

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 109

Sunday 16th May 2021

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

Welcome

Welcome to this edition of Cutting Edge Camelot.

Scripture Passages

Acts 1: 15:17, 21-26

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, ¹⁶ "Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus - ¹⁷ for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry."

²¹ "So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us - one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection."

²³ So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." ²⁶ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

John 17: 6-19

“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸ for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours.

¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them.

¹¹ And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.

¹³ But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵ I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.

¹⁶ They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Reflection

This Sunday is an ‘in between’ one as it falls between our celebrations of Jesus’ Ascension into heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

In the progress of this coronavirus emergency we might also think of ourselves as being in a bit of an ‘In between’ time. Yes, we are grateful for

the extent of the unlocking that has already taken place but in the light of Friday's announcement concerning the Indian variant further progress now seems much more uncertain.

Our readings for this Sunday from John's Gospel and Acts also reflect the mood and preoccupations of an 'in between' period.

The setting of John's gospel is the Last Supper. Jesus is preparing His disciples to face a time when He will no longer be physically present with them. This time has not yet come but it is approaching.

¹¹ And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

Jesus and the disciples are at a turning point. The world spoken of in this sense means the world that is opposed to God, a place of danger and threat where protection is very much needed. Jesus will no longer be in the world because He is returning to His Father. However, the disciples will for the remainder of their lifetimes continue to be in the world though without the protection of Jesus' physical presence. So all the more they need Jesus to ask that they enjoy God's spiritual protection and that they remain united in the face of a hostile world.

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said,

And our passage from Acts is also set in an 'in between' time, the days after Jesus' Ascension and before the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The total number of believers at this time is only one hundred and twenty, a very small and vulnerable group.

However, even in 'in between' times there are some decisions which we still have to make. Such decisions may be difficult because we simply do not

know what the long term future might hold. And yet they still need to be made. So how do we trust in God when we make such decisions?

Our passage from Acts gives us an example of such a decision and how the disciples made it. The apostles needed to choose a replacement for Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus.

Of course we might suggest that as with other decisions in an 'in between' time the right course of action might simply have been postponement. Is a replacement needed at this time? After all, the person who is chosen as this replacement, Matthias, is never heard of again. But later on the ideal candidate, the apostle Paul, turned up. Was he meant to be the twelfth apostle? However, at this transitional time Paul was not even a Christian, rather he was a sworn enemy of the church. Who could have predicted his subsequent transformation?

And then again we might be surprised by the method by which Matthias was chosen, casting lots. Does this suggest a deep trust in God or simply a trust in a random process and outcome?

Nevertheless, the apostles had clear guidelines for this vacant position. They were looking for someone who had accompanied Jesus during His earthly ministry and who was an eye witness to Jesus' Resurrection. Paul, incidentally, could never have fulfilled the first of these conditions and it was only later that he could claim to be a witness to Jesus' Resurrection.

So straight away we learn that the choice of the twelfth apostle was not random at all but based on a very clear and faith based principle.

This enables the apostles to draw up a shortlist. There are two names on this list, Joseph and Matthias. Perhaps they were both equally good candidates and there was nothing much to choose between them. Certainly there seemed to be nothing obviously disqualifying either of them. We may

have been in the position where we have considered the claims of two different candidates who seem equally suited for a particular position. These choices are difficult to make.

The disciples do indeed make this choice by the casting of lots. And although this might seem to be a random process it is in its context secondary to the role of prayer in terms of making the right choice.

For before the lots are cast they pray. And in this prayer they express full confidence in God's judgement and choice. They acknowledge that it is not they but only God who really knows the heart. And so they trust God to show them which of the two candidates God has chosen. The casting of lots is simply the way in which they trust and believe that God will make His will known.

So we are reminded also of the crucial role of prayer in 'in between' times when we are uncertain as to which path to follow in the road ahead.

In John's gospel, Jesus is praying for His disciples

⁹ I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me

And as Jesus prays He focusses on a specific need that they have, the need for protection.

¹² While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.

While Jesus has been physically present with His disciples He has protected them directly. But this will no longer be the case, Jesus will no longer be physically present. His physical presence will now be replaced by the spiritual protection of His prayers.

14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

The need for protection is very real. Even despite Jesus' physical presence Judas still succumbed to the spiritual temptations and dangers around him. The relationship between the world and the disciples is one of sharp hostility. The world hates the disciples. They do not belong there. They march to the beat of a different drum. Their entire value systems are different.

15 I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.

Nevertheless, Jesus does not pray that the disciples should escape from the world and its dangers. Rather He prays that His disciples should experience God's protection as they encounter these dangers.

17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

And as well as prayer, protection will come through the lifestyle of the disciples. Jesus prays for the disciples to be sanctified. Sanctification means being holy or becoming more and more like Christ. And this happens as we are soaked in God's word which is the truth. It does not depend on our own efforts but is given to us as we share in Jesus' own holiness and dedication to His Father.

So as we consider our readings today we might ask ourselves how we make decisions. In an 'in between' time we do need to consider whether or not such decisions should simply be postponed until life becomes more certain. But if decisions do need to be made then it is crucial that they are made prayerfully.

A key part of Jesus' prayer for us is that we might become holy. How might

we demonstrate holiness in this time? Holiness is being like Jesus and the fruit of the Spirit (which the apostle Paul describes in his letter to the Galatians) is an expression of the character of Jesus. An important part of this fruit is kindness.

Surely kindness is much in need at this 'in between' time. We all have fears and vulnerabilities but these can be different for each one of us and we need to respect such differences. So we need to be understanding of different viewpoints. And where we do indeed need to make some decisions even if these do turn out to be provisional ones, then we need to think about everyone's position as we make such decisions.

Tristram

Bishop Peter's Retirement

Bishop Peter will be retiring as our Diocesan Bishop next Sunday at Pentecost after seven years in post.

His farewell service will be on Saturday 22nd May. Details of how to join in this service online will be made available on the diocesan website.

We have sent Bishop Peter and his wife Jane a card of appreciation on behalf of all of us in the Camelot Parishes. During his time as Bishop he led services both at North Cadbury and at Holton. The card includes a drawing of the Scissor Arch at Wells Cathedral made by Chris Akroyd, churchwarden at Blackford.

Points for Prayers

- For prayerful wisdom and kindness to one another in this 'in between' time

- Continued thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers and those in care homes demonstrated throughout the course of this pandemic
- Wise response to the possible impact of the new Indian variant of coronavirus particularly as the next step in the easing of lockdown restrictions is to take place on Monday
- 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
- Bishop Peter's retirement (see notice above)
- 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

A well known hymn which speaks about our need to be instructed by God is 'Teach me, my God and King'. We are singing this at St Mary's Compton Pauncefoot this morning.

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 tomorrow, Monday 17th May.

Services during May

The following services have been arranged in May:-

Sunday 16 th May	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 16 th May	11 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 16 th May	11 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 16 th May	6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 23 rd May	8 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 23 rd May	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 23 rd May	11 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 23 rd May	11 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 30 th May	8 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)