

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 78

Wednesday 16th December 2020

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

Welcome

Welcome to this midweek edition of Cutting Edge Camelot.

Scripture Passages

Mark 12: 28-34

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?"

Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbour as oneself,' - this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

1 John 4: 20

Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.

Reflection

'What would Jesus do?' This is a hypothetical question that we often ask ourselves when we are confronted by contemporary circumstances which are not directly mentioned in the Bible.

It's a fair question to ask but it is a hypothetical one and sometimes I find it a difficult one. It may be just my problem but when I ask myself what Jesus would do I often find that the answer seems to be remarkably similar to what I would do. And what about those who might disagree with me? Well, I imagine Jesus would put them straight...

So we may find ourselves with a surer starting point if we ask ourselves 'What did Jesus say and do?' This may not provide us with an exact answer to the question we want answered but surely it is the place from which we need to begin.

And so we find in the passage from Mark's gospel above that once again Jesus is embroiled in a dispute with the scribes and Pharisees. However, on this occasion Jesus seems to be unusually sympathetic to the particular scribe who comes to question Him.

The scribes and Pharisees had amassed an extraordinarily complex set of rules and regulations based on the commands to be found in the Old Testament. This kind of complexity may well remind us of the ever-changing regulations with which we have to grapple in this coronavirus emergency.

And so the scribe's question to Jesus was a very fair and relevant one. What do you think is the most important commandment of them all? What lies at the heart of all these rules? What are they all about?

And Jesus' reply is clear and unequivocal. First of all, love God with all that you have. And secondly love your neighbour as yourself. This is a simple formula which the scribe is able to endorse with enthusiasm. And indeed many who would not call themselves Christians might also find themselves in agreement with these statements at least to the extent of loving our neighbours.

It is important to realise that loving God and loving our neighbour go hand in hand. They cannot be separated. Our verse from John's letter reminds us of this, of how we cannot love God and at the same time hate a brother or sister. But having said that, loving God undoubtedly matters. Indeed we could say that our love for our neighbour is a natural overflow of our love for God.

One very important aspect of loving God is our worship. But we need to be careful not to identify and restrict our worship to a particular external form. As the scribe reminds us making burnt offerings and sacrifices do not by themselves mean that we are loving God wholeheartedly.

And so back to the very difficult circumstances in which we find ourselves. Later on in this edition of Cutting Edge Camelot you will find both a schedule of services over the Christmas period and an explanation of the thinking behind this schedule. You may well glean from this that there are many legal responsibilities and a maze of regulations which needed to be taken into account.

And yet complex as all this might be I did not want that to be my starting point in approaching this Christmas period. Rather I wanted to start by asking myself the very simple question 'How do I love my neighbour as

myself?’ That immediately provoked a further question ‘How do I love myself?’

I found myself giving a straightforward answer to this question. I do not want to catch coronavirus, nor do I want those who are close to me to catch it. So if that is what I want for myself should I not want this for everyone else?

At the same time, I wish over the Christmas period (and at other times) to worship God alongside other people and so to be renewed in my faith and love for God. The help of other people is very important if our love for God is to remain fresh and vital. So if that is what I want for myself should I not want this for everyone else?

Ah yes, but how do you put this all together? That’s where it all gets difficult. And what would Jesus do? What would Jesus make of Tiers 1, 2 and 3? I think I will leave other people to answer that question. All I can say is that if we take as our starting point the love of God and the love of other people I don’t think we will go far wrong.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- For our spiritual growth and discipleship, that the love of God and other people might be uppermost in our hearts
- 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 approval of first vaccine for use in combating coronavirus
- The arrangements for the Christmas period in the Camelot Group
- Wedding of Matthew and Joanna at Blackford on Saturday 19th December
- For North Cadbury Church Primary School and Marchant Holliday school in our benefice remembering also Horsington school as they celebrate and break up for Christmas
- 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.

Making decisions on Christmas Services

The options that were available to us in providing Christmas services were (a) indoors (b) outdoors (c) livestreamed (d) recorded. I comment on each of these various options in turn below. It is also worth mentioning that we also needed to take account of the number of officiants we had available to lead Christmas services. This meant, for instance, that it was not possible to provide a Christmas Day service for Blackford. However, Blackford and Galhampton which do not have Christmas Day services do have services on both Christmas Eve and the Sunday following Christmas, 27th December.

It is not possible to cover all eventualities but given the extraordinary circumstances under which we are operating we have tried in our process of decision making to be as inclusive as we can so that as many people as possible can enjoy church Christmas celebrations in one form or another.

(a) Indoor services

In other years, this is how we have held Christmas services. However, in the extraordinary circumstances of this year indoor services have presented new challenges which principally relate to the reduced socially distanced capacity of the church.

It has been necessary for churchwardens and others to determine how many people may safely be accommodated in their church and to weigh this against their anticipated likely attendance. For the purpose of knowing what their likely attendance might be they may have communicated with their potential congregations by email or letter.

Another consideration for indoor services is that the congregation is not allowed to sing although an organist can play and a small socially distanced choir can sing.

