

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 102

Good Friday 2nd April 2021

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Good Friday edition of Cutting Edge Camelot.

Below is the programme for the service as uploaded on to Vimeo. There then follows the text of the three reflections. Please note that this text is not a transcript of what was said in the service so it may be different in some respects.

The Vimeo link is:-

<https://vimeo.com/532180718>

Good Friday Service

Welcome and Introduction

John 18: 1-9 The arrest of Jesus

John 18: 15-18, 25-27 Peter’s denial of Jesus

John 18: 19-21, 28-37 Jesus before the authorities

Reflection 1: Approaching the Cross

Hymn There is a green hill far away

Psalm 22: 1-11

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 The suffering Servant

Reflection 2: Interpreting the Cross

Hymn We sing the praise of Him who died

The Crucifixion (John 19: 16-24)

Jesus' words from the Cross (John 19: 25-30)

Reflection 3: At the foot of the Cross

Prayers

Hymn When I survey the wondrous Cross

Blessing

Reflection 1: Approaching the Cross

Caravaggio's picture of the arrest of Jesus shows a dramatic clash between darkness and light. In physical terms this is most obviously demonstrated by the moonlight which illuminates people's faces and the man who carries a lantern. Otherwise there are only shadows and darkness. The faces of both Jesus and Judas are lit up but in Judas' face we see the furtive expression at this moment of betrayal as he looks sideways away from Jesus, unable to look Him straight in the eye.

Darkness and light correspond to openness and secrecy. We can be open or be secretive both in our actions and in our acknowledgement of who we are.

Jesus is someone who operates openly and is not afraid to tell other people who He is. His ministry has been a public one. When He is questioned by

the high priest, He says, "*I have spoken openly to the world; I have said nothing in secret.*"

And at the time of His arrest, Jesus is also bold. He asks those who have come to arrest Him who they are looking for. And when they reply 'Jesus of Nazareth' He is not evasive. He says very simply 'I am he.'

But in contrast to Jesus' openness, the others in the narrative are evasive. They prefer to operate not plainly in the light but secretly in the shadows. There is, first, Judas.

Judas surrounds himself with the protection of force. He brings with him the violence of soldiers, police, lanterns, torches and weapons. Jesus, however, has no need for this and indeed refuses to use human weapons.

Quietly and in a hidden way Judas has plotted to destroy Jesus. His actions are premeditated. He knows where to find Jesus, where to lead the police and the soldiers, because he knows that this place is one where Jesus often meets with His disciples.

And then there is Peter. He wants to hide in the shadows, not to acknowledge openly who he is, that he is a disciple of Jesus. He wants to follow Jesus at a safe distance. But this desire for safety, this inability to be open leads Peter to the disastrous step of three times denying that he knows Jesus.

Maybe we can understand and even sympathise with Peter. Maybe we think that we might have responded rather like him if we were in a similar position. There may even have been times when we have behaved like him. It is not easy to tell other people who we really are and what our faith is. Such openness requires courage and boldness.

As we reflect on these contrasts between light and darkness, openness and secrecy we may conclude that the courage to be open is not one that is ours

by right. Our natural response is to stay in the shadows and to avoid complete commitment. But Jesus is able to live openly and in the light. If we are to do the same then we need to ask Jesus for His strength and courage.

Reflection 2: Interpreting the Cross

Christians see our two passages from the Old Testament, the opening of Psalm 22 and Isaiah's Suffering Servant as pointing us to the Cross and its meaning. So how do these passages help us to understand the true significance of Good Friday?

Both passages oscillate between two poles of meaning. On the one hand there is suffering, anguish and helplessness. Psalm 22 opens with the famous cry for God's help which is found on Jesus' lips in Matthew's and Mark's accounts of the crucifixion,

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

And this cry for help continues unabated in the next verse of the Psalm,

² O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.

Later in the Psalm the humiliation and mockery of Christ's Crucifixion are foretold. The basic humanity of the one who suffers is denied and even His relationship with God is attacked.

