

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 52

Wednesday 16th September 2020

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

Welcome

Welcome to this midweek edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. We resume its publication with a new midweek series on the book of James. Anna begins this series by introducing the book as a whole and then reflecting on the opening section of the book with its challenging theme of the connection between trials and joy.

The Book of James

The book of James is one of the epistles – or letters – found towards the end of the New Testament. The author of the book of James simply refers to himself as ‘James, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ’ and while it is not possible to know for sure, it is believed that the James who wrote this letter was the brother of Jesus. This James was a leader of the Christian community in Jerusalem, and this letter was intended to be read by Christians living in other places, in order to encourage them to stay faithful to God at a time when Christians were being persecuted for their faith. The book of James may only be five chapters long, but it has a lot to say about how to live as a Christian, so we’re going to spend the next few weeks considering what it might mean for us today.

Scripture Passage

James 1.1-18

¹ James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

² My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; ⁴ and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

⁵ If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. ⁶ But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; ^{7, 8} for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

⁹ Let the believer who is lowly boast in being raised up, ¹⁰ and the rich in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field. ¹¹ For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. It is the same way with the rich; in the midst of a busy life, they will wither away.

¹² Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. ¹³ No one, when tempted, should say, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; ¹⁵ then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved.

¹⁷ Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸ In fulfilment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

Reflection

I wonder how many of us can honestly say that whenever we face a trial – or some form of hardship or difficulty – our response is one of joy! But James begins his letter by reminding his fellow Christians that the trials that they are currently facing – which may well have involved severe persecution – can have a wonderful outcome: they can produce endurance, as a result of which these believers will become more fully the people God is calling them to be.

The word translated here as ‘endurance’ is also sometimes translated as ‘patience’, ‘unswerving constancy’ or ‘steadfastness’. If you’ve ever watched some of the epic cycling challenge that is the Tour de France, you’ll have seen an excellent example of what endurance, patience, unswerving constancy and steadfastness look like. Even on the mountain stages where the cyclists are pushed to their absolute limit, they continue to pedal onwards and upwards, often not for their own glory but in order to give one of their team mates the best possible chance of winning that day’s stage. I doubt many of the competitors would say that at those toughest moments they feel much joy, but when you see them celebrate with their team mates afterwards, the joy is unmistakable. Sometimes it is only after we have endured a trial, and practised patience, unswerving constancy and steadfastness, that we are able to reach the point of joyfulness when we see how God has been at work, even at the toughest times.

For many of us, these last few months will have been a trial, and no doubt our ability to endure and to be patient will have at times been challenged, and potentially pushed to the limit. But I wonder if even through these tough times you have recognised moments of joy? Or ways that you have grown and matured? How has God been at work in your life during the trial of the last few months? You might find it helpful to take some time to reflect on these questions – and maybe compare experiences with someone else.

As well as talking about trials, James also speaks about temptations. He makes clear that the temptations that we face don't come from God. God doesn't spend his time working out ways to trick us into doing things that are unhelpful or damaging to ourselves or to others. The emphasis again is on overcoming the temptations that we all inevitably face from time to time. And what is it that we receive when we overcome these temptations? Not a Tour de France-style yellow jersey or trophy, but 'the crown of life', which sounds rather impressive! But what does it mean?

Crowns had a number of different symbolic meanings that James' original readers might have recognised. William Barclay identifies four. First, crowns of flowers were worn at celebrations, such as weddings and feasts, so one thing crowns symbolised was *joy*. Crowns were also worn by kings and those in authority, so crowns also symbolised *royalty*. Thirdly, a crown of laurel leaves was given to winning athletes, so a crown also symbolised *victory*. And finally, a crown was a mark of honour and *dignity*. To paraphrase the words of William Barclay:

The Christian has a *joy* that no other person can have. Life for them is like being for ever at a feast. They have a *royalty* that other people have never realised for, however humble their earthly circumstances, they are the child of God. They have a *victory* which others cannot win, for they meet



life and all its demands in the conquering power of the presence of Jesus Christ. They have a new *dignity*, for they are ever conscious that God thought them worth the life and death of Jesus Christ (from *The Letters of James and Peter*, page 49).

