

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 135

Advent Sunday 28th November 2021

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

Welcome

Welcome to this edition of Cutting Edge Camelot on this Advent Sunday. And welcome back also to Anna our curate who returns back today from maternity leave. Below Anna reflects on the meaning of Advent.

Scripture Passages

Jeremiah 33.14-16

¹⁴ The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵ In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: “The Lord is our righteousness.”

Luke 21.25-36

²⁵ “There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶ People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

²⁹ Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰ as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know

that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁴ “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵ like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Reflection

As I reflected on these passages from Jeremiah and Luke, I was reminded of the themes of **watching and waiting**, which are so central to the season of Advent, and I was intrigued what pieces of art I might find if I looked up ‘watching and waiting’. Below are just a few of the many that popped up...



Clockwise from top left:
Always Waiting by Elkin Canas,
The Lean by Andre Hemstedt & Tine Reimer,
Waiting by Jacqueline Hoebbers, and
Awaiting his Return by William Ladd Taylor

As you look at the different pieces of art that relate to watching and waiting, I wonder which one stands out to you? Is there one in particular that really represents watching or waiting to you? Is there one that you really like? Or really *dislike*? Do you feel you can relate to a particular image?

If we consider our passages, we are reminded that those who lived at the time of Jeremiah, around six centuries before Jesus' birth, may have felt that they'd done a lot of watching and waiting, and where had it got them? They ultimately saw Jerusalem – God's holy city – fall into the hands of the Babylonians, and many of their fellow people exiled. And yet, Jeremiah writes of 'those days' and 'that time', which is 'surely coming' when 'Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety'. Jerusalem will be called 'the Lord is our righteousness', because those who dwell there will mirror and uphold the righteousness of God's coming Messiah – the righteous Branch that will spring up. But at the time of Jeremiah, the people of Israel must watch and wait for a little bit longer; watching and waiting for both the Messiah and for the restoration of Jerusalem.

Our passage from Luke follows on from a section prophesying the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, not the fall of Jerusalem which Jeremiah refers to, but the fall and destruction which occurred a few decades after Jesus' death. However, our passage is not just about Jerusalem, but about the whole world. Jesus has been asked by the disciples about what the signs will be that the end times are about to take place, but Jesus specifically warns them against being drawn in or caught up by those who claim to be the Messiah or say, "The time is near!". It can be very risky to use passages like the one in Luke as some kind of countdown or checklist, and think, "Well, X, Y and Z hasn't happened yet, so Jesus can't be coming anytime soon", or the reverse