

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 69**

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November 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 of the Talents. You can find a fuller version of Ron’s talk in the Vimeo video.

## **Scripture Passage**

*Matthew 25: 14-30*

“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

“The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

“After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’

“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

“And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’

“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

“Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’

“But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest.

“So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

## **Reflection**

We have words that mean more than one thing, like bear, as in Teddy, and bear as in just put up with it. Or bear a child. And the word talent to us means a gift or ability, and we sometimes accept that it is God-given.

And that muddies the water around this parable, because as far as Jesus and his contemporaries were concerned, a talent was a sum of money it would take a working man about fifteen years to earn. Five talents would be a lifetime’s earnings for an ordinary chap.

So sometimes this story gets interpreted along the lines of God saying, “I gave you the ability to play the banjo/cook curry/draw cartoons/tap-dance-what did you do with it?” As if God is going to call us to account for not employing these gifts in his service or for the good of all humanity. But really, that’s us horsing around with scripture (and I’ve no objection to that - I do it all the time) and Jesus was actually talking about vast amounts of hard cash, just for effect.

For a start, there’s the arbitrary and unfair way the master hands out his wealth - five for one, two for another, and just one for the third. That just one, remember, is still the equivalent of a big lottery win or a Premium Bond jackpot. But the guy who got the one clearly thought it was a bit measly considering his mate got five. Not fair!

Do we take it that the journey the master is going on is to Jerusalem, Golgotha, and the Cross? So are we looking towards Jesus coming back, when we will be judged on how we have used, misused, or just ignored the gifts we have been given? And if we haven’t played the banjo to the glory of God, we’ll be cast out, teeth gnashing and all that?

Let’s take a hint from the fact that Jesus chooses ridiculous sums of money to tell his story. He’s playing!

The first servant bought, sold, invested and traded, and doubled his money. Wow! And so did the second. He played the markets, or maybe he played roulette for all I know, and look! Two talents have become four. But the third *wouldn't play*. And that’s what displeased his master. Imagine the first two with ear-to-ear grins because they’ve had a whale of a time, and the third sulking and grumbling. He didn’t get that life is supposed to be fun. The master was pleased with his profits, sure; but he was more pleased to see his servants having a good time.

When we were little, Dad would take us out, give us treats. It might have

been the cinema, or just up the hill to fly our kites, and when we got back, he'd ask "Did you enjoy it?" It was important to him. He wanted us to have a good time. And when we meet God, when he comes back to us, or more likely when we meet him in death, I'm sure that before he starts on about our sin, which he died to anyway two thousand years before we were even born, he'll ask, as good Fathers do, "Did you enjoy it?" And if we've been afraid of him, looking his gift horse in the mouth and generally treating him as a divine ogre out to get us, he'll be disappointed.

Some people's lives seem to be blessed more than others. Pam recently lost a school friend, Barbie, whose brother took his own life, and so did her daughter. Barbie's husband was paraplegic after an accident, and couldn't work. He died in 2004. She had diabetes and was bi-polar. What a life! And yet she was brave, and even cheerful, and her faith pulled her through it all. Whatever life threw at her, she knew God still loved her.

So it isn't how much we're given that matters, but how we play the hand we're given. Like the friend who picked up seven vowels at the beginning of a game of Scrabble. But he knew that euouae is a word! A seriously obscure word, but he played it.

Just at the moment, life for a lot of us isn't much fun. Rules and restrictions, the fear of illness, and for some, bereavement and sorrow. (Pam's friend Barbie died with Covid 19) I can imagine a future - soon, I hope - when we'll ask each other, "What did you do during lockdown?" and out will come stories of hobbies, gardening, projects and accomplishments we never had time for in healthier times. How will we play whatever hand we're given? Will Jesus welcome us with "Well done, good and faithful servant"?

*Ron*

## **Points for Prayers**

- Reflecting on the Parable of Talents, to play our hand well and to pass on to others the forgiveness we have received from Jesus
- 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
- Give thanks for progress on the development of a vaccine
- Minimising the second wave of coronavirus through the new lockdown
- Communications within the Camelot Group and its churches during the new lockdown (please see notices below)
- 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 the 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.

## **Guidance on new lockdown**

The basic guidance is contained on the government website which states that places of worship must close during the new lockdown ‘ apart from for the purposes of independent prayer, for funerals or funeral commemorative events, to broadcast an act of worship, to provide essential voluntary services or urgent public support services, for registered childcare, and to host permitted gatherings.’

## **Videos on Vimeo**

A link can be found on the home page of the website to a video of this Sunday's service which we made at St Nicholas' Holton. Thanks to all who participated in this including Anna our camera person.

## **Would you like to facilitate a small Zoom group?**

As I mentioned in my Vimeo presentation I believe that there is a role for Zoom (or a similar programme like Microsoft Teams or Google Meet) to play in enabling small groups of people to connect with one another online.

I would very much like to hear from anyone who would be willing to facilitate such a small group. The simplest way of getting in touch with me is by email, [tristramraesmith@gmail.com](mailto:tristramraesmith@gmail.com).

I think that the ideal size of such a group would be say 5 to 6. It can meet as frequently or infrequently as the group decides, maybe once a week to start off with? The free version of Zoom has a time limit of 40 minutes but other than that meetings can be as long or as short as the group decides. Perhaps 20 to 30 minutes might be appropriate as a starting point?

The main role of a facilitator is to enable each person in the small group to contribute to a group discussion if they so wish. Previous experience of using Zoom (or a similar programme like Microsoft Teams or Google Meet) would be useful but not essential.

The main purpose of such a small group is to provide an opportunity for fellowship and to enable participants to catch up with one another.

Material for reflection and discussion can be provided through articles in Cutting Edge Camelot, the content of Vimeo videos or other sources.

Prayer can take place in whatever form (set or free) is most appropriate given the make up of the participants.

It may be that you already run or belong to such a small group in which case I simply wish to encourage you in this venture.

If you would like to facilitate a new small group please let me know. You are free to focus the group in whatever way suits your own facilitating skills and experience. If you are happy for your name and email address to appear in Cutting Edge Camelot we can see whether there are other people who might wish to join your group.

*Tristram*

### **An inclusive Communion celebrated on behalf of the benefice**

During the second lockdown as in the first Ron and Pam will be celebrating Communion regularly in their home each Sunday at 10.00 am. Please be aware of this because even though no-one can join them they are praying for us all and hope that you will feel included in this act of Communion.

### **Private prayer**

St Michael's North Cadbury will be open for private prayer on Wednesdays from 2.30 pm to 4.00 pm.

### **The Parish Office**

The Parish Office is closed although Rob does come in regularly. In his absence please contact Rob via email ([office@camelotparishes.org.uk](mailto: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)