

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 108

Sunday 9th May 2021

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

Welcome

Welcome to this edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. Below Ron reflects on what Jesus' command to love one another means in practical terms for our lives.

Scripture Passage

John 15: 9-17

'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.'

Reflection

In the words of an old poster, if you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? The challenge in the wording is that it asks us to examine ourselves for the proof that we're Christians. It's not enough to say I live in a Christian country; my parents brought me up Christian, I was baptised as a baby, and I watch Songs of Praise. And it's not enough to say I go to church regularly. I once found a mouse in a biscuit tin. It didn't make it a biscuit. Just because you're in a church building doesn't necessarily make you a Christian. Nor, dare I say it, does the fact you had a wonderful conversion experience some years ago, and your prayer-time leaves you with beautiful warm feelings. It's not safe to categorise people according to their religious experience. It's too easy to dismiss others, saying that because they haven't had the same religious experience as you, that means they're not a real Christian.

Jesus told us not to judge others. The test of whether a religious group is a church or a cult isn't just what they believe; it's also what they think about those outside their own group. If they insist that everyone else is in error, or that everyone outside their little group is going to hell, there's a good chance they're a cult. But let's try not to judge them, even on that.

It's none of our business to decide whether other people are Christians or not. The only question for us is am I a Christian? When Jesus' disciples once found someone casting out devils in the name of Jesus, they asked whether they should have stopped him. And Jesus said, *No - whoever isn't against us is on our side.* We mustn't be asking if others are on the Lord's side. We give them the benefit of the doubt, but we examine ourselves very carefully. Am I a Christian? And the test for that is given us by Jesus. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

The evidence for faith we're looking for, is loving behaviour; it's the fruit which proves the roots are working. And when Jesus speaks of love, he's not talking about mushy emotions. Love has become one of the softest words in the language. *I'd love a Babycham. I love the Greek Islands. I love the new Madonna album.* So how do you tell someone you love them so they appreciate the real depth of what you feel about them? Back in Jesus' day, people were a bit more careful how they used words. They didn't go about saying they loved this or that. So when Jesus commands us to love - and notice, it is a command, we have to take notice. His new commandment isn't about liking people, because that's something we can't always do. Jesus doesn't command us to do the impossible. But loving people, even the people you don't like, is all to do with the way we treat each other. *Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another,* he said. Well then. How does Jesus love us? If you read the Gospels carefully, you find that his was a quite special kind of love. He loved the whole human race. All together, and one at a time. He wasn't hidebound by nationalist prejudices. He loved Roman soldiers, enough to forgive them banging nails in his wrists and ankles. He loved a Canaanite woman, enough to heal her daughter he'd never even met. And he loved the Greeks who came to see him, like curious celebrity hunters. He loved his own nation, but his eyes were wide open to all its faults. He loved it enough to want to see it at its best. He loved his hometown, even though they didn't accept his authority.

Jesus loved with a tolerant love; he certainly didn't approve of what some people got up to, but he never stopped loving the people. He loved people because, and he loved them despite. He especially loved those who were outcast from society; the prostitutes, the cheating tax collectors, sinners of all sorts. He loved his followers, who became his closest friends; he even loved Judas, knowing what he knew about him, and he told them to love each other. But what comes over most clearly is that Jesus loved people as individuals. He wanted to find out all about people, he accepted them as they were, and he loved them for what made each of them unique. A woman from Samaria with a succession of husbands and a live-in boyfriend. A rich

kid who loved his money too much. Nathaniel the Superjew - the stories are full of these people Jesus really cared about. Then he found out what their needs were. Sometimes he knew what people needed better than they knew themselves, and set about meeting their needs. The man at the pool of Bethesda, feeling sorry for himself, so Jesus had to ask him if he really wanted healing. Jesus' love was an active love; a love that issued in practical service, healing and restoring people so as to bring out their hidden potential. That's how Jesus loves us. He loves us for what we might be, while still loving us for what we already are. And that's how he commanded us to love each other: inclusively, tolerantly and as individuals to be respected, encouraged and served.

The Bible is the greatest love story in the world, because it's about a love that sacrifices itself to meet the needs of others. If you want romantic love, it's there too. Read the Song of Solomon for the image of a hairy, lusty, caveman God chasing us, his beloved, to make us his own. But the great love of God goes beyond lust. He likes us, too, because he made us in his own image, and he loves us enough to throw himself into the traffic to push us to the kerb. *If you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?* Probably not a lot; but if you're really trying to love other people in the self-sacrificing way that Jesus loves you, then the prosecution might just be able to make enough of a case against you to secure a conviction.

Ron

Points for Prayers

- To seek to love others in the self sacrificing way that Jesus loves us
- Continued thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers and those in care homes demonstrated throughout the course of this pandemic

- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds, those who have recently been bereaved and those suffering as a result of social isolation and in other ways
- India and other countries currently in crisis from coronavirus
- Wisdom and sensitivity to others as the lockdown restrictions continue to ease with the next step expected on 17th May
- For North Cadbury Church Primary School and other local schools as they continue their new term
- 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.

Hymn

One hymn based round Jesus' command to love as given in this gospel passage is 'A new commandment I give unto you'.

Congregational Singing

Congregational singing is now 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 has been relaxed in order to allow groups of up to six people to meet outside. The rule on not socialising inside church buildings remains unchanged but is due to change on 17th May.

Services during May

The following services have been arranged to date in May:-

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| Sunday 9 th May | 9.30 am Communion, Galhampton |
| Sunday 16 th May | 9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot |
| Sunday 16 th May | 11.00 am Communion, Maperton |
| Sunday 16 th May | 11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury |
| Sunday 16 th May | 6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlington |
| Sunday 23 rd May | 8.00 am Communion, Blackford |
| Sunday 23 rd May | 9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury |
| Sunday 23 rd May | 11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury |
| Sunday 23 rd May | 11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington |
| Sunday 30 th May | 8.00 am Communion, Blackford |
| Sunday 30 th May | 6.30 pm Evensong, Galhampton |

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

Excalibur

The May 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)