

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 91

Sunday 21st 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 Passages

1 Peter 3: 18-22

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹ And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you-- not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Mark 1:9-15

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

¹² And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

Reflection

Down by the Dead Sea, at the time of Jesus, there were groups of Jewish monks living in the desert. They are called the Essenes, and the Dead Sea Scrolls were their scriptures. Jesus probably knew of them. Some people think John the Baptist was one of them. They never set out to influence the rest of society. They lived tough lives of extreme poverty, withdrawn from anywhere they might have had influence, like court or temple. But somehow, their witness energised even those who knew they could never imitate them. They saw all of life as a battle between good and evil, light and darkness. Their battle in the wilderness brought victories not just to the ones involved, but to others as well.

We're told that Jesus went off into the desert after he was baptised. It was straight after Jesus' baptism - Mark says the Holy Spirit *drove* him to it. And he had God's words of love and encouragement ringing in his ears. God had called him his Beloved Son. But the wilderness is where he had to discover what it means to be the beloved Son of God.

It might seem an odd way to prepare for leadership, by starving yourself, alone in the desert. Jesus prepared for his ministry by making himself weak and vulnerable, as though this is the only way he could be sure that the ministry he would have, came from God, and not just from his own strengths. It's a bit like Gideon, in the Old Testament, who was told to

whittle his army down from thousands to just three hundred- and the poorest soldiers, at that, just so that he was never tempted to think his victory was down to anything other than God's strength, and God's grace.

Jesus didn't spend his time in the desert drawing up mission statements, setting targets, or identifying key staff. Instead, he reduced himself to the barest essentials, leaving his character and instincts starkly exposed, without the externals to buttress them. We don't really know how long he was there. The expression "forty days and forty nights" is a Jewish expression meaning "for a considerable period of time", which is why it crops up so often in the Bible. But we can assume that after a while of fasting, loneliness, extremes of heat and cold, his appreciation of who he was, not who anyone else thought he might be, was pretty acute.

He was tempted to the simple, harmless miracle of turning stones into bread. Did he already know that his closeness to God meant that he could do things others couldn't do? Did he have an anxious time later, at the wedding reception in Cana, thinking to himself *what if it doesn't work? What if nothing happens?* But here in the desert, nobody's looking, it won't be showing off, and God knows you need to eat something. But Jesus learned that miracles are just tools. In his ministry, they would be one of his most attractive characteristics. I mean, it was his miracles that made people sit up and take notice. But here Jesus came to see they weren't the vital part of himself. They became extensions of his love, his compassion and sympathy, and signs of what was acceptable in God's kingdom. Blindness, hunger, leprosy, even death, will have no part in God's kingdom, and Jesus used miracles to spell that out.

Jesus also had to deal with the temptation to set limits on what God can ask of him. When I realised that God was calling me to the ministry, I obeyed, because I trusted he wouldn't ask me to do more than I was capable of. And Jesus was tempted to test how much God loves him. If God asks you to do something outrageous, like jump off the temple roof, would you do it? And

does God love you enough to save your life if you do it? Right at the start of his ministry, Jesus put that option aside. It would become real all too soon. If God wants you to be crucified, would you do it? And does he love you enough to save you from it? Yes he will do it. No, God won't save him from it. Whatever God asked of Jesus, he did. He just trusted God, totally.

And what about power? Donald Trump went to extraordinary lengths to hold on to it. The army in Burma has just seized it, and already uses it to oppress any opposition. Riches may be the gateway to power, but is power the gateway to even more riches? Do politicians genuinely have the urge to make the world a better place, because they know better than their rivals how that can be done?

As he went about preaching, teaching and healing, one of the things that most struck people about Jesus was his natural authority. He clearly had strong leadership qualities, and people would follow him. They followed him in ministry. If he'd asked, they would have followed him in battle. Jesus knew what he had to do to make the world a better place, and it had nothing to do with either riches or power. But because of this unseen victory in the desert, Jesus would never be tempted to build up an army, to set himself up as a king. Instead, he would submit totally to the will of his Father, and win God's victory for all of us, against sin and death.

What was being tested in the desert was the core of Jesus' being, stripped of all other defences. That core was his total dependence on God, his Father.

We're not called to go and live lives of hardship in the desert. But in Lent, we're offered a challenge - what is at the heart and core of our lives? What would the devil have to offer us to lure us away from God? Do we know what is essential to us, and what is just peripheral? Have we ever tried to live without the props of comfort and security that seem so necessary to us?

Thanks to Jesus, we don't have to battle with the devil in the wilderness on our own. We are the body of Christ, and so we share what he has already done, without any help from us. But perhaps occasionally we might be called to do our own bit of fighting against evil, for our own sake, or for others.

Ron

Hymn Suggestion

The hymns in our Vimeo recording are 'O Jesus I have promised', 'The God of love my shepherd is (Psalm 23)' and 'Forty days and forty nights'.

Vimeo

A Camelot service for the First Sunday in Lent is available to watch on Vimeo <https://vimeo.com/514774244> . It will also be broadcast on Twitch www.twitch.tv/loudaudiolive at 11.00am today, and is available on the same link to watch afterwards.

The Diocese has shared a reflection from the Archdeacon of Taunton the Ven Simon Hill 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/>

Giving in Lent

The Kisumu Children Trust is a charity for children in Kenya. The Camelot Group has supported this charity in previous Lents and we would like to do so once again in this Lent.

Our parishioners in Galhampton, Mike and Katherine Dare, have been trustees and actively involved with Kisumu for a number of years. They write as follows:-

‘2020 has been a challenging year for Kisumu Children, as with all charities, and of course for our churches across Camelot, though thankfully Kenya has thus far been saved from the extreme ravages caused by Covid-19. In addition, an initiative sponsored by UNICEF and the Kenyan Government is requiring us to redirect the Christian love, care and witness we provide in our children’s home towards continuing to support the children in this way but in their own rural homes or with extended families rather than in our home. This will be a real challenge for our ministry over the coming years and may well see us working more closely with local churches in Kisumu and the local school. We hope too to be able to facilitate a link between the local school there and the North Cadbury school here, which we know Lisa would like to achieve, once Covid pressures have reduced.’

If you wish to give an online donation the BACS details are: The Kisumu Children Trust; Sort Code 40-52-40; Account no. 00011583. The charity banks with CAF Bank. Could you please include the reference “Camelot” on donations made by BACS. Gift Aid authorisations can also be provided for completion if requested.

Please make cheques payable to Kisumu Children and send them to:-
Kisumu Children Trust, The Old Post Office, 1, Thorpe Avenue, Tonbridge,
TN10 4PW.

Supporting our community

North Cadbury Church of England Primary School

Our Head Teacher Lisa Thompson reports as follows:-

'I am delighted to report that we have received many donations of cash, cheques & book tokens. So please could you pass on our huge thanks & let people know that we have been able to ensure that every household at school has received a good quality reading magazine through the post this half term. A sizeable book order has also been placed with delivery due this Monday.'

So many thanks to all who have contributed in this way. If you have further donations that you would like to give please 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'.

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.

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.

Points for Prayers

- That we may learn what it means to have God and Jesus Christ at the heart and core of our lives
- The restrictions of the third lockdown and sustaining our common life in this time remembering the government announcement about possible easing to be made on Monday
- Give thanks for progress in the roll out of the different vaccines in combating coronavirus and for the falling rates of infection
- 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
- For the work of Kisumu Children Trust
- 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)