

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 59

Sunday 11th October 2020

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday’s edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. Ron reflects below on Jesus’ parable about the wicked tenants.

Scripture Passage

Matthew 21: 33-46

“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country.

“When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way.

“Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’

“But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

“Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.”

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Reflection

There are two ways of exercising power. There is ordinary, right-handed power, and there is left-handed power. Left-handed power is about letting things take their own course, letting things be what they are, and Jesus did it all the time. He didn’t overcome his enemies in any sense we’d understand it at all. He let them kill him. And forgave them while they did it. Even when they said they’d believe in him if he did the proper messianic thing of coming down alive from the cross, he didn’t do it. He just died. And so he overcame everybody’s enemy - death itself.

Notice how Jesus tells this story to the Pharisees. They would have known what he was talking about. But at the end, you notice, Jesus pulls his punch. He doesn’t say what the owner of the vineyard actually did. He asks them, *how do you want this story to end?* And they say, *He’ll come down like a ton of bricks, and he’ll kill them all, and give the vineyard to someone who’ll manage it properly.* It’s a moment before they twig he’s talking about them.

They've got Jesus wrong, because they've got the wrong idea about the Messiah, because really, it's God they've got wrong.

The reason God chose a small, unimportant race of nomads, slaves to a great empire, and called them his special people, was so they could reflect his glory in all the world. This is left-handed power in action. He didn't choose the Egyptians, or the Aztecs or the Chinese or the Persians - none of these historical big hitters. Instead, he chose the Hebrews. The plan was, people would look at them, prosperous and happy, peaceful and blessed, and say what a powerful, wonderful God theirs must be. But that never happened, because Israel never lived up to that.

By Jesus' time, they thought their real business was maintaining the worship of the temple, keeping the small print of the law, keeping themselves separate, special and holy. Any thought of their original mission had gone. They were so busy doing what they were doing, they had forgotten what they were chosen for in the first place. I sometimes think our own churches fall into the same trap. Instead of being a force for real good in the world, showing God as loving, caring, and generous, we've become all tied up with our buildings, our diocesan share, our own politics, so people see *us* as a charity, as if God can't function in the world without financial help. But that's an aside.

There is something strangely wrong about the parable Jesus told. If the tenants had not changed their ways for the servants of the owner, why might they change for his Son? And their plan to murder the Son and get the vineyard for themselves is just stupid. The only way their reasoning could make sense is if they believe the householder is so far away that they could live out the rest of their lives before he could get to them. Or in the case of the Jewish leadership, the day of judgement is so far off it won't happen in their lifetime, so they don't have to take it into account.

But the Pharisees also believed that when God's judgement *did* come, it would be in the same right-handed way they themselves judged. Scores would be evened, enemies would be flattened, and Israel would be carried shoulder high as top nation. God's judgement would be on everyone else, not them. But in any case, they don't associate Jesus with God at all. They were not prepared for an ineffective Messiah whose idea of saving action is to aggravate the representatives of God into killing him. That's how Jesus appeared to them. Not even another of the owner's servants, let alone his Son. They won't trust such a mild Jesus. The messiah they would want is one in their own image, who will deal with *their* enemies, and kick the seats they want kicked.

And Jesus knows what they're thinking, and he doesn't have to say to them, *This is how you are - this story is about you, and the way you've used your position for your own ends.* He uses left-handed power to get them to pronounce the condemnation of themselves on themselves.

The stone the builders rejected, says Jesus, will become the cornerstone of the whole building. You might not think much of me, but it isn't what you think that matters, it's what God thinks. Jesus is going to save everybody, including the Pharisees, precisely through what made him unacceptable to them. His humility, his suffering, his death.

Anyone who falls on this stone, says Jesus, will be broken in pieces; but when it falls on anyone, it will crush him to dust. This is a hard thing to understand. Are we prepared to fall on Jesus, and be broken in pieces, and rebuilt the way he wants us? That's trusting Jesus, letting him make us the people he wants us to be. The alternative is to stand rigid, and stiff, and have his anger fall on us. We need to turn to him, and trust in his mercy, rather than wait on his judgement.

Ron

Hymn Suggestion

A hymn which reminds us that Jesus is the cornerstone of the church is 'The Church's one foundation'.

Points for Prayers

- For our spiritual growth and discipleship and that we might build our lives on the foundation of Jesus Christ
- For further services in the Group this month and particularly for Harvest services
- For Anna's ordination and ministry as priest (please 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
- Preparations to avert or minimise a second wave of coronavirus
- 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.

Forthcoming services of public worship

Please see the following schedule of forthcoming services of public worship. 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 11th October

9.30 am, Galhampton, Communion

9.30 am, St John the Baptist North Cheriton, Communion (Anna to preside)

9.30 am, St Michael's Blackford, Matins

11.00 am, St Michael's North Cadbury, Harvest Service

11.00 am, St Nicholas Holton, Harvest Service

Sunday 18th October

9.30 am, St Mary's Compton Pauncefoot, Communion (Anna will preside)

11.00 am, St Peter and St Paul Maperton, Communion (Anna will preside)

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

6.30 pm, St Mary's Yarlington, Evensong

Sunday 25th October (clocks go back)

8.00 am, St Michael's Blackford, Communion (Anna will preside)

9.30 am, St John the Baptist North Cheriton, Communion

9.30 am, St Mary's Compton Pauncefoot, Matins

11.00 am, St Michael's North Cadbury, Communion (Anna will preside)

11.00 am, St Mary's Yarlington, Sunday Worship

11.00 am, St Thomas a Becket South Cadbury, Harvest Service

3.00 pm, St Nicholas Bratton Seymour, Harvest Service

4.00 pm, Galhampton, Evening Service

St Nicholas Bratton Seymour

A Risk Assessment for St Nicholas Bratton Seymour has now been completed and the first service to be held there following lockdown will be the Harvest Service on 25th October at 3.00 pm. This means that all the Camelot churches will then have returned to public worship following lockdown.

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.

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 October 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.

Anna's ordination as priest

Congratulations to our curate Anna who was ordained as priest on Tuesday 29th September at St Cuthbert's Wells by Bishop Ruth.

Anna presided at Communion for the first time at 11.00 am on Sunday 4th October at St Michael's North Cadbury. We know that there will be others of you who will wish to support Anna in her new role. So, the rota will enable

Anna to preside at Communion in as many of the Camelot churches as possible in the month following her priesting.

Here is a message and photograph from Anna concerning her ordination.

A message from Anna

Thank you so much to everyone who sent me good wishes, and let me know they were thinking of me and praying for me on Tuesday evening. It may have been a small service, but it was very special and full of joy.

Here is a photo of Tristram and I taken after the service.



I very much look forward to seeing many of you around the benefice in the coming weeks as we celebrate communion together.

With love,

Anna

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)