

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 89

Sunday 14th February 2021

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday's edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. Please note the information given concerning our Vimeo recording this week.

Scripture Passage

2 Kings 2: 1-12

Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent."

Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho.

The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent."

Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on.

Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit."

He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not."

As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

Mark 9: 2-9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”

Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Reflection

Are we ready to move on to the next phase of our lives and ministry? How do we know? And how do we know whether other people are ready to step up to a new and greater position of responsibility?

Our first passage speaks of the transfiguration of Christ and our second of Elijah being taken up into heaven. As we think about them perhaps the contrast between Elisha, Elijah’s successor as prophet, and the disciples of Jesus strikes us.

For Elisha does seem ready and prepared to take on the prophetic mantle of his master and teacher Elijah. How do we know this?

First Elisha is not just waiting for an opportunity to push Elijah out of the way so that he can take over the top job as prophet. We all know the story of the seemingly loyal subordinate who, in the shadows, schemes away to secure the downfall of the boss in order to take over at the top. And generally because the subordinate is probably more interested in status than in handling the pressures of actually being in charge this story does not end well.

But this is not the case with Elisha. His loyalty and indeed his love for his master Elijah is beyond doubt. He is not looking for a more important or influential position for himself.

At the beginning of the passage, Elijah and Elisha are walking together. This illustrates the closeness and trust of their relationship as disciple and master.

And the strength of Elisha's personal devotion to Elijah again emerges when he refuses to obey Elijah's command to stay where he is. No, he insists on continuing to accompany him. He does this on three separate occasions.

Then the other prophets ask Elisha whether he knows that Elijah will be taken away from him this day. Elisha does know this but he does not want to speak about it. Why not? It is another sign of the depth and strength of his attachment to Elijah. He knows that he will suffer a great personal loss when Elijah is taken from him and he does not want to think about this.

And when Elijah is actually taken up into heaven, Elisha cries out my father, my father. His relationship with Elijah is a deeply personal one.

However, although Elisha does not seek Elijah's position he is not afraid of succeeding him. Sometimes people do not want a promotion because they feel they are not worthy of this honour or are afraid of its pressures. This too can be a sign that they are not yet ready to step up.

But again Elisha is not like this. He knows that Elijah is about to depart into heaven and he asks for a double portion of Elijah's prophetic spirit. It was normal in those days for an eldest son to inherit a double portion of his father's estate. Elisha is spiritually hungry for all that God has for him. He is ready to take on Elijah's prophetic office.

And then the disciples, Peter, James and John as they witness Jesus' transfiguration. They are quite naturally terrified. They do not know what to do.

So when Peter sees Jesus talking with Elijah and Moses, he blurts out the suggestion of making three tents or shelters, one for each of them.

Perhaps Peter thinks that he must say something in response to this extraordinary scene. Perhaps he is gratified to learn that his master Jesus is considered to be in the top tier of prophets and he wants to build the three tents to signify this. Perhaps he wants to freeze this remarkable moment in time by providing some visible memorial of it, so that later on he can tell people 'This is where we saw Jesus on the mountain talking with Moses and Elijah'. However, the fact is we simply do not know why Peter made this suggestion.

We do, however, know that it was not an appropriate one. For a voice comes from heaven and tells the disciples, *"This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!"*

In other words, there is no need for bright ideas or good suggestions. Indeed there is no need to do anything. All the disciples need to do is to recognise who Jesus truly is and to listen to Him.

So at this stage the disciples had much to learn about the future roles that God had prepared for them. They were not yet ready to step into these ministries.

At the end of this passage once again they are warned about springing into immediate action. Elijah, Moses and the cloud all vanish and as the disciples look around they can only see Jesus. Then Jesus forbids the disciples to speak about what they have seen until after He has risen from the dead.

Why does He do this? Jesus knows that the disciples are not at that point able to understand fully what they have seen and so to communicate its true meaning to other people.

We began by talking in a very human context about how we know that people are ready to take on a greater measure of responsibility. In these passages we have seen that while Elisha is ready the disciples need to wait because they are not yet ready.

However, when we think about Elisha and the disciples we are not thinking about purely human responsibilities but about the realities of God's power and glory. If we came face to face with God's glory we too would find this terrifying just as the disciples did. So we might ask ourselves how we can possibly handle any responsibilities we are given in God's Kingdom.

