

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 30

Wednesday 17th June 2020

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

Welcome

Welcome to this midweek edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. We begin our series on Biblical characters who suffered imprisonment by looking at Joseph in the Old Testament. You can read the whole story of Joseph in the book of Genesis from ch.37 to ch.50. You can use any version but if you have access to the New Jerusalem Bible you may find this particularly vivid.

A small incident from the close of the Joseph narrative appears below. George then reflects on the transformation which God worked in Joseph's life through his imprisonment and other times of suffering.

Scripture Passage

Genesis 50: 15-21

Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?"

So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father."

Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, “We are here as your slaves.”

But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.” In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Reflection

Joseph’s story starts with him aged 17, Jacob's favourite son, spoilt, big-headed, tactless, hated by his elder brothers. Thirteen years later, aged 30, he is governing Egypt, second in importance only to Pharaoh.

In between, his brothers throw him into a pit. He is rescued and sold as a slave to Potiphar, an Egyptian official who promotes him to be in charge of his household. Potiphar’s wife repeatedly tries to seduce him. Furious at being refused, she falsely accuses him of attempted rape and he is thrown into prison. There, he is put in charge of two new prisoners, Pharaoh’s cupbearer and baker, and interprets the dreams they have had (Egyptians believed that dreams foretold the future). The cupbearer will be restored to his former position. The baker will be hanged. So it proves.

Joseph asks the cupbearer to intercede with Pharaoh for him; but the cupbearer forgets him. Two years pass. Then Pharaoh has dreams which no one can interpret. The cupbearer remembers Joseph, who is sent for. The dreams, he says, foretell seven years of good harvests, followed by seven years of famine. Pharaoh should appoint someone to govern the country who will organise provision against the famine.

Pharaoh appoints Joseph, who governs wisely. The famine comes. After two years, Jacob is forced to send his sons down to Egypt to buy grain. To cut a

long and dramatic story short, they meet Joseph and the whole family eventually settles in Egypt. When Jacob dies, Joseph's brothers fear that Joseph will take his revenge on them. Instead, Joseph sees God's hand in what has happened and forgives them.

Joseph is a prisoner from the moment he is thrown into the pit, although only later is he actually in prison. How does he react? In a word, positively. We are left to imagine the turmoil of his thoughts and emotions, his agonised prayers, early hopes that his father will rescue him, later hopes of a royal pardon obtained through the cupbearer, all fading away. But he makes the best of the situation he is in, serving others to the best of his ability, never despairing. Potiphar is so impressed that he puts Joseph in charge of his household and all his possessions. The chief gaoler reacts in similar fashion. The writer of Genesis emphasises that God is with Joseph throughout this time, making everything Joseph does successful. Joseph seems conscious of this, for he tells Potiphar's wife that to sleep with her would be wicked - a betrayal of Potiphar's trust and a sin against God.

Joseph learns about responsibility for both people and things, and that being trusted calls for loyalty in return. His misfortunes transform him from an unusually tiresome teenager into a truly 'big' man, fit to rule over others, ready to forgive where a lesser man might have wanted revenge. He becomes the right man at the right time in the right place, through whom God saves the Egyptian people and Jacob's family from starvation, and completes a chapter of salvation history.

God had a purpose for Joseph, as he does for each of us. Joseph's positive attitude and his loyalty helped God to bring good, both for Joseph and for many others, out of the evil and misfortune from which Joseph had suffered.

George

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
- 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.

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)