

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 65

Sunday 1st November 2020

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday’s edition of Cutting Edge Camelot on All Saints and All Souls Sunday.

Yesterday the Prime Minister announced a second national lockdown effective as from Thursday and lasting until Wednesday 2nd December. Although the church has yet to publish its official guidance the following details have appeared on the government website:-

‘Places of Worship will be closed, unless they are being used for:

- Funerals
- To broadcast acts of worship
- Individual prayer
- Formal childcare or where part of a school
- Essential voluntary and public services, such as blood donation or food banks
- Other exempted activities such as some support groups’

The Sky News website summarises the impact as follows:-

- Services in places of worship banned but private prayer permitted
- Funerals allowed with close family members only

We will await further details as and when they become available.

Scripture Passage

Matthew 5: 1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Reflection

All Saints and All Souls is with us again. All Saints was started so we could remember all those we call saints that don't have their own day in the calendar. And All Souls follows on, to remember before God all those ordinary people that the church doesn't recognise with the title of saint, but who we trust are in God's good care.

Jesus has been proclaiming *The Kingdom of God is upon you!* and saying things that start *the Kingdom of Heaven is like...* and I bet there were people asking who will get to be citizens of this kingdom of heaven, and what benefits will there be? In other words, *Do I qualify?* and *What's in it for me?*

So Jesus gives a list of qualities that his followers will have, and be blessed on account of. But what about people who might be poor in spirit, but don't hunger and thirst after righteousness? The ones who mourn, but aren't necessarily pure in heart? What about peacemakers who aren't meek, or meek people who aren't peacemakers? Or people who are persecuted, but not for righteousness' sake? Are we blessed if we only have one of these qualities, or do we have to tick all the boxes?

To be poor in spirit is to have a humble opinion of ourselves, to realise we're sinners, and have no righteousness except what God is pleased to say we have, and be willing to be saved only by God's grace and mercy.

When Jesus spoke of people mourning, did he mean like those we think about today, who are bereaved? This afternoon we have our service for those who've been bereaved in the last year or so to come to North Cadbury church and light a candle in memory. Could be, and I hope so, that they will be comforted by the gospel of resurrection and eternal life. But in my own experience, it's only half a comfort. The gospel helps me come to terms with death, but not with loss. We still miss the ones we say we've lost, even if we know they're safe with God. But we might also mourn over our

spiritual poverty, or when we realise that our behaviour has spoiled our relationship with God. And that's the sort of mourning that can only come if we are, as Jesus put it, poor in spirit, and that he's promised will be comforted.

Meekness is so often misunderstood. It means gentle, a soft touch - and I mean that as a compliment. If we say somebody's a soft touch, we usually mean they're gullible, but I mean somebody who is known to be generous - the sort of person you could go to when you're in trouble, and know they'd do whatever they could to help. The meek person would rather suffer injury than inflict it. Not out of weakness - don't confuse the two. Meekness is being that sort of person, but also realising our poverty of spirit, realising our sinfulness - see how they begin to interlock?.

Hunger and thirst for righteousness can't be half-hearted - the words Jesus uses mean serious need - realising that in ourselves, we can't be righteous. But God insists on saying we are. Our sins are forgiven, and because of the death of Jesus, and his resurrection, we have no case to answer before God. But we'll only accept that once we accept we need it.

Jesus asked for mercy on the men who nailed him to the cross. Saint Stephen prayed for those who stoned him. I bet I wouldn't. Jesus told several stories that emphasised that forgivingness, which is what mercy really means, should be what marks us out as citizens of the kingdom. But if we really understand God's forgiveness of us, and lead on from that to his forgiveness of everybody else, then our forgiving others ought to come naturally. Who are we to hold a grudge when God doesn't?

Pureness of heart is simple honesty, not having any hidden motive, no hypocrisy. And we need it to see God, because otherwise, we'll always be looking for the catch. God will meet us in other people, he will speak to us through other people, and we need to be open hearted enough to recognise him.

Peacemakers. Do we try to be at peace with all people? Do we help others to be at peace with God, by sharing with them a gospel of peace? It should be the work of all Christians to promote peace in all its forms.

Christians in many places in the world are being persecuted still. Would we blame them for simply fleeing? Swelling the numbers of refugees because in Iran and Pakistan, in Nigeria and Sudan, being a Christian is downright dangerous? Or what about Christians in North Korea or China, who can't run away? Or what about Christians who find they can't accept abortion, homosexual marriage, or anything else that goes against what they see their Christian principles demand? I realise this has stopped being a sermon, and become a series of questions to make you think, but the graces of the Kingdom of Heaven are all interrelated, and work together in us to change our characters into something that other people might more easily recognise as Christian.

And is the Kingdom of Heaven worth it? That has to be a question for another time.

Ron

Hymn Suggestion

A traditional hymn for All Saints Sunday is 'For all the saints'.

Points for Prayers

- For our spiritual growth and discipleship as we respond to the good news of Jesus Christ and for our All Souls and All Saints services this morning
- For impact of new lockdown on the life of the church
- For the lockdown measures announced yesterday to be effective in stemming and minimising the second wave of coronavirus

- 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)
- 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

In the light of the information currently known relating to the impact of the second national lockdown effective as from Thursday only this morning's services are listed below.

Sunday 1st November

9.00 am, St Mary's Yarlinton, 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.

8.00 am Communion at St Nicholas Bratton Seymour

St Nicholas Bratton Seymour has now reopened. The decision has been made for a six-month period (while social distancing measures are in place) to move the 8.00 am Communion service at Bratton Seymour from the second to the third Sunday of each month.

Private prayer

North Cadbury church continues to be open for private prayer on Wednesday afternoons from 2.30 pm to 4.00 pm.

Excalibur and the Parish Office

It is planned to resume paper deliveries of Excalibur beginning with November's edition.

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)