(b) Outdoor services

Although some churches have decided to go ahead with indoor services on a socially distanced basis others have decided that an outdoor service represents a better alternative.

This is likely to result in an increased overall capacity although there is still the need to maintain social distancing.

It is also possible for the congregation to sing carols outside which they are not able to do inside.

The obvious downside with an outdoor service is the possibility of bad weather.

(c) Livestreaming

Because of the generosity of Dan Gruner, a parishioner in Galhampton, and his colleagues who have freely offered their professional services and expertise we have been able to consider the option of livestreaming from St Michael's North Cadbury.

We anticipated that the numbers of those who might wish to attend the Camelot Carol Service at St Michael's North Cadbury on Sunday 20th December were likely to be considerably greater than our socially distanced capacity. For this reason we decided to pursue the option of livestreaming this service with only the participants present. The alternative would have been either to adopt a strict ticketing system or to turn people away at the door and we did not wish to do this. The livestreaming will at a later point then be uploaded as a recording available for everyone to view with a link given through Cutting Edge Camelot and any other appropriate means.

(d) Recorded service

The midnight service on Christmas Eve at St Michael's North Cadbury was also likely to provide similar social distancing issues. For this service we have opted to make a recording of this Christmas Communion available from 11.30pm onwards on Christmas Eve. Again the link will be given through Cutting Edge Camelot and any other appropriate means.

In the event that the weather is so bad on Christmas Day that it makes outdoor services impractical this recorded service also provides an available back up in the event that people are not able to come to an outdoor service.

Schedule of services during Christmas period (20th to 27th December)

Chronological order

Sunday 20th December

- 3.00 pm Yarlington, Afternoon Carol Service, outdoors
- 6.00 pm North Cadbury, Camelot Carol Service, livestreamed and recorded behind closed doors, also available later as a download

Christmas Eve

- 11.00 am Galhampton, Carol Service, indoors
- 3.30 pm Blackford, Readings and Carols, in the churchyard outdoors
- 4.00 pm North Cadbury, Communal Carol Singing, outdoors
- Available from 11.30 pm
North Cadbury, Midnight Communion, recorded

Christmas Day

- 9.30 am Yarlington, Readings and Carols, outdoors weather permitting, indoors if not
- 9.30 am Compton Pauncefoot, Communion, indoors
- 9.30 am South Cadbury, Readings and Carols, indoors
- 10.00 am North Cheriton, Readings and Carols, outdoors
- 11.00 am North Cadbury, Communion, outdoors
- 11.00 am Holton, Readings and Carols, outdoors
- 11.00 am Maperton, Communion, indoors

Sunday 27th December

- 9.00 am Blackford, Communion, indoors
- 11.00 am Galhampton, Communion, indoors

Outdoor services - Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Christmas Eve

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|---------|---------------------------------------|
| 3.30 pm | Blackford, Readings and Carols |
| 4.00 pm | North Cadbury, Communal Carol Singing |

Christmas Day

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 9.30 am | Yarlington, Readings and Carols, outdoors weather permitting, indoors if not |
| 10.00 am | North Cheriton, Readings and Carols |
| 11.00 am | North Cadbury, Communion |
| 11.00 am | Holton, Readings and Carols |

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Communion services

Christmas Eve

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| From 11.30 pm | North Cadbury, Midnight Communion, recorded |
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Christmas Day

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 9.30 am | Compton Pauncefoot, Communion, indoors |
| 11.00 am | North Cadbury, Communion, outdoors |
| 11.00 am | Maperton, Communion, indoors |

Please remember

Meeting inside church

Under Tier 2 restrictions we are allowed to come to church to worship but we are not allowed to meet each other outside of our own household/bubble (during the Christmas period this includes 'Christmas Bubbles' of up to three households).

We may ask ourselves how we can come to church without meeting other people. Obviously we need to interpret these regulations in a way that makes sense. So I don't think that we can or should exclude greeting or acknowledging the presence of other people. However, I do think that the regulations mean that within the church we should not engage in conversations of any length either before or after the church service. This may result in going outside the church in which case...

Meeting outside church

We may go outside church. Tier 2 regulations here are less strict although their impact is still very real. Outside it is possible to meet with friends and family we do not live with in a group of no more than six (the so called 'rule of six'). However, the need for social distancing still applies and although such meetings are possible we have been advised to be careful in terms of the total number of meetings we have.

Christmas Bubbles

During the period 23rd to 27th December there are so called 'Christmas Bubbles'. These are groups formed by up to three households but with no overall restrictions on numbers. They are able to meet in places of worship. They do not need to sit together but must not interact outside their own bubble.

Carol singing outdoors

The congregation can sing as part of a service, allowing for appropriate social distancing.

Carol singing indoors

Congregations cannot sing although a small choir, limited in size so far as possible can sing.

Let us know your plans

If you are intending to come to a Christmas service (particularly an indoor service) which you do not normally attend it would be greatly appreciated if you could let the relevant churchwarden(s) know in advance. This will very much help them in their planning for safe social distancing at these services.

Excalibur

An online version of Excalibur including all this service information will shortly be uploaded by Rob on the website camelotparishes.co.uk

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) or on 01749 850934.

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)