

# CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 93

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021

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

## Welcome

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

## Scripture Passages

*Romans 4: 13- 25*

<sup>13</sup> For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. <sup>14</sup> If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. <sup>15</sup> For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

<sup>16</sup> For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, <sup>17</sup> as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”) – in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

<sup>18</sup> Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So numerous shall your descendants be.” <sup>19</sup> He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. <sup>20</sup> No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup> being fully convinced that God was able to

do what he had promised. <sup>22</sup> Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.” <sup>23</sup> Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, <sup>24</sup> but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, <sup>25</sup> who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

### *Mark 8: 31-38*

<sup>31</sup> Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

<sup>33</sup> But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

<sup>34</sup> He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. <sup>36</sup> For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup> Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <sup>38</sup> Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

### **Reflection**

One thing after another. We go through life day by day. And our moods tend to reflect what is happening to us at the time. When times are tough it is natural to be gloomy and despondent or at best stoical, thinking to

ourselves that we have just got to keep going. On the other hand a really positive piece of news buoys us up and gives us a sense of elation.

So day by day we experience life as it comes. And yet we also look at life in a different way. Sometimes on a special anniversary or at a particular time of the year we will reflect on say the past year or years and ask ourselves not simply what happened but what it all meant.

And then we can find that our perspective becomes quite different from the one we had at the time. What might have looked like a missed opportunity which made us feel anxious and depressed could in hindsight appear as a providential protection from unnecessary danger and stress. We might be thankful that the opportunity we longed for did not in fact come our way.

And when we reflect like this we see life not just as a sequence of one event following another, but more as a whole. We may even begin to discover a pattern and an underlying purpose in our lives.

And when we tell the Christian story we can either do it as a sequence of one event following another or we can look at it as a whole and draw out its pattern and underlying purpose.

Our church's year encourages us to hear the Christian story in sequence. At Advent we prepare for Christ's coming, at Christmas we celebrate Christ's birth and now in Lent and Easter we remember Christ's journey towards the Cross which is followed of course by His resurrection.

And each Sunday highlights different aspects of Christ's story and message.

This morning we hear Peter seeking to persuade Jesus not to follow the path which leads to suffering and death on a Cross. And this provokes the stern rebuke from Jesus '*Get behind me Satan !*' Jesus will not be deflected from His purpose even by one of His closest disciples and friends.

And then a similarly stark and uncompromising message follows, Jesus says *'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'*

But we might think at this particular time is this the message we need or want to hear? What has been happening in the last few months? There has been the terrible toll of deaths and hospitalisations around us, many families suffering loss and bereavement. And those not directly impacted by this have been forced to suffer a greatly reduced measure of social contact with all that this means in terms of loneliness and mental health. This last period of lockdown has been really hard for so many of us.

So would it not be more appropriate if the message coming to us this Sunday was slightly more encouraging and optimistic?

Maybe. But if we were to look at the Christian story not simply in terms of one event following another but as a whole with an underlying pattern and meaning this might also help us. What if we were to put each individual part of the Christian story within the context of the whole?

This is what it means at a very simple level to do theology. Theology can have a rather off-putting reputation full of long words and difficult concepts. We may even think that theology obscures a simple message.

However, at its basic level what theology does is to help us make sense of the Christian story, to enable us to put its different parts into the context of the whole, to see how they all fit and work together.

So if we look at today's passages a bit more closely we will find that their message is not just one of austere self-denial but that this message is placed within a larger framework of Christian hope and of God's purpose for our lives.

Paul writing to the Romans reminds us that Abraham's obedience in being willing to give up a comfortable lifestyle and to embrace an uncertain future by trusting in God stemmed from faith. He tells us that the promise to Abraham depends on faith and rests on grace.

And the pattern of Abraham's life echoes the pattern of Jesus' life in terms of cross and resurrection. Abraham believed that God was able to give life to the dead and call into life a hope and a promise that did not yet exist. This was despite all the outward circumstances of his life which were those of barrenness and indeed death.

