

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 131**

**Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021**

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

## **Welcome**

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

## **Scripture Passages**

*Deuteronomy 6: 1-9*

Now this is the commandment - the statutes and the ordinances - that the LORD your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, <sup>2</sup> so that you and your children and your children's children may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. <sup>3</sup> Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. <sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. <sup>6</sup> Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. <sup>7</sup> Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. <sup>8</sup> Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, <sup>9</sup> and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

*Psalm 119: 1-8*

Happy are those whose way is blameless,  
who walk in the law of the LORD.

<sup>2</sup> Happy are those who keep his decrees,  
who seek him with their whole heart,

<sup>3</sup> who also do no wrong,  
but walk in his ways.

<sup>4</sup> You have commanded your precepts  
to be kept diligently.

<sup>5</sup> O that my ways may be steadfast  
in keeping your statutes!

<sup>6</sup> Then I shall not be put to shame,  
having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.

<sup>7</sup> I will praise you with an upright heart,  
when I learn your righteous ordinances.

<sup>8</sup> I will observe your statutes;  
do not utterly forsake me.

*Mark 12: 28-34*

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?”

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; <sup>30</sup> you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ <sup>31</sup> The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

<sup>32</sup> Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; <sup>33</sup> and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and

‘to love one’s neighbour as oneself,’ - this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

<sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question.

## **Reflection**

I am not a great expert on the game Jenga although I am hoping at North Cheriton this morning to improve my knowledge! However, I understand the object is to build wooden building blocks into the form of a tower and then to remove them one by one until the tower comes crashing down. It seems to me that the more solidly the blocks have been built into a tower in the first place the longer the tower is likely to last when you come to take the pieces out. On the other hand, if one or more of the foundation pieces is missing then the whole tower will become unstable and is not likely to last long when you come to take it apart.

In the Christian life what are the key building blocks that we need? What are the ones which, if they are missing, will cause the whole structure of our lives to come crashing down?

In a different way, this seems to be the question which the scribe was asking Jesus in today’s gospel reading.

The law of the Old Testament as added to and commented upon by the scribes and others contained innumerable stipulations for our lives, according to one estimate 613! We might see each of these as individual building blocks. But which are truly foundational? Which blocks do we need to start off with? And which, if they are missing at the foundation, will eventually cause the whole structure of our lives to fall down?

Unlike many of the other scribes, this particular scribe is well disposed towards Jesus and indeed impressed with the answers that Jesus has already given to various difficult questions such as whether or not we should pay taxes to Caesar. So when he asks Jesus “*Which commandment is the first of all?*” his question is not yet another potential trap but reflects a sincere desire for direction in life.

And Jesus is in no doubt as to how to answer this question. He begins with God’s character and uniqueness, *the Lord our God, the Lord is one*. There is one true God. And He follows this up with the command to love God with all the different facets of our being, heart, soul, mind and strength. Complete, whole-hearted and all-encompassing love for God has to be the first building block that we put in place for our lives.

And the second one is equally clear. Indeed it is linked to the first and flows on from it. This is the commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves. Such a commandment takes in all the other more specific commands about human behaviour such as you shall not murder.

Hearing this answer the scribe is completely satisfied. He too wishes to affirm the uniqueness and incomparability of God. And he too recognises the supremacy of the need to love God and our neighbours as ourselves over and above such outward signs of religion as burnt offerings and sacrifices.

But I wonder what goes through our minds when we hear the word commandment? Commanding and obeying God when taken on its own can sound like a harsh, joyless message.

However, in the Old Testament, the Psalms which, rather like a modern-day hymn book, is a book of praise and worship links the need to obey God’s commands with the expression of joy and celebration. After all, the long period recently when we were not allowed to sing hymns reminded all of us

that singing hymns is not just part of a service but a positive source of enjoyment and spiritual encouragement.

So Psalm 119, the longest Psalm in the Psalter, stresses that obeying God's commands, walking '*in the law of the LORD*', is also the way to true happiness.

If we seek God with our whole hearts we will be happy. This reminds us that what God is looking for is not first of all a mechanical form of obedience but a spiritual desire and search from which such obedience will in turn flow.

Yes, there is indeed a need for diligence and obedience when it comes to loving God. However this is to be accompanied by praise and thanksgiving, *I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous ordinances.*

And in this we need to have God's presence with us to give us strength and comfort, *I will observe your statutes; do not utterly forsake me.*

So we need to have love for God and our neighbours at the heart of our lives. And such love is not to be cold and mechanical but warm and joyful. If we do have this foundation in our lives then we will flourish.

Or as the Bible puts it we will be blessed. In our reading from the book of Deuteronomy such blessings are seen in material terms.

The context of this reading is that, finally after many wanderings in the wilderness, Israel is about to pass into the Promised Land. And if Israel is careful to follow God's ways and commands then they will enjoy the blessings of long life.

They will also be fruitful in terms of children and descendants and will enjoy the *'milk and honey'* of the Promised Land.

These are material blessings but if we are honest with ourselves and look around us do those who are faithful to God always enjoy these blessings? To put it another way 'Why do bad things happen to good people?' That, of course, is a huge subject which needs very lengthy treatment. But we can note that, although the New Testament does not discount the value of material blessings at the same time it broadens our horizons and its central perspective is on the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ.

These include the blessings of peace with God and the assurance of an eternal future and hope in Christ. And such blessings are not dependent on what happens to us in material terms.

So we need to have the building blocks of love for God and our neighbour right at the foundation of our lives. And these will give us both joy and spiritual blessing.

And yet is there not one further foundation piece which we have not touched upon?

Jesus replies to the scribe's affirmation of the primary importance of love for God and our neighbour with the words "*You are not far from the kingdom of God.*" In other words, the scribe is very much on the right spiritual lines.

And yet has he reached his spiritual destination? He is not far from the kingdom of God but he is not there yet. What more needs to be added? Surely it is the foundation piece of accepting Jesus Himself as God's way to forgiveness, love, joy and peace. We don't of course know what happened to the scribe after this encounter with Jesus was over. Did he take this additional step of putting his trust in Jesus? He may well have done for the

integrity of his spiritual search gives us hope that this is indeed what happened.

But what about us? Do we have the central building blocks of love for God and neighbour and trust in Jesus in place? For if we do then we can have the assurance that whatever challenges we may be facing the tower that we build with our lives will not come crashing down.

*Tristram*

### **Points for Prayers**

- To have the right foundation blocks in place when building our lives
- 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
- Climate change summit in Glasgow
- 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 for this Sunday is ‘All people that on earth do dwell.’

## Notice about forthcoming service at Maperton

Please note that the service at Maperton for this Sunday previously advertised as a Family Service has now been changed to a Matins service accompanied by the organ.

## Services up until Remembrance Sunday

Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> October	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> October	9.30 am Family Service, North Cheriton
Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> October	11.00 am Matins, Maperton
Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> October	4.00 pm Evensong, Galhampton
Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> November	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> November	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> November	11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> November	10.50 am Remembrance Service, North Cadbury
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> November	10.50 am Remembrance Service, Yarlington
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> November	10.50 am Remembrance Service, South Cadbury
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> November	10.50 am Remembrance Service, Compton Pauncefoot (joint with Blackford)
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> November	10.50 am Remembrance Service, Maperton



Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November                      10.50 am Remembrance Service, Holton

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November                      10.50 am Remembrance Service,  
North Cheriton

## **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](http://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](mailto: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)