

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 114

Sunday 20th June 2021

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday's edition of Cutting Edge Camelot.

Scripture Passages

2 Corinthians 6: 1-13

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. ² For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!

³ We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴ but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷ truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹ as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see - we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

¹¹ We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you.

¹² There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. ¹³ In return - I speak as to children - open wide your hearts also.

Mark 4: 35-41

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” ³⁶ And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. ³⁷ A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”

³⁹ He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?”

⁴¹ And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

Reflection

Storms on the Sea of Galilee can blow up fast. That seems to have happened in this famous account of Jesus and His disciples as they set sail on the Sea of Galilee.

It begins peacefully enough with Jesus and His disciples trying to get away from those crowds which were so constantly following them. They get into the boat and conditions at the time seem fair enough. Other boats also take this opportunity to start the sea journey.

But then suddenly and out of nowhere a violent storm blows up. So violent indeed that the wind gets up, the waves come over the top of the boat and begin to swamp it.

Sometimes for us storms blow up seemingly out of nowhere. We may expect a quiet period and then suddenly and unexpectedly we find ourselves caught up in a crisis. However, I cannot honestly say that this week I was caught by surprise by the announcement of a four-week extension to the lockdown restrictions. This had been accurately predicted and hinted at for some time by the press and the rest of the media.

And yet there was still a sense of shock and even outrage as this announcement came. For many it represented yet another serious blow to their business and their income. For others there was the psychological effect of the delay to what had been dubbed 'Freedom day', a long awaited moment when we no longer had to live with all the restrictions placed on our everyday lives.

And so despite what we may have been told in advance it still felt to many as if we had been sailing along perfectly calmly, taking one step after one another on this long road out of lockdown and then we were told of new and uncertain dangers which would halt this progress in its tracks.

The disappointment and dismay is real. Other forms of hardship in our lives are perhaps not quite so dramatic. They may be health issues or family circumstances with which we have lived for a number of months, even years, so that we have become accustomed to their impact on our lives. But they are still a form of suffering or hardship in our lives, perhaps this time more in the form of a dull, continuous ache.

Both our passages today deal in different ways with times of hardship and suffering. The sudden storm on the Sea of Galilee is a crisis which seems to have come out of nowhere but is terrifying for the disciples. The various forms of suffering and hardship described by Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians seem to be more continuous and long lasting, extending across the whole period of his ministry. But their impact on his life is just as great.

This causes us to ask what the place of hardship and suffering in the Christian life is. Is it abnormal and extraordinary or just a normal part of the Christian life? If we are accustomed to living in comfort, times of hardship and suffering may seem very difficult to cope with or to understand. However, the New Testament offers us a very different perspective on this subject.

To look once more at the storm on the Sea of Galilee.

The storm arises suddenly and unexpectedly. It strikes fear into the hearts of the disciples. It is an urgent crisis which requires decisive action and change. Where is God to be found? Where is Jesus? Surely this above any other moment is a time for Jesus to be with them and to act decisively.

But in this crisis Jesus is in the stern of the boat asleep on a cushion. What use is this to the disciples? Does He really care about the crisis which has gripped His disciples, a crisis which may cost them their lives? Jesus in fact is demonstrating the depth of His capacity to trust in God by continuing calmly to sleep at this moment. And yet it is easy for His disciples to misinterpret this trust as a sign that He does not care. Perhaps we may identify with the disciples at this point as we reflect on times of crisis and hardship that we have been through in our lives. In such times have we never thought to ourselves 'Where is God?'

However, the disciples have, as so often, misunderstood Jesus. There are no histrionics when Jesus does act. He wakes up and His words to the sea are simple and clear, 'Peace! Be still'. But they are also immediately effective as the wind ceases and there is a dead calm.

And then Jesus turns from the wind and the waves, His power over the natural world, to address His disciples. And He rebukes them for their fear and lack of faith.