And Jesus too never separates the suffering of the Cross from the promise and hope of the resurrection, *'he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.'*

So in the whole picture grace and faith are the foundations of the Christian life. Suffering and self-denial are not meaningless. They are given life and purpose through the hope and promise of the resurrection.

And yet at the same time we must not try to evade this message which comes to us today, the message of denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following Christ. It may not be immediately attractive but it is nevertheless an important part of the whole Christian message.

So what might it mean in practical terms to deny ourselves? For many of Christ's first followers the call to take up their cross came very literally. Many of them did indeed face crucifixion or another form of death for the sake of their faith.

And in parts of the world today there are Christians who face persecution and even death for the sake of their faith. We may be grateful that we are not tested in this way. But how do we practice a lifestyle of self-denial?

There is of course the tradition of 'giving up' things for Lent but I wonder whether we can go a bit deeper.

Starting, however, with 'giving things up' reminds us that we do this not just for ourselves but for the sake of other people. In other years when we have been able to hold events like Lent lunches and have eaten more simply than usual we remind ourselves also of the needs of others. Our natural instincts are to look after ourselves but in denying ourselves we begin to live a lifestyle of generosity. A generosity that is more than simply financial but embraces a generosity of spirit.

And this brings us to another very practical change in our lifestyles which happens when we deny ourselves. How do we respond when someone hurts us? Instinctively we want to hit back, to get even. But our Christian response needs to be different. We need to deny that instinctive response and instead to offer love to those who hurt us, a love for our enemies.

And then there are the struggles for power, status and recognition that the disciples and indeed all of us have. On the road to Jerusalem these emerge very clearly when the disciples argue on the road about who is the greatest among them.

If we are honest many of us also have these preoccupations so we can probably understand why the disciples argued in this way. However, these too are instincts that we need to deny if we are to place Christ first in our lives.

Generosity, loving our enemies, saying no to our desire for power, status and recognition. All these are very practical ways in which Jesus' call to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him can be worked out in our lives.

And yet these are all parts of a bigger picture. When Jesus rebukes Peter He tells him, *'You are setting your mind not on the things of God but on human things.'*

This is a stark contrast which reminds us that as Christians we need to embrace an entirely new perspective on life. I began by speaking of how we can experience our lives either as a straight line, one event following another, or as a whole. When we have the time and space to reflect we can see our life as a whole and we can also see its underlying pattern. Perhaps lockdown and the season of Lent might give us an opportunity to do this.

And what we see as a result of such reflection depends on our overall perspective, the eyes through which we see. Do we look in terms of God and God's kingdom or is our perspective a purely human one? For in God's sight what we saw as our failures might be successes. And the opposite might also be true, that our successes might in God's terms be failures. So are we willing and prepared to ask ourselves where God has been at work in our lives in the past? And where might God be at work in our lives in the future? The answers to these questions might surprise us.

*Tristram*

## **Hymn Suggestions**

The hymns in our Vimeo recording are 'Amazing grace' and 'Praise to the holiest in the height'.

## **Vimeo**

A recording of this Sunday's service is available to watch on Vimeo at:-  
<https://vimeo.com/517568745>

## **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*

The school is very grateful for donations received which has enabled magazines to be distributed and books to be ordered. Any further donations can be made 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**

- To see our lives in the perspective of the whole Christian picture and to be prompted to practice generosity, love for our enemies and humility
- The restrictions of the third lockdown and sustaining our common life in this time
- Clear planning for future church life in the light of the government's timetable for the easing of restrictions
- 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
- For North Cadbury Church Primary School and other local schools as they prepare for reopening
- For the work of Kisumu Children Trust
- 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 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](http://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](mailto: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**

We have no further news to report on Bishop Peter since we heard that the stem cell transplant had been completed. We will keep you further updated as and when we have any more news. In the meantime please do continue to keep him and his family in your prayers. This is much appreciated.

*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)