

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 97

Wednesday 17th March 2021

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

Welcome

Welcome to this midweek edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. Our series on the Beatitudes continues with my reflection on the connection between purity of heart and seeing God.

Reflection

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8)

What does it mean to see God? In the Bible seeing God represents the fulfilment of our deepest spiritual dreams and desires.

In the Old Testament Job a good man who undergoes immense suffering is motivated by the desire to see God. He refuses to accept his friends' platitudes about the part that God is playing in his suffering but instead demands to speak to God for himself.

Finally, God does turn up and responds to Job. Even though this encounter does not seem to provide Job with direct answers to the questions that he raises nevertheless it does satisfy the deep longing of his heart to know God personally. This is what he says,

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; (Job 42:5)

Hearing at second hand from other people is contrasted with the direct experience of sight and it is this direct first-hand experience that Job has yearned for.

And in the New Testament, Simeon finds that once he has seen Jesus the purpose of his life, his hopes and dreams, have been fulfilled. God has shown Simeon that he will not die before he has seen the Messiah (Luke 2:26). And when that has happened Simeon is content to ask God to let his servant depart in peace *'for my eyes have seen your salvation'* (Luke 2:30).

And for the apostle Paul, the prospect of one day seeing God fully face to face is a reward to which he looks forward. It makes full sense of the very partial glimpses of God that we are given in this life,

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. (1 Corinthians 13:12)

And so the promise of seeing God is a sign of the importance of spiritual hunger and desire, of our continued yearning after God which, one day, as we walk in faith like Job, Simeon and Paul will be completely fulfilled.

Recently I have been enjoying some paternity leave following the birth of my second daughter Tahlia. And these great moments of life certainly pare down and put into perspective what in many other ways be perfectly worthy and indeed necessary activities and aims in life.

So also our relationship with God needs to be completely central to our lives and to place everything else at the periphery. That kind of absolute focus on God is what it means to be pure in heart.

But seeing God is not all about a mystical experience which we might experience at the top of a mountain or even perhaps in a safe space to which

we can retreat on our own untroubled by the mundane and practical demands of the outside world.

This would be to ignore another equally important aspect of seeing God. For seeing Jesus and God is inextricably linked to how we behave towards our fellow human beings.

John in his first letter reminds us of this link between seeing God and loving one another,

No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:12)

and he goes on to make this point even more forcefully when he reminds us, *Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. (1 John 4:20)*

Jesus makes the same point in his parable of the sheep and the goats when both the righteous and the wicked are unable to remember a time when they had actually seen Jesus. Yet Jesus reminds both groups of people that they have in fact seen Him in the faces of all those in need, those who were hungry, thirsty, a stranger, without clothing, sick or in prison. To have truly seen and responded to our neighbour in his or her full humanity is to have seen God and Jesus.

This feels like a daunting standard to live up to. In fact, none of us can say that we actually respond to the needs of other people in this whole hearted and comprehensive way. And this brings us back to our need for purity of heart. It is the pure in heart who will see God.

In the introduction to this series we saw Jesus Himself as the One who provides a living example of each of the Beatitudes. It is Jesus who is pure in heart in His relationship towards God, undivided in His first loyalty and

allegiance. And it is Jesus who perfectly exemplifies what it means to love our neighbour, to respond with compassionate help to those who come to Him in need.

And so it is by having Jesus at the centre of our lives that we too can be pure in heart. To be like Jesus is to see God. As John also says in his letter, it is because we will be like Jesus that we will see Jesus as He is (see 1 John 3:2). In other words purity of heart and seeing God is not something that we can work up by ourselves, it is a gift from God which we can receive and grow into through faith in Christ.

Tristram

Easter Services

We are anticipating that the rule on outdoor gatherings will be relaxed as from 29th March 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 (a) the rule on not socialising inside church buildings will remain unchanged and (b) so far as we know at the moment congregational singing will not be permitted. We understand that there is some discussion between church leaders and the government on this latter point and we will of course let you know if this brings any relaxation of this measure prohibiting congregational singing.

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

11.00 am St Nicholas Holton, Morning Service

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.

News of Bishop Peter

Bishop Peter has written to thank everyone for their prayers, support and encouragement. He says he is getting much stronger and seems to be recovering well. However, following doctor's advice and after much prayer and reflection he has come to the conclusion that he needs to take early retirement on medical grounds. Plans for a retirement service are yet to be finalised although this may take place on Pentecost Sunday marking Bishop Peter's seven years as our Diocesan bishop.

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.

Points for Prayers

- Seeing God and purity of heart
- Our plans for Easter
- 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
- 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 have now reopened
- 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. We are reviewing this suspension of services in the light of preparations for Easter and the government timetable for easing restrictions.

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)