

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 99

Wednesday 24th March 2021

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

Welcome

Welcome to this midweek edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. George continues our series on the Beatitudes by reflecting on what it means to be a peacemaker.

Reflection

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God

If we were to think who are the peacemakers in our world, we might start with the UN peacekeeping forces in their blue helmets, helping to maintain peace in some troubled country where bullets have been flying. We might add ACAS, with its role in helping to resolve industrial strife, or Relate in the context of marriage breakdown. We would certainly include innumerable parents coping with tears and tantrums because Elspeth won't share her dolls or Jack (not this time a dachshund) has broken Tommy's model aeroplane.

But peace is more than an absence of strife. In the New Testament it gets its meaning from two words. One is the Hebrew *shalom*, where peace includes a sense of well-being (good health, sound sleep, a long life) and contentment. The other is the Greek *eirene*, which adds the idea of imperturbability.

A loss of peace in that wider meaning may not involve any external conflict with another person. It may be caused simply by our own internal 'demons':

feelings of anxiety or remorse, disappointment or frustration, resentment, anger or a sense of grievance caused by the unfairness of life or by things said or done by other people. The internal strife that results will harm us, spoiling our lives and even our health. It will often affect others as well. And it has the potential to burst out into external strife.

So the soldiers in blue helmets, and others we may first have thought of, are certainly peacemakers, but the Beatitude is about something broader than that. How can we be peacemakers who help to encourage the things that make for peace, both between people and in people, and discourage things that have the opposite effect?

There is a clue in the second half of the Beatitude. Peacemakers are blessed “for they will be called children of God.” Children typically exhibit some of the characteristics of their parents. “Like father, like son” we say, or “He’s a chip off the old block”. To be a peacemaker involves sharing two in particular of God's characteristics.

One is that God is a God of justice, but also of compassion and mercy. If in 1918 the victorious allies had shown rather more compassion and mercy to the defeated German people, instead of demanding the huge reparations to which they thought they were justly entitled (most of which were never paid), the rest of the 20th Century might have been more peaceful than it was.

On a more day-to-day level, the world would be a more peaceful place if we all followed the maxim “If you don’t have anything nice to say about a person, don’t say anything”. What we could say to someone’s discredit may be true. It may be just. But saying it when we are not required to say it (and we seldom are) will not make for peace. Compassion and mercy urge us to bite our tongue.

The other is God's limitless and unconditional love, from which flows God's limitless and unconditional forgiveness.

In 2002, I attended a Lent Course run by the then Dean of Wells that considered the events of 9/11. A questioner asked whether it would not have been better if, instead of announcing a war on terror, President Bush had announced that those responsible for the attack on the Twin Towers were forgiven. The Dean thought that politically that would not have been an option. No doubt he was right. But I was left wondering whether the world would have been spared a lot of subsequent bloodshed and suffering if it had been possible for forgiveness somehow to have formed part of America's response.

Eric Lomax was a prisoner in a Japanese prisoner of war camp. He survived, but was tormented by memories of his torture by a particularly cruel Japanese interrogator. Years later, still tormented, he made a return visit to the camp. There he met the interrogator who said, brokenly, how terribly sorry he was for what he had done. At long last, Lomax found that he was able to forgive, his torments ceased and he found peace (he later wrote a book about his experiences, called *The Railway Man*).

It can sometimes be very hard to forgive. To forgive unconditionally can be even harder. But forgiveness is needed as much for the peace of mind of the injured person as for the person who caused the injury. Eric Lomax was extraordinarily lucky in meeting the interrogator and finding him a changed man. We may need to pray for the strength and grace to forgive, and go on forgiving, even when we are tempted to say 'that was unforgivable' and there has been no apology or sign of regret.

Jesus didn't come to live among the great and the good, bringing a blueprint for world peace. He came to live among ordinary people, to show us the ways of love. Peace and peacemaking need to grow from beneath, with their roots in the lives of ordinary people doing their best to love God and their

neighbour. Mother Teresa of Calcutta once (perhaps often) said, “What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family.” That’s the first and necessary step.

George

Points for Prayers

- For the strength and grace to forgive and so to be peacemakers
- Our plans for Easter and the different ways in which we can share our faith over the Easter period
- For peace, wisdom and harmony in decisions relating to the distribution of vaccines and other medicines, that they may reach those most in need of them
- 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 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.
- Those facing illnesses of all kinds and those whom we know who have recently been bereaved.

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 Yarlinton, 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.

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.

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)