray to get some reasonable request, or on behalf of someone else, but to celebrate the most wonderful thing that God has already done, by Jesus and in Jesus. We have a friend in our death - if we never meet him anywhere else in all our lives, we'll surely meet him there.

We have a God who has promised in Jesus always to be there for us, and there with us. Maybe when our lives go off the road, we find ourselves wheels up in the ditch, we might wish for a God who will haul us out like a crane, and set us back on the road. What we actually have is a God who

will speak to us through the pain of the cross, sit with us on the verge, and agree with us that life is a bitch. This is the reality that we live with, and can observe; that our prayers seem to be unanswered. But there is another reality, that we can only take on trust; that God is dead in Jesus, and alive in Jesus, and present with us in his Holy Spirit. That's what he has promised us, underlined six times. And so we know not to ask, but to trust. We take the Lord's Prayer as our model for prayer, but I can think of another. Remember the wedding at Cana, when they ran out of wine? Mary didn't ask Jesus for anything, she didn't plead or cajole, and she didn't repeat herself. All she said was, *they have no wine*. And left him to do something, or nothing, to shrug it off, or to leap into action. And then she said to the staff, *do whatever he tells you*. Take that as a model. Just tell Jesus whatever concerns you. And then do whatever he says.

Ron

Hymn Suggestion

The words of Luke's gospel, Ask and it shall be given unto you are taken up in the song 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God'. A well-known hymn which celebrates the faithfulness of God is 'Great is thy faithfulness'.

Points for Prayers

- For the spiritual growth and discipleship of ourselves and others as we respond to the good news of Jesus Christ
- 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
- Response to death of George Floyd

- Prayers for parents, teachers, governors and children of North Cadbury Church of England Primary School as the school is partially reopened, for the school to be a place of both joy and safety
- 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.

Update on North Cadbury Church of England Primary School

In accordance with government guidelines selected classes have returned to North Cadbury Church of England Primary School from the beginning of this week until the summer holidays in July.

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)