

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 124

Sunday 12th September 2021

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

Welcome

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

Scripture Passages

Isaiah 50: 4-9

The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word.

Morning by morning he wakens –

wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.

⁵ The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.

⁶ I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.

⁷ The Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
⁸ he who vindicates me is near.

Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me.

⁹ It is the Lord GOD who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

Mark 8: 27-38

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” ²⁸ And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹ He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” ³⁰ And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

³¹ Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

³⁴ He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶ “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷ Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Reflection

We have learnt a lot about the crowd as we have followed our gospel readings over the summer. We have also learnt about the pressures which the crowd brings to the ministry of Jesus and His disciples.

However, it can be quite comforting to be part of a crowd if you have to face difficult questions which you would rather avoid. What do you think about this or that controversial topic? Well, we might say, the majority verdict, the balance of opinion is such and such. I'm not in a position to judge for myself, I don't have the knowledge or capacity. And even if we pride ourselves in not following the crowd or the fashion, in fact we are influenced by them just as much if we say simply that we should disregard the majority opinion.

The crowd in other words is a safe place where we can hide and take refuge. We do not need to reveal who we truly are and we can avoid the responsibility of asking ourselves what we really think.

In this famous account of Jesus' dialogue with His disciples at Caesarea Philippi, He starts by asking His disciples the relatively easy question. What's the majority opinion about me? Who do other people say that I am?

And the disciples can answer this question simply on the basis of their information and observation. The conversation begins on a gentle, non-threatening level.

So the disciples answer Jesus in straightforward terms. They tell Him that other people say that Jesus could be John the Baptist, Elijah or another one of the prophets.

Up to this point the disciples can hide under the shadow of other people's opinions. But now Jesus asks them a much more direct and challenging question. The option of being part of the crowd is no longer available to them. Instead they are asked what do you think? What other people think no longer matters. Other people could be right or wrong. Perhaps there is a completely different answer which has not yet been considered. However, all that matters is 'What do you think?'

This brings the disciples and us to a lonely place where we need to take responsibility for our actions, whether other people agree with these or not. This can also be a frightening place where we feel very vulnerable.

And as well as bringing them to a lonely and vulnerable place, the answer to this question is one which will open the disciples up to a destiny not simply of glory but also of suffering.

Peter perhaps typically is the first to rush in with the correct answer that Jesus is in fact the Messiah. But does he realise the true implications of what he is saying?

For misunderstandings of who the Messiah is and what the Messiah will do were common at that time. Many people expected a glorious and triumphant national liberator. No doubt because of this the first thing that Jesus does after Peter gives his famous answer is sternly to order the disciples not to tell anyone about him. For this might simply feed people's misconceptions.

No, if we are to truly understand the nature of the Messiah we have to turn to Old Testament prophecies such as the one from Isaiah which is our first passage this morning. In Isaiah there is a series of songs collectively called the Servant Songs concerning a mysterious figure called the Servant. This passage from Isaiah forms the third out of these four songs. As Christians we believe that Jesus has fulfilled the destiny and calling of the Servant.

The Servant, first of all, is in the position of an ideal disciple. His first responsibility is to listen to God each morning day by day. It is only after listening to God that the Servant is in a position to teach and bring God's word to others, to sustain the weary. This reminds us that as Christians we always need to receive from God first if we are to give anything out to others.

And the obedience and commitment of the Servant is stressed. There is no turning back whatever the cost. The importance of listening is once more stressed as God opens the ear of the Servant. There is a link between listening and obedience.

The suffering of the Servant then comes to the fore as the Servant gives his back to those who strike him and his cheeks to those who pull out the beard. He does not hide from insult and spitting. There are echoes here of Jesus' crucifixion and also of the Sermon on the Mount where we are told to turn the other cheek.

With this passage and prophecy in mind we can understand better why the first thing Jesus teaches His disciples after they learn that He is indeed the Messiah is about how Jesus, the Son of Man, will suffer, be rejected and die before rising again.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, Peter is not keen to accept this message. However, Jesus tells him that he needs a completely different perspective on life, God's perspective rather than a purely human one.

For from a human perspective we always wish to avoid suffering, disgrace and death. But from God's perspective these are part of and serve a greater purpose. For more important than life or death is the reality of the Resurrection, which offers us a different and often unpopular perspective on life.

There is, then, a courage that is needed in commitment. The Servant in Isaiah shows this courage, setting his face like flint and relying totally on God who is the one who will ultimately rescue and vindicate him. He shows complete trust in God in the face of his enemies.

For a disciple of Jesus the courage of commitment is also needed. For the way of a disciple is also one of suffering and taking up our cross. Those who

want to save their lives will lose it and those who lose their lives for Jesus' sake will save their lives. We think often of what our bodies need and what will happen to them but in the end it is the soul which counts and which is eternal. As Jesus says,

“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Many of us, I suspect, would often like simply to merge into the crowd and to take comfort in this, knowing that we will not be noticed as individuals. And yet faith in Christ does not allow us this option. To each one of us, Jesus asks ‘What do you think? Who do you say that I am?’

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- To be able to accept the cost as well as the joy of being a disciple of Christ
- Continued thanksgiving for the care, skill and courage of NHS workers and all others who work to contain the spread of this pandemic and to be agents of healing
- Remembering the impact of 9/11
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- For weddings and christenings planned for the autumn
- Bishop Ruth and the rest of the Diocesan staff as they take on additional responsibility in this vacancy in See
- For the choice of a new Bishop, someone who shares God's heart for this Diocese
- Thanksgiving for the return of North Cadbury Church School and other local schools after the summer holidays

- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton as it prepares for reopening in the near future
- 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 of the hymns at Holton this morning speaks of what it means to respond personally to Christ's call on our lives. It is 'Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?'

Services for September

Sunday 12 th September	9.30 am	Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 12 th September	9.30 am	Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 12 th September	9.30 am	Matins, Blackford
Sunday 12 th September	11.00 am	Sunday Worship, Holton
Sunday 19 th September	9.30 am	Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 19 th September	11.00 am	Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 19 th September	11.00 am	Harvest Service, Maperton
Sunday 19 th September	6.30 pm	Harvest Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 26 th September	9.30 am	Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 26 th September	9.30 am	Harvest Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 26 th September	9.30 am	Harvest Matins, Blackford
Sunday 26 th September	9.30 am	Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 26 th September	11.00 am	Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 26 th September	11.00 am	Communion, Holton

Sunday 26th September 11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlinton

Sunday 26th September 6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton

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. The September edition of Excalibur has now been published online at camelotparishes.co.uk and on each parish's A Church Near You webpage.

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)