And yet we are on a journey with Jesus and with God. The disciples' powerful encounter with God's glory happens as Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and to the Cross is about to begin. As we prepare for Lent and then Easter we will accompany Jesus and the other disciples on this journey.

And this reminds us that we need to walk with Jesus each day just as Elisha walked with Elijah. We need a continuous, everyday pattern of fellowship with Jesus. For long periods of time this may not involve anything dramatic or out of the ordinary. But we need to share the whole of our lives with Jesus.

And out of this journey we need to be prepared to bear witness to what we have seen and experienced of Jesus. Years later, Peter writing towards the end of his life realised that this was the reason why he and the other disciples had been given the immense privilege of seeing Jesus transfigured in glory. By this time Peter had indeed grown into the apostolic ministry which God had prepared for him and he was ready to give a simple eye

witness account of what he had seen. This was all that was needed, no need to elaborate or add his own explanations and interpretations. So in his second letter he writes,

“we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.” (2 Peter 1:16-18)

And finally we need the humility of Elisha. We are not to seek power and position for ourselves. Our study of the first of the Beatitudes ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit’ has reminded us that God enters our lives not through our places of strength but where we feel inadequate and unable to cope.

None of us knows what the next few months will hold. Times are very uncertain. But even in ordinary times we need to be ready for God’s plans and purposes to surprise us. The way in which God may work in our lives through the power of Christ’s Resurrection has no limit.

But whatever happens, ordinary or extraordinary, foreseen or unforeseen, if we walk with Jesus, if we are willing to bear witness to Him, if we model the humility which Elisha shows then we can trust that we will be ready for any responsibilities that God chooses to give us.

Tristram

Hymn Suggestion

A hymn which speaks of our journey with God throughout our lives is ‘Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided’.

Vimeo

Our recorded service is on Vimeo. The link is:-

<https://vimeo.com/512028261>

Please note that the reflection in Cutting Edge Camelot gives the essence of the reflection in the recording but is not an exact transcript.

The Diocese has shared a reflection from Assistant Bishop Rob Martin for this Sunday. You will find this by going to the diocesan page on the Vimeo website, <https://vimeo.com/user131166676>.

The Big Church Read

The Big Church Read is a great opportunity to bring Christians together across the country to read books together. It contains online videos, reading plans and discussion questions to enhance the reading experience. The current book chosen for reading and discussion is Singing in Babylon: Finding purpose in life's second choices by Jeff Lucas. For more information please see:- <https://thebigchurchread.co.uk/>

Supporting our community

The Lord's Larder

The Lord's Larder is one of our local foodbanks based in Yeovil. In many of our villages we have central collection points for food to be taken to the Lord's Larder and to other local foodbanks. They are immensely appreciative of the support and of food which is given in this way.

However, they also need financial contributions so that they can buy additional food as needed. If you would like to contribute in this way you can do so by setting up a Standing Order in favour of the Yeovil Christian Support Trust. Their bank details are Unity Trust Bank Plc, Birmingham,

Sort Code 60-83-01, Account No 20211112. It is possible to increase the value of these donations by claiming Gift Aid.

North Cadbury Church of England Primary School

The school also immensely appreciates our prayers and support in this difficult period. While prayer remains primary, some of us may be wondering whether we can also help in practical ways. The need for all families connected with the school to be able to buy books for use at home is very pressing in this time of home schooling.

So the school would appreciate donations of book tokens or gift vouchers for this purpose. If you wish to make a donation direct by BACS transfer the School's details are:-

Account Name:- North Cadbury Church of England Primary

Sort Code:- 30-99-98

Account No:- 65255268

Please use the reference 'Lockdown Books'.

On the other hand, you may wish to send any donations to the Parish Office marking any envelopes 'For the School'. They can then be passed on promptly to the school.

If anyone would like to donate to the school some pre-owned books these will also be gratefully received. However, these will need to be of good quality and less than ten years old.

Points for Prayers

- The need for humility and for us to share our lives with Jesus and so to bear witness to Him
- The restrictions of the third lockdown and sustaining our common life in this time

- Give thanks for progress in the roll out of the different vaccines in combating coronavirus and for the falling rates of infection
- The need for wisdom in the timing of any easing of restrictions
- 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 moment
- 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

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 February edition of Excalibur is now 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.

An inclusive Communion celebrated on behalf of the benefice

During the third lockdown as in the others 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.

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)