

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 129

Sunday 17th October 2021

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

Welcome

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

Scripture Passages

Hebrews 5: 1-10

Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; ³ and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. ⁴ And one does not presume to take this honour, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵ So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;

⁶ as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever,
according to the order of Melchizedek.”

⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹ and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, ¹⁰ having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Mark 10: 35-45

³⁵ James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶ And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” ³⁷ And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” ³⁹ They replied, “We are able.” Then Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

⁴¹ When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John.

⁴² So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³ But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Reflection

Status probably matters to us more than we would like to admit. The size of a desk can often give a message as to how important or otherwise its occupant is. And the allocation of a certain country house as a retreat for a senior member of the government seems to have been the subject of some quite keen comment and dispute recently.

We probably would wish to consider ourselves above such pettiness. And yet a small incident might pull us up. We do not really care whether a resume mentions all our professional titles and achievements and for all

practical purposes this is unimportant. But nevertheless we feel obliged to point out this omission.

Sometimes the reason for this may be that such titles have been given to us because we have earned them through our own hard work. This should not go unnoticed or unrecognised.

And yet in God's world status works differently. Status and position are purely at God's disposal they are not given as a reward for what we have done.

In the Old Testament the position of a high priest was one of great status. However, as our passage from the letter to the Hebrews comments '*one does not presume to take this honour, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.*'

And this same pattern is seen in Christ's own ministry. He is given status and an honoured position in God's sight. However, He does not seek nor does He earn such status. Hebrews points out that Christ too is a high priest but does not glorify Himself through this role. Rather His appointment as high priest depends not on any achievement but on His relationship to God. Hebrews echoes the words declared over Jesus at His baptism where God the Father says to Jesus, "*You are my Son, today I have begotten you*". And we need to remember that, at this moment of baptism, the entirety of Jesus' ministry lay ahead of Him. So He did not become a Son as a reward for anything He had done for God. He always was and is God's Son. His baptism was simply the moment when this was publicly recognised.

It is His identity as God's Son which is the basis for His choice as high priest. And Christ's line of priesthood is an eternal rather than a purely human one. Christ is a '*priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek*'.

Nevertheless, the understanding which James and John, two of Jesus' closest followers, have of how status and position work in God's world is very different. It is probably much closer to our own understanding.

The beginning of James and John's conversation with Jesus as recorded in our gospel passage warns us that their request is likely to be an inappropriate one. They open the conversation with the blunt words, *"Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."*

But what right do they have to address Jesus in this way? Surely Jesus as their Teacher and Master should be the one who asks them to do what He wants. They have turned this relationship upside down seeking to put Jesus in a position where He is at their beck and call, issuing them with a 'blank cheque' on which they can write whatever they want.

Wisely, Jesus refuses to respond to this demand. Instead He will not offer them anything until He has learnt exactly what it is that they are asking.

But their request for one of them to sit at Jesus' right hand and the other at His left hand in glory betrays a complete lack of understanding of Jesus' purposes, values and mission. This request is a purely self-centred and self-glorifying one. They want to be in the most important seats to the left and right of Jesus and to share His glory (while conveniently bypassing the need to share in His sufferings). The entire perspective is wrong.

It is interesting that James and John were two members of Jesus' inner circle. The third one was Peter. Was this an attempt to push Peter out of the leading position among the apostles? Who knows?

Anyway Jesus' response is that granting seats at His right or left is not within His disposal but depends entirely on God's choice. Status in God's world is given not earned.

And as a corrective to this all too human concern with status, Jesus stresses the priority of service.

The other ten apostles responded to James' and John's behaviour with anger. It seems unlikely that their outrage was based on an understanding of how inappropriate James and John's concern with status was in terms of God's kingdom. For they too seem to be concerned with status in a different way. Probably they resented James and John trying to grab the top spots that they were hoping might instead go to one or two of their own number.

So, Jesus' subsequent teaching is addressed to all the apostles. He draws a contrast with the behaviour of the Gentile world and its concern for status. In this world those who are important tyrannise and oppress other people.

Christians, however, are to behave in a very different fashion. For Christians, true greatness comes not from status and position but from the willingness to serve others. Jesus reminds the apostles that the shape of His own ministry is defined at its heart by servanthood, *"For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

And service goes together with sacrifice. The role of a priest is a sacrificial one. Jesus in His role as high priest is required to sacrifice Himself for the sake of saving others.

So when James and John approach Jesus with their inappropriate request to sit at His right and left hand in glory, Jesus challenges them with these words, *"You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"*

Jesus calls their attention to the necessity of suffering for their faith. The cup that Jesus will drink from refers to the Cross and the baptism is

likewise a metaphor for the way in which His suffering and death will flood over Him.

It is possible to think of suffering in a rather stoic fashion. We must put up with it, endure it and not complain. However, this portrayal of suffering is very far from the portrayal of the way Jesus faced suffering.

Hebrews records for us that *In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.*

So Jesus in His earthly ministry responds to the suffering which has been appointed for Him with great vulnerability and humanity. Rather than stoically putting up with it, He prays to God with loud cries and tears. This provides a model for us in times of crisis and of suffering. We need to allow ourselves the freedom to express our true emotions to God for in this we follow the model of Jesus' own sufferings.

Status, service, sacrifice and suffering. Which matters most to us? Which should we seek?

Maybe we need the honesty to admit that often we are in fact preoccupied with status. And yet would we voluntarily seek sacrifice and suffering? The loud cries and tears of Jesus in His earthly ministry remind us that this is not a natural choice for us to make. Likewise in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus displayed His human vulnerability, praying that if it was possible the cup of suffering and the Cross should be taken away from Him.

And so I think our starting point needs to be service. This will involve sacrifice and suffering. And yet strangely enough it is also the path to a true God given status and greatness, for *'whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant'*.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- To set our hearts on service rather than status
- COVID plans for winter and our own planning for the Christmas period
- Continued thanksgiving for the care, skill and courage of NHS workers and that they will not be overwhelmed by the demands on them in the winter period
- MPs and their safety in the light of the death of Sir David Amess
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- 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
- North Cadbury Church School and other local schools
- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton as it prepares for reopening in the near future
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Hymn

One of the hymns set for this Sunday is 'My song is love unknown.' This reflects on the humanity of Christ's suffering.

Services in October

Sunday 17 th October	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 17 th October	11.00 am Communion, Maperton

Sunday 17 th October	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 17 th October	6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 24 th October	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 24 th October	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 24 th October	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 24 th October	9.30 am Sunday Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 24 th October	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 24 th October	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 24 th October	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 24 th October	6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton
Sunday 31 st October	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 31 st October	9.30 am Family Service, North Cheriton
Sunday 31 st October	11.00 am Family Service, Maperton
Sunday 31 st October	4.00 pm Evensong, 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 October 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)