

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 53

Sunday 20th September 2020

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday's edition of Cutting Edge Camelot.

Scripture Passage

Matthew 20: 1-16

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard.

"When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went.

"When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?'

"They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.'

"He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.'

"When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.'

“When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’

“But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

“So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Reflection

A vicar was driving along a country lane, keeping the speed limit like we all do, when he met a motorcyclist coming the other way, fast. There was a collision, and neither of them survived. Up at the pearly gates, St Peter looked over the shoulder of the vicar, and said to the biker, “Come in, my son” “Hang on,” said the vicar - I was in front of him, and I’ve been a vicar thirty eight years!” “Yes,” said St Peter, “and this lad had only had his bike a month - but he put the fear of God into more people than you did in thirty-eight years.”

If you say something isn’t fair, somebody will say *Show me where it says it has to be fair*. And we can’t - it’s just that feeling we have about the way the world ought to be.

And we want God to be fair, and to an extent he is - we know he doesn’t have favourites, and the rain falls on the unjust as well as the just, but what really gets up our noses is God’s failure to sort out the wicked. All around

us we see right rogues getting away with it, the fat cats getting fatter, the dictators safe behind their security forces, and we cry out to God, to know why he does nothing to sort them out. It's *not fair*.

So. Once upon a time, says Jesus, the owner of a vineyard is looking at his grapes, and looking at the sky, and realises if he doesn't get his harvest in pdq, the rain will come and ruin the lot. So off he goes to the market place where all the day-labourers hang out, waiting for work, and takes on some likely lads, and arranges to pay them a denarius a day. Grape picking begins, but not fast enough. So a few hours in, the owner goes back and hires more pickers - maybe the ones he passed over the first time, but there isn't a lot of choice. The same at noon - the real loafers are still there, and he rounds them up and tells them he'll pay them what's right. But the rainclouds look really threatening now, so come five o'clock, he goes to the market, and tells all the kids hanging out to get to his vineyard, pick grapes, and he'll see them alright.

Not a minute too soon; as the first raindrops fall, the grapes are in, the baskets are full, and the owner is a happy man. He tells his foreman to line up the workers for their pay, starting with the five o'clock kids who have done an hour's half-hearted picking. And blow me down if they don't get a big shiny denarius each. And way down the line, the all-day labourers rub their hands with anticipatory glee. Until the owner gets to them and gives them each a big shiny denarius.

And they begin to grumble. It isn't fair. Admittedly, they got what they agreed for, but here's a whole bunch of other guys getting the same. So one worker gets the short straw to go raise the grievance with the owner.

"Listen, friend," says the owner, and that word "friend" is loaded, and maybe accompanied by a poke in the chest with a finger. "Can't I do what I like with my own money? You've got what you agreed - what's it to you what I give these kids? Now come and have a drink."

God, it seems, in the person of the owner of the vineyard, isn't fair. He's generous, which is better. Unless you have a thing about wanting to see evildoers punished. My problem is, when people ask "Why doesn't God smite the wicked?" is that I'm not so good myself, and if there's any smiting going, I don't want to be on the receiving end. Why would I be happy for God to forgive my sins and not other peoples'?

And this brings us back to the joke at the beginning. The first shall be last, and the last first. Jesus once said, *Woe to you Pharisees! The tax collectors and the prostitutes will get to the Kingdom before you!* The Pharisees were a group who tried their very best to keep the Law, and some were arrogant enough to believe they'd succeeded. They felt entitled. If there was a queue for the heavenly banquet, they would be at the front. But the tax collectors - men like Jesus' friend Matthew, and Zachaeus from Jericho, and the woman caught in adultery who threw herself on Jesus' mercy - these were people who knew they needed God's forgiveness, but didn't think they deserved it. Jesus said that knowing their need would see them through. And we can compare the happiness of the workers who got what they thought they deserved, and the ones who knew very well they didn't deserve it, but still got a shiny silver denarius.

And what about the absolute rascal who sees the error of his ways and repents on his deathbed? Yes, he gets his shiny denarius. The Emperor Constantine, who made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, never actually got himself baptised until he knew he was dying - when he'd fought all his battles and dealt with all his enemies. If we all knew we'd live to be 99, would we live our lives differently? I hope not. I hope we're good, and kind and loving, not because that's what will get us into heaven, but just because it's good and right, and pleases God.

Ron

Hymn Suggestion

A hymn that we are using in one of our services this Sunday is 'Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart'. You may like to look this up on YouTube.

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
- Wedding of Henry and Catriona on Wednesday at St Michael's North Cadbury
- Our Bishops (please see notice below)
- 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 Yarlinton, 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.

Excalibur and the Parish Office

Because of concerns relating to the hand delivery of parish magazines (see official Church of England guidance on this point) an electronic rather than a printed version of Excalibur will be continue to be produced for the time being. This will be available on the website, www.camelotparishes.co.uk, and will include Camelot People giving details of occasional offices in the benefice. The September Excalibur is now available on the website.

The Parish Office is closed although Rob does come in regularly. In his absence please contact Rob via email (office@camelotparishes.org.uk) or on 01749 850934.

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)