

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 61

Sunday 18th October 2020

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday's edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. George reflects below on how Jesus's ministry overcomes the way we tend to divide people into 'us' and 'them'.

Scripture Passage

Matthew 22: 15-22

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. ¹⁶ So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. ¹⁷ Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?"

¹⁸ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰ Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?"

²¹ They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's."

²² When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

Reflection

“Have you stopped beating your wife? Answer yes or no.” It’s a famous trick question. Either way, you will be admitting guilt, when nothing could have been further from your mind.

The question that the Pharisees and Herodians put to Jesus was likewise a trick question. Was it lawful, under the Law of Moses, to pay the poll tax that Rome imposed on its subject peoples? They weren’t interested in the answer. They simply wanted to undermine Jesus. If Jesus said yes, he would alienate the zealots and other ardent nationalists among his supporters, who objected to paying the tax. If he said no, they could tell the Romans who would have him arrested, and might even have him crucified.

Jesus can see what they are up to. The tax is one denarius a year, payable in Roman coinage. Jesus knows that the denarius shows Caesar’s head and an inscription describing him as “Son of the divine Augustus, High Priest”. To the Jews it is a blasphemous object. He asks the Pharisees to produce one. They do, now feeling embarrassed at carrying such a blasphemous thing about with them. They confirm that it is Caesar’s head, and that the inscription refers to him. That shows that it belongs to Caesar (rather as our bank notes belong to the Bank of England, even though they are of value to whoever holds one). So Jesus says, “Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar - and give God what belongs to God”.

What is it that belongs to God? Answer: everything and everyone. “The earth is the Lord’s,” says the Psalmist, “and all that therein is: the compass of the world, and they that dwell therein” - including Caesar. The first half of the reply will satisfy the Romans. The second half will satisfy the most ardent nationalists. The Pharisees’ and Herodians’ cunning plan has failed.

The Pharisees get a bad press in the Gospels. There are exceptions. Nicodemus is one. But as a body they appear throughout as opponents of

Jesus. Why? It is not just because of his criticisms of them, though they would have hurt. Nor do they see him as a threat to their nation, except perhaps towards the end, when the crowds start to think that he may be the Messiah.

The Pharisees were very conscious of being part of God's chosen people, a holy nation set apart from all others, dedicated to the service of God. For them, as for Jesus, the first and great commandment was to love God with all your heart and mind and strength. They believed that the way to do that was by obeying all God's commandments in the Law of Moses with meticulous care. They even included the extra rules that applied only to priests, even though they weren't priests. They had as little as possible to do with Gentiles. They also kept themselves apart from their fellow-countrymen who didn't observe the Law of Moses in the way they did - especially those described in the Gospels as publicans and sinners. Theirs was a life lived among "us" to the exclusion of "them".

They could see that Jesus was a godly and patriotic man with an impressive knowledge of the scriptures, even if some of them found his views too liberal. But he told stories in which the hero was a heretic Samaritan. His love overflowed into acts of kindness to Gentiles, such as the Syro-Phoenician woman and her daughter, the Roman centurion and his servant, and the madman who said his name was Legion because he was possessed by so many devils. He associated with notorious publicans and sinners, people they would shun as both disreputable and ritually unclean. He even had meals with them, for goodness sake. He was open to anyone and everyone.

Jesus' openness was a standing rebuke to the Pharisees, for whom divisions into "us" and "them" were so important. So too was his special concern for the poor, the vulnerable, the disadvantaged and those who were sinners and knew it, while theirs was for "people like us". They felt their position being undermined. So most of them came to see him as a threat to be opposed.

With us it is quite the opposite. Jesus recognised that, as the Psalmist implied, all of us, whatever our nationality, colour or creed, are God's children, made in his image and loved by him with an unconditional love. That is something we all have in common. It unites all human beings at the most fundamental level. It is not a threat, but a source of hope. It should make us pause before we start thinking in terms of "us" and "them".

George

Hymn Suggestion

A hymn which reminds us of Jesus' rule and that everything belongs to God is 'Jesus shall reign where'er the sun'.

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
- For Anna's ordination 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 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.

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 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 Yarlinton, 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

Sunday 1st November

9.00 am, St Mary's Yarlington, Communion (Anna will preside)
9.30 am, St John the Baptist North Cheriton, Camelot Morning Worship
11.00 am, St Michael's North Cadbury, Group Communion
4.00 pm, St Michael's North Cadbury, All Souls Service (see below)

All Saints and All Souls Service

This year our Benefice All Saints and All Souls Service will be held at 4.00 pm at St Michael's, North Cadbury on Sunday 1st November. The service is a chance to remember and to give thanks for those people whom we have loved who have passed away.

During the service, there will be an opportunity to light a candle and place it on the altar as an act of remembrance. If you are unable to attend the service, but would like a loved one remembered at the service, please let Anna know the name(s) of the individual(s) you would like remembered, so that a candle can be lit and their name placed on the altar. Anna can be contacted at curate@camelotparishes.org.uk or on 441160, please let her know by Sunday 25th October.

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.

Please note that Galhampton church will not be available for private prayer after the clocks change so Wednesday 21st October will be the last session.

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 Communions in as many of the Camelot churches as possible in the month following her priesting.

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)

