

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 82

Sunday 10th January 2020

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday’s edition of Cutting Edge Camelot.

Scripture Passages

Genesis 1: 1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Mark 1: 4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Reflection

A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing. And a little knowledge (which is what I have) of Hebrew can also be a dangerous thing particularly when it applies to the Bible.

On the other hand, one of the many benefits of reading the opening verses of the Bible for me is that it contains so many relatively well-known Hebrew words and so many evocative ones. Two of these words are *Tohu* and *Bohu*. This is a word play which tends to elude us in English but *Tohu* means formless and *Bohu* means empty. And so we are told that in the beginning the earth was a 'formless void'.

Tohu and *Bohu*. Words which have expressed so much of my personal response to the events of the last week.

The announcement of the latest lockdown. Yes, we have been here before and yet then again we have not. Each of the lockdowns has been similar but significantly different. In this lockdown we have been given permission to continue with public worship unlike in the previous lockdowns. So, yes, we have permission but with permission comes choice and we need to exercise this choice wisely. And what is wisdom in the times in which we live? A question which is also relevant as we witness the scenes of disorder and chaos reaching us this week from Capitol Hill in Washington.

Tohu and *Bohu*. How does God, how do we bring order, fullness and fruitfulness from a 'formless void'?

And yet Genesis does not begin with emptiness and formlessness. Rather it begins with a confident assertion of God's power and creativity.

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,

It is God who is responsible for the whole of creation, the heavens and the earth.

And then again in the beginning there is not simply a formless void and darkness covering the face of the deep. There are also signs of life and hope. There is the *ruach* of God. *Ruach* is another significant Hebrew word. A word which can be translated simply as 'wind' but can also mean 'spirit'. One translation speaks of the Spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters.

In times such as last week many or even all of us may feel very dark and confused and so also feel an urgency in seeking God in prayer. As we do seek God in prayer it can seem as if we too are hovering with the Spirit of God over the landscape of events both locally and further afield, looking for signs of life. And we find that as we hover in prayer so gradually and over time our vision becomes clear, full and fruitful.

So God works gradually and by degrees. The Spirit of God hovers over the waters in order to give form and life. Yet God also works through divine command. God says let there be light and there is light. The power of God's word is demonstrated as this new aspect of creation, light, is brought into being.

And as we turn to the account of Jesus' baptism at the beginning of Mark's gospel we may at first wonder what the connection is between the two passages. Perhaps a clue to this is given in the fact that both come from the beginning of their respective books in the Bible.

For just as in the beginning God creates the heavens and the earth so Mark begins his account of the gospel of Jesus Christ with the baptism of Christ. For baptism too signifies a new beginning, it is a sign of the new creation which God effects through Christ.

And in Mark's gospel there are also echoes of Genesis as he refers to water and to the Spirit. At the beginning of creation the Spirit of God hovers over the face of the waters. And in the new creation when Jesus is baptised and comes up out of the water the heavens break apart and the Spirit of God descends like a dove.

And after that God affirms Jesus' identity as He speaks in the form of a voice from heaven telling us that Jesus is God's beloved Son in whom God is well pleased. He is the One to whom we are to listen and in whom we place our trust.

So as we move forward into the next week we might be especially reminded of the role of 'hovering' prayer as we seek to work with God in bringing about order, fullness and fruitfulness where at present we might only see formlessness, emptiness and darkness.

We all pray in different ways, of course, and we need to find the way that is right for us. Nevertheless I would like to commend to you the Diocesan initiative beginning next week of Prayer - Everyone, Everywhere! You can find details of this initiative on the diocesan website as given in the note below.

I do encourage you to have a look and see whether this might be right for you.

Tristram

Diocesan Initiative of Prayer

This is a week of videos with different people from across the Diocese speaking about how they like to pray. It culminates in an online session next Saturday 16th January in which people can share what ways of prayer they have tried or experimented with during the week. You can find details on the diocesan website,

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry-for-mission/discipleship/spirituality-prayer/prayer-everyone-everywhere/>

Hymn Suggestion

A hymn which reminds us of how God can work gradually and by degrees is 'God is working His purpose out as year succeeds to year.'

Points for Prayers

- For the growth of our own prayer life
- The restrictions of the third lockdown and decisions to be made concerning them
- The roll out of the different vaccines in combating 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
- Our Bishops (please see notice below)
- For North Cadbury Church Primary School and other local schools as they are unable to open fully at the start of the new school term
- 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.

Third National lockdown and services this Sunday

The third national lockdown has been announced. Unlike in the previous two lockdowns it is permissible to hold public worship services although we also need to consider whether it is wise to do so.

On this Sunday Communion Services will be held at 9.30 am at Galhampton and at 11.00 am at St Michael's North Cadbury. Other services across the Group have been cancelled.

This means that in effect the services at Galhampton and North Cadbury are Camelot services. Those from other villages in the Group are welcome to come to these services. However, we now need to be even stricter in terms of social distancing and capacity issues.

Accordingly if you are planning to come to these services from other villages could you please let the churchwarden of North Cadbury Caroline Joneleit-Hope know (carolinejoneleithope@gmail.com). This will enable her to plan effectively in terms of social distancing capacity.

Also please be reminded that under the lockdown the rules in terms of mixing of different households is also even stricter. Mixing of households is now not allowed either before or after services, inside or outside. So we need to depart promptly once a service has ended. If this does not happen then it will mean that, under our Risk Assessment, we are not able to hold services safely and so we will not be in a position to continue during lockdown with the service in question.

We would also stress that everyone is in a different position in relation to the risk profile of themselves and their families. So each one of us needs to

make a wise decision as to whether or not to come based on our own individual circumstances.

Details of the arrangements for next Sunday will be publicised during the course of next week either by means of a separate bulletin or as part of a full midweek edition of Cutting Edge Camelot.

Full details of the rules for the new lockdown can be found at:-

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>

Videos on Vimeo

We will be considering how our Vimeo account can best be used during this latest lockdown.

Excalibur

The January edition of Excalibur including all the service information is available online at 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.

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. He has now received a stem

cell transplant. Please pray for the new cells to 'do their bit' and for his continued healing. 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)