*⁶ But I am a worm, and not human;
scorned by others, and despised by the people.*

*⁷ All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;*

*⁸ "Commit your cause to the LORD;
let him deliver-- let him rescue the one in whom he delights!"*

And in the depiction of Isaiah's Servant the stark reality of rejection and suffering also emerges. The Servant *'had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him'*. And *He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity.*

But on the other hand, there is confidence, trust, and an affirmation of ultimate power and authority.

The Psalmist takes heart both from how God has acted to help His people in history,

⁴ In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.

and also from how God has protected him at a personal level,

*⁹ Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.*

*¹⁰ On you I was cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.*

And the opening description of the Servant emphasises triumph and exaltation rather than humiliation and suffering,

*¹³ See, my servant shall prosper;
he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.*

The Servant *'shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him'*.

This oscillation between suffering and triumph foreshadows the pattern of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection.

But why so much suffering and rejection? Was it really necessary? What did it all achieve? The New Testament tells us that Christ died for our sins

in accordance with the scriptures (meaning the Old Testament). The death of the suffering Servant is one which redeems and frees others from the power of sin and of death.

- ⁴ *Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.*
- ⁵ *But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.*
- ⁶ *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way,
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Our sins, our suffering and sicknesses are all placed on and carried by Christ. Through His suffering we are given both physical healing, *by his wounds we are healed*, and even more important spiritual wholeness, *the Lord has laid on him, Christ, the iniquity of us all*. Christ died so that we might live free of the burden and guilt of sin.

What a wonderful privilege this is. May we know in our own hearts this Good Friday this true and lasting spiritual release.

Reflection 3: At the foot of the Cross

We move to the Cross itself. What is really happening there? Who can really fathom the depths of what the Cross means?

But even if we cannot fully understand, we can trust and accept. At a personal level the more I look at the Cross the more I am drawn into worship, awe and wonder. And as we are drawn into worship and adoration, so the impact of the Cross on our lives becomes deeper and deeper.

Those who try to produce a neat formula to explain what is happening, those who may seem to be in control, find that this does not work. Pilate gives his explanation in the words nailed to the Cross “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”

But this attempt at bringing order out of chaos does not work. It simply produces more controversy. He is told that what he should have written is *‘This man said, I am King of the Jews.’* And Pilate maybe sick of all these fine points and arguments that he does not understand simply responds by closing the conversation down with the words *“What I have written I have written.”*

And the soldiers at the foot of the Cross. Maybe they think that they are in control, that they know what they are doing. They cast lots for Jesus’s clothes. This is the ultimate sign of the loss of Jesus’ human dignity and of random and casual cruelty. Perhaps the soldiers think that in this moment they have complete power over what is happening to Jesus. But they have no idea of what is really happening and where true power lies. They may think that they are freely choosing to express their contempt in this way. But in reality casting lots for Jesus’ clothing simply fulfils what scripture foretells many centuries previously, in the words of Psalm 22.

23 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts...they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.” This was to fulfil what the scripture says, “They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.”

But Jesus does know what these terrible events mean. Even in the extremes of suffering He has not lost His capacity to focus on and care for others. He sees His mother nearby and His beloved disciple, John. And He knows that when He is dead, His mother will need help and protection. So He tells his mother, *“Woman, here is your son.”* and the disciple *“Here is your mother.”*

And Jesus knows that despite all outward appearances His death is not random or meaningless.

²⁸ *After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), "I am thirsty."*

He knows that His mission is now accomplished, all is now finished. And once more He refers to Psalm 22 in the words *'I am thirsty'*.

And His final words are simply, *'It is finished'*. What is finished? God's work of salvation for you and for me. The way in which our sins are forgiven and in which you and I can have a simple, childlike relationship with God.

We need to kneel at the foot of the Cross. Even though we can understand only in part, we can nevertheless accept in full Jesus' words *'It is finished.'* It is finished, all that we need for us to love and enjoy God has been accomplished for us by Jesus. Our gratitude for what Jesus has done for us can know no limits. And it is through grateful worship that we can begin to express something of this response to the mystery and power of the Cross.

Easter Services

- 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

Services after Easter

Services arranged to date are:-

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

Please note that North Cadbury and Galhampton are holding joint services for the time being.

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 April 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)