

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 47

Sunday 16th August 2020

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday's edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. Ron reflects below on a challenging passage from Matthew's gospel which is the set reading for this Sunday.

Scripture Passage

Matthew 15: 21-28

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon."

But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me."

He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Reflection

We have no real idea what it was like to be Jesus. We get tiny glimpses, like when the woman with a hemorrhage touched his clothes, and he felt power going from him- he knew when he was used, as it were. We believe he was fully human, because only a human could die for the sins of humanity. He wept when a friend died, he got hungry and thirsty, and angry, and we can identify with that. But he was also God incarnate, and we don't know how he came to know that, or what it felt like. I've said before, when he was a baby, he didn't even know he was a baby, but as he grew, he came to see first, that he had a wonderful relationship with God his Father, but also, crucially, at some point he came to realise that *nobody else did*. We get glimpses of the process - the voice of God speaking at his baptism, and his mother must have told him about the circumstances of his birth - the gospel writers couldn't have got that from anyone else. So hold on to the picture of Jesus learning, and adapting, taking on board who he was, until he comes to understand that he is the unique Son of God. We're not told how he came to realise and understand what his mission on earth was, and what that was going to involve - that is, dying.

A few chapters before this Gospel, Jesus told his disciples, as he sent them out to share his message, "Don't go to any gentile territory, or any Samaritan towns. Instead, you are to go to those lost sheep, the people of Israel." That suggests that Jesus saw his ministry as local. So now, in our Gospel for today, Jesus, well into his ministry, needed time out. A holiday. So he headed North, to what's now Syria - still under Roman control, but crucially, not part of Israel or Judea - the land of God's Chosen People. But here, his reputation had gone before him. Somehow, word had got around that this was Jesus - *the* Jesus, who could heal. And a woman whose daughter had some mental affliction - possessed by a demon, as they put it

then, came pleading for his help.

Jesus answered her that he was sent to the people of Israel, his own people. I believe we can take this at face value. He wasn't testing her, or challenging her, simply pointing out that he wasn't there for her, because she wasn't Jewish.

She wasn't put off. She fell at his feet, pleading. Now bear in mind that a lot of Jewish people despised the gentiles, that's anyone who isn't Jewish, and referred to them as dogs. An actual racist slur. "It isn't right," said Jesus, "to throw the children's food to the dogs." People have tried to wrap this up, suggesting Jesus used a friendlier word - puppies, maybe, or doggies, or that he was smiling when he said it because he knew all along that he was going to help her. They're trying to make Jesus fit into their image, Gentle Jesus. Jesus is *nice*. But none of this is in the text. This is Jesus, up to this point, really believing that his mission and ministry were limited by geography and race.

Now we think of Jesus as the teacher. Here we see Jesus learning something. The woman replied, famously, "True, sir, but the dogs eat the leftovers that fall from the master's table". Incredibly, this Canaanite woman had a bigger vision of Jesus' ministry than he did, and Jesus, seeing her faith, and maybe suddenly appreciating that he was there for everyone, healed her daughter as requested.

Jesus' mission was different after this. "When I am lifted up," he said, "I will draw *all men* to myself." No exclusions here - by men, he meant mankind, all of us, Jews and Gentiles, black and white, even women. And I believe the encounter with the Canaanite woman was the turning point.

Jesus's appreciation of who he was and what his mission in the world was grew and changed as he experienced different situations. And he was always very good at using opportunities that came his way to show God's

glory, and to show God's will in these different situations.

All our plans at the moment have to be provisional - we don't know whether we'll be able to go on holiday, have friends visit, or even carry on meeting like this. So like Jesus, we need to be flexible. Whatever we think we might do is open to change. And maybe our attitudes need to be open to change, too. There's a lot of talk lately about universities no-platforming speakers whose views might not agree with theirs. Students don't want to hear opinions they might find offensive. But that's saying they aren't open to change, or growth. And we have to be. Our faith can't just solidify. God is speaking new truths to us all the while. Every time we read the Bible, we might get a new insight. I have the problem that I don't hear many other people's sermons, which is why Cutting Edge is good. I read what Tristram or Anna or George might say, and I realise there's other ways of looking at things than mine.

Jesus learned that the whole world is his parish, there's no them and us, just us, all in it together. So hang loose, stay flexible, open your mind, and let God make you the person he wants you to be.

Ron

Hymn Suggestion

A hymn which reminds us of our need to come to God, like the Canaanite woman, just as we are is 'Just as I am without one plea'.

Points for Prayers

- For our spiritual growth and discipleship as we respond to the good news of Jesus Christ
- For further services in the Group planned in August (see below)

- 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 and research into and development of a vaccine as soon as this can be achieved
- Our Bishops (please see notice below)
- 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.

Services of public worship in August

Please see the following schedule of services of public worship planned for the rest of August. This does not include all of the monthly services across the Group held pre-lockdown. So if a service in the Group which you regularly attended is not included in the schedule you are of course most welcome to attend any other service within the Group. However, because of the limitations on capacity in the various churches through the need for social distancing it would be appreciated if you could in these circumstances let the relevant churchwarden know in advance of your intention to do this.

Please note that St Michael's Blackford will now reopen at the end of August with an 8.00am Communion service on Sunday 30th August. This is an addition to the previously published schedule of services.

Sunday 16th August

9.30 am, Communion, St Mary's Compton Pauncefoot

11.00 am, Sunday Worship, St Michael's North Cadbury

11.00 am, Communion, St Peter and St Paul, Maperton

Sunday 23rd August

9.30 am, Communion, St Thomas a Becket, South Cadbury

9.30 am, Communion, St John the Baptist, North Cheriton

11.00 am, Communion, St Michael's North Cadbury

11.00 am, Sunday Worship, St Mary's Yarlington

Sunday 30th August

8.00 am, Communion, St Michael's Blackford

6.30 pm, Evening Service (Common Worship), Galhampton

Reopening churches for private prayer

The commencement of a number of services across the Group means that the arrangements for private prayer will now change. The arrangements for August are as follows :-

Sunday morning openings

Sunday 30th August

North Cheriton open from 9.30 am to 10.30 am

Compton Pauncefoot open from 9.30 am to 10.30 am.

Midweek openings

Wednesday afternoons, August 19th & 26th

North Cadbury, open from 2.30 pm to 4.00 pm.

Galhampton

Wednesday afternoons, 4.00 pm to 5.00 pm followed by Celtic Worship led

by Alison at 7.00 pm.

Our Bishops

Bishop Peter is stepping back from his duties for the moment in order to undergo treatment for leukaemia. Please pray for him and his family in this challenging time. Please pray also for Bishop Ruth and the rest of the Bishop's Staff as they take on the oversight of the diocese in his absence.

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 10.00 am 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.

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)