The invitation to receive the crown of life, which is offered to all, is an invitation to a new kind of life. A kind of life that is focused on Jesus, putting him first, rather than other things – such as wealth, which ‘withers’ and ‘perishes’ (verse 11). A kind of life where we recognise that all the good things we receive – ‘every perfect gift’ – comes from God (verse 17). A kind of life where we come to recognise more and more the joy that can be found, even as we face trials. This is the crown of life, the way of life, that is being offered. And we must decide if we are willing to receive it.

Anna

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 this month and particularly for Harvest services
- 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
- The difficult decisions that need to be made as a result of the rise in coronavirus restrictions
- Our Bishops (please see notice below)
- Wedding of Henry and Catriona at St Michael’s North Cadbury on Wednesday 23rd September
- For North Cadbury Church Primary School and Marchant Holliday school in our benefice remembering also Horsington school as they proceed with their new school year

- 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.

The rule of six

Some of us may be concerned that the new restriction on social gatherings to six people ('the rule of six') will impact on or even prevent services of public worship from taking place. Although the detailed Church of England guidance on this subject has yet to be updated it is our understanding that the new rule does not affect services of public worship. Accordingly our plans for forthcoming services remain unaltered and if they do need to change we will of course let you know as soon as possible.

Services of public worship in September

Please see the following schedule of services of public worship planned for the rest of September. 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.

Any further additions to this schedule will be notified as and when they arise.

Sunday 20th September

9.30 am, St Mary's Compton Pauncefoot, Communion

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

11.00 am, St Peter and St Paul Maperton, Harvest Service

6.00 pm, St Mary's Yarlington, Harvest Service

Sunday 27th September

9.30 am, St Thomas a Becket South Cadbury, Communion

9.30 am, St Mary's Compton Pauncefoot, Harvest Service

9.30 am, St Michael's Blackford, Harvest Service

9.30 am, St John the Baptist North Cheriton, Harvest Service

11.00 am, St Michael's North Cadbury, Communion

11.00 am, St Mary's Yarlington, Sunday Worship

6.30 pm, Galhampton, Harvest Service

Reopening churches for private prayer

North Cadbury and Galhampton churches are normally open for private prayer on Wednesday afternoons. North Cadbury is open from 2.30 pm to 4.00 pm and Galhampton from 4.00 pm to 5.00 pm followed by Celtic Worship led by Alison at 7.00 pm. Please note that North Cadbury will not be open on Wednesday 23rd September as there is a wedding on that day.

Online service to remember deaths during the pandemic

In collaboration with Wells Cathedral, the diocese is to offer an online service to remember all those who have died during the Covid pandemic.

Led by Bishop Ruth and the Dean of Wells, families of the bereaved are invited to send in names of those whom they mourn, and candles will be lit and their names are read out.

Bishop Ruth said: "So many people weren't able to attend funerals or grieve properly when their loved ones died in the last few months, because of

restrictions imposed by the pandemic. We hope this service will offer people a chance to come together and mourn their loved ones by name, alongside others who have also been bereaved.”

The service will include music from members of the Music Foundation of Wells Cathedral, and prayers will be said by some of Somerset’s hospital chaplains. There will also be a reflection from someone who survived Covid following weeks in intensive care.

The service will be available to watch on the [Wells Cathedral website](#) and here on the [website](#) of the Diocese of Bath and Wells from Wednesday 30th September.

Those who wish the names of their loved ones to be included should email them to the [Communications](#) team by Monday September 21st.

Update on Bishop Peter

Bishop Peter thanks everyone for all the cards and other expressions of support which he has received. A card was sent to him on behalf of the Camelot Parishes as a whole. He says that he has been lifted on ‘eagle’s wings’ through the love and prayers of others and he thinks that the treatment for leukaemia is going well. He is grateful that potential donors for a bone marrow transplant have been identified and he is preparing for such a transplant later this year. Please continue to 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.

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)*