

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 101

Wednesday 31st March 2021

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

Welcome

Welcome to this midweek edition of Cutting Edge Camelot during Holy Week. The next edition will be on Good Friday.

Below I conclude our series on the Beatitudes.

Scripture Passage

Matthew 5: 10-12

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Reflection

We conclude our series on the Beatitudes by looking at the final one, blessed are those who are persecuted. And this seems appropriate as we remember Jesus' suffering and crucifixion during this Holy Week.

I once told someone who wanted to be helpful to me of how difficult a certain job had been. Once I had finished he had no hesitation in telling me where the problem lay. ‘It's obvious’ he said ‘Your face did not fit.’

And as I thought about this recently I wondered what this really meant. Clearly it meant that the difficulty was about the type of person I was rather than my performance of specific tasks. But was it my fault that my face didn't fit? Could I, should I, have done anything about it? Or could it even have been that the opposition that I faced was a form of persecution?

And on other occasions I have found myself acting or speaking in ways that I felt were specifically motivated by my faith. However, the response that this provoked was quite disproportionate, far more than a simple expression of disagreement. And yet did I in fact act or speak wisely?

I don't know. And I suspect that this may resonate with others of us. We must not forget the power of the light of Christ as it shines through us as Christians. Very often we may not be conscious of this. But it can illuminate the dark places around us and draw a sharp response of opposition from those who resist being drawn into the light of Christ.

And persecution does not always announce itself with a direct frontal assault on our faith. Sometimes it comes in a sidelong fashion as we find ourselves being subtly excluded from full acceptance by others for reasons that we are unable fully to grasp.

But of course we can be wrong. There is such a thing as a persecution complex in which we simply imagine that others are attacking us.

However, does it really matter whether our persecution is real or imagined? For the way that God asks us to respond to persecution is clear and straightforward. It is with blessing, to '*bless those who persecute you*' (Romans 12:14). And if we do respond to others with blessing then we intend good towards them. The issue of whether or not there has in fact been any persecution can safely be left in God's hands.

For persecution is not something which we seek. Other beatitudes such as those relating to mercy or peacemaking can give us personal goals or aims to aspire to. But it would be strange (and possibly not very healthy) to aspire to be persecuted.

Rather it seems that persecution is a consequence of our faith rather than an aim in itself. We can see the first beatitude, being poor in spirit, as being foundational to the rest. As the poor in spirit we acknowledge our need for and dependency on God. This means going against the grain of our culture which values the apparent strength of self-sufficiency. And so persecution, in one form or another, will inevitably follow.

I remember (and you may too) the mocking challenge directed by a political journalist to one of our leaders as to whether he prayed about decisions. As Christians we might think it a commendable sign of wisdom to pray for God's wisdom and to ask for God's help in difficult decisions. But for the journalist this seemed not to be the case. My guess is that he saw prayer in this context as a dangerous admission of weakness, a sign that the resources of human reason and willpower were not in themselves enough to enable us to make right choices.

However, in many parts of the world today, Christians will have no difficulty in knowing whether or not they are persecuted for their faith. For what they face is not mockery or silent exclusion but imprisonment and death as they follow very literally in the footsteps of Christ.

A recent report commissioned by the Foreign Office showed that almost a quarter of a billion Christians were still enduring persecution around the world. Just one instance was of gunmen who raided a church in Benue state, murdering 2 priests and 17 worshippers. The then Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said that it was hard to avoid concluding that this was motivated by anything other than religious hatred.

Such accounts which could be multiplied many times over remind us that we can be grateful for the freedom which we enjoy in being able to express our faith. Such freedom is not enjoyed in other parts of the world and we must not take our own freedom for granted.

So another way in which we can apply this beatitude to ourselves is to pray for those Christians around the world who face persecution for their faith. We need to be thankful for the courage of their witness and to pray for their continued strength and endurance.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- For Christians around the world who are persecuted for their faith, for strength and endurance, for ourselves that we may respond with blessing to persecution, real or imagined
- Our plans for Easter and the different ways in which we can share our faith over the Easter period
- 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
- Bishop Peter in his decision to take early retirement and Bishop Ruth as she continues to shoulder additional responsibilities in the diocese
- For North Cadbury Church Primary School and other local schools as they prepare to celebrate Easter in a way that conveys its message to all under their care
- For the work of Kisumu Children Trust
- Prayers for those affected economically by the lockdown, for businesses and those who have become unemployed

- Prayers for those who are lonely or housebound and for those who may be doing all right but who are really missing everyday social interaction in shops, the street or over the garden fence
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.
- Those facing illnesses of all kinds and those whom we know who have recently been bereaved.

Easter Services

There is good news to report as congregational singing will now be permitted for those services which are taking place outdoors in the churchyard. However, the position remains unchanged for services inside the church. Here congregational singing is not permitted.

The rule on outdoor gatherings is due to be relaxed as from tomorrow in order once more to allow groups of up to six people to meet outside.

This makes it much more feasible to hold services again although we need to remember that the rule on not socialising inside church buildings will remain unchanged.

In the meantime, however, it has been possible to plan for some Easter services across the Camelot Group as follows:-

- 9.30 am St John the Baptist North Cheriton, Easter Celebration
- 9.30 am St Mary's Compton Pauncefoot, Communion
- 9.30 am St Michael's Blackford, Morning Service
- 9.30 am St Thomas a Becket South Cadbury, Communion
- 11.00 am St Michael's North Cadbury, Communion
(N.B. This service is a parish one i.e. including Galhampton)
- 11.00 am St Nicholas Holton, Morning Service

4.00 pm St Mary's Yarlington, Easter Service

If there is not a service in your own parish you are welcome to attend services in other parishes across the Group but please do let the churchwardens know so that they can preserve the appropriate social distancing.

Services after Easter

The following services are joint as between North Cadbury and Galhampton:-

Sunday 11 th April	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 18 th April	11 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 25 th April	6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton

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.

Excalibur

The March 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.

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)