In response the disciples experience awe and wonder and ask themselves who Jesus is. For it is only God who has power over the wind and the seas. As they ask who Jesus is no doubt they remembered times in the Old Testament such as when God parted the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus. Such incidents clearly showed that it was only God who had power over the wind and the sea. And if Jesus also had this power then who was Jesus?

As we turn to our reading from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians we might first be struck by the emphasis on all the sufferings and misfortunes that Paul has experienced as he has fulfilled his calling to preach the gospel. It is a long and impressive list, *'as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger.'*

It might be easy from this to conclude from this that Paul saw suffering and endurance in times of hardship to lie at the very heart of the Christian gospel. Some Christians and Christian groups have indeed reached this conclusion and have measured their growth in holiness by how far they have deprived themselves of comforts and how much they have placed themselves in difficult and dangerous circumstances for the sake of the gospel.

However, Paul's understanding of the Christian life is richer and more varied than that. Suffering and the capacity to endure is indeed a part of the Christian life but it is by no means the whole.

Our passage begins by Paul setting the entirety of the Christian life within the framework of God's grace. He urges those who listen to him *'not to accept the grace of God in vain.'* The signature note of the passage and indeed the Christian life is one of grace and salvation.

And Paul certainly does not go out of his way to invite opposition and conflict and the pain that this brings. Rather he says, ' *We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry.*'

However, we are to be faithful to Christ and His message. As this happens so our own lives begin to change. Paul lists a number of Christian virtues which we will begin to display '*purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God*'. And as both our character and effectiveness grow the result is joy, peace and blessing. For whatever hardships we may go through the Christian life is ultimately one of joy.

We keep going in the Christian life not simply through bad times but also in the good times which we are free to enjoy and indeed should. We know Christ '*in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute*'.

At the heart of the Christian life there lies a paradox. Cross and Resurrection, suffering and joy, belong together and cannot be separated from one another. So we are, '*as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.*'

Yes, the hardships and deprivations of the Christian life are real, we are '*as poor and having nothing*'. However, they are combined with joy and plenty '*making many rich... possessing everything*'.

Paul ends with an appeal for the Corinthians to reciprocate his love by opening their hearts to him. For so far even though Paul has offered his love to them they have not responded in kind. And this unreciprocated love would also have been a source of deep pain in his life. Love, however, is a fitting note on which to end. It is love which is both the goal of the Christian life and its motivating power.

So when times are tough the quality of our relationship with God is inevitably tested. Is God really there? Does He care?

And in these times the challenges of these passages are clear and relevant. They call us to a renewed trust in God and to prayer, to the need to persevere in our journey of faith and above all for love to be at the centre of our vision. Like Paul, may we too experience Christ's grace which alone makes all this possible.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- To grow in our faith even in times of hardship and difficulty
- Continued thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers and those in care homes demonstrated throughout the course of this pandemic
- For all those adversely affected by Monday's announcement of a four week extension to lockdown restrictions
- For weddings as they need to continue to observe social distancing and other restrictions
- 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
- Bishop Ruth and the rest of the Diocesan staff as they take on additional responsibility following Bishop Peter's retirement and plan for the future
- For North Cadbury Church Primary School and other local schools as they continue the school year
- 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 hymn which speaks of the dangers of the sea and the need for God's help is 'Eternal Father, strong to save.'

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.

Services for the rest of June

Sunday 20 th June	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 20 th June	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 20 th June	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 20 th June	6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 27 th June	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 27 th June	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 27 th June	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 27 th June	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 27 th June	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 27 th June	11.00 am Open Air Sunday Worship, Yarlington *
Sunday 27 th June	6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton

Yarlington Open Air Service, Sunday 27th June *

The Yarlington Open Air Service on Sunday 27th June will be followed by a picnic. Please bring your own picnic. Please bring a chair and a blanket as needed.

Excalibur

Excalibur is back in paper form. It contains details of Camelot people, a record of baptisms, weddings and funerals undertaken through the church in the Camelot Parishes. Previous editions of Excalibur can be found online at camelotparishes.co.uk

The Parish Office

If Rob is not in the Office during normal office hours please contact him 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)