

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 83

Sunday 17th January 2020

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

Welcome

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

Scripture Passages

John 1:43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me."

Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth."

Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Philip said to him, "Come and see."

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!"

Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?"

Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you."

Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Reflection

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, we hear of an Apostle, one of the twelve, named Bartholomew. It's a surname- it means Son of Tolmai. And Tolmai, or Ptolemy, is actually a Greek name, so it may be that our Bartholomew had some mixed blood, a Greek up his family tree from the bad old days three hundred years before, when the country was ruled by the Greeks. John's Gospel, though, doesn't mention Bartholomew at all - he calls him Nathanael, because he knew him. They were on first name terms.

It was Philip (another Greek name, that), who introduced Nathanael to his new friend, Jesus. Philip was sure he'd found the Messiah, the promised Saviour.

"Where does he come from?" asked our Bartholomew.

"Nazareth," said Philip.

"Don't make me laugh. Nothing good ever came from Nazareth".

Philip didn't argue. "Come and see," he said.

When Jesus saw Nathaniel Bartholomew, he said, "Here's a true-blue Jew - there's nothing phoney about him!" And Bartholomew must have been pleased, because Jesus recognised that being a true Jew didn't depend on who your family were, any more than being a Christian does now. Christians aren't born, they become. At baptism we become a member of the church, but that's not the same as being a Christian. A baby can no more be a Christian than he can be a member of the Union of Postal Workers. And Bartholomew was a proper Jew, not because of any ancestral ties, but

because he shared the expectation and hope that one day, God would send one to be anointed, to save his people. What Jesus recognised in Bartholomew was the person he was, not who his parents had been.

“How come you know me?” asked Bartholomew.

“I saw you under the fig tree,” said Jesus, “before Phillip spoke to you.”

Bartholomew’s reaction, to be honest, is a bit over the top.

“Rabbi,” he said, “you’re the Son of God!”

Nobody had said that to Jesus before. But Bartholomew said it. The cynic is won over. Instead of being suspicious of Jesus because he came from a place up North that was only a one-horse town because someone had nicked a horse, he now hails him as the Son of God. We have no real idea why.

But to get back to the fig tree. Our man wasn’t just dozing under it, or eating a pie. What a Jewish man did under a fig tree was to read the scripture, and meditate on it. It was supposed to be just the right place, the perfect atmosphere, for meditating on spiritual things. Remember when Adam and Eve had covered themselves with fig leaves because they suddenly twigged they were naked? There they were, dressed in leaves, and God had still been able to see them. So being under a fig tree, you were reminded that God could see you.

Bartholomew was no idler. He was a studier, a seeker. And he found Jesus. Jesus said, “You’ll see great things - you’ll see heaven opened, and angels ascending and descending”. Just like Jacob’s ladder. Is that what Bartholomew had been reading? And maybe he was trying, like we do when we read our Bible, to relate it to his own life. Jacob called the place Beth-El, the House of God. Where would Bartholomew find the House of God? Where might he be able to see God revealed, and talk to him, and hear him speak? Well, as he found out, wherever Jesus was. God’s dwelling on earth wasn’t a temple, an actual house, but a person. And not an important

official from the big city, but the carpenter's son from the sticks. Where would we find the house of God?

I know a lot of you are distressed because worship in churches is suspended for the time being. And it's all very well for me to say you can worship God anywhere, but I know that the atmosphere of a church building, its walls soaked in centuries of prayer, is special. God doesn't actually live in the building any more than he lives in the lane outside. And even if we say something like "We meet God in other people", then still our opportunities to meet him are limited by this terrible virus.

Nathanael is mentioned once more in John's gospel. After the resurrection, when they didn't know what was going to happen next, or what to do, some of them went fishing, and Nathanael was one of them. They couldn't see the way forward, so they went back. It might have been the last time they did, because they met Jesus beside the lake, and after that, it seems they really did abandon the fishing business. There was no going back to the old ways. Bartholomew and his friends found out that following Jesus means going forward all the time.

You can't go back, and you can't even stay still. If the Messiah comes from Nazareth, then you have to put aside your prejudices and accept that. If the Messiah is crucified, you accept that, too, and make it the starting point of your faith, not the end of it. Christians and churches need to learn that. "We've always done it this way" is the looking back and standing still option that Bartholomew found didn't work. We've been put in the situation where doing things the old way isn't possible. As a church, we're being prodded to move on, embrace new things. And in due time, I trust the New Normal will incorporate our new ways along with the ones we miss so much now.

God bless you all. Look after each other.

Ron

God's vision for the Deanery

Have you sensed God's heart for our area? Do you dream of what God longs to do in the lives of our friends and neighbours? Or are you struggling for vision amidst the uncertainty even though you know God is moving in our midst? If you relate to any of these, do join our time of listening and prayer for God's vision and purposes to be established in the Deanery.

This is on Thursday 28th January at 7.00 pm via Zoom. Please let Tristram know if you would like to be included in this event and he will then arrange for you to receive the Zoom invitation.

Diocesan Initiative of Prayer

The Diocesan Initiative of Prayer ended with an online session on Saturday. I found this session and the materials sent out previously in the week very helpful. Perhaps a particular highlight for me was the dancer who said she expressed prayer through dance. I am not sure that I can follow that particular path but the week got me thinking about the sheer variety of ways in which prayer can be expressed.

Tristram

Vimeo

While we get to grips with how we may best use our Vimeo account in this latest lockdown, the Diocese in the meantime now has its own Vimeo account.

Simply go to the diocesan page on the Vimeo website, <https://vimeo.com/user131166676> and you will find a service with a reflection on this Sunday's passage of scripture from our assistant Bishop Brian Castle. During the following weeks further online services will be made available via Vimeo led by various other assistant Bishops.

Hymn Suggestion

A hymn which focusses on responding to God's call is 'O for a thousand tongues to sing'.

Points for Prayers

- For our spiritual growth and response to God's call
- The restrictions of the third lockdown and sustaining our common life in this time
- 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.

Suspension of services

As announced via a midweek bulletin services across the Camelot Group have now been suspended as sadly we concluded that it was not possible to hold them safely in the current circumstances. The suspension of services will be kept under review as circumstances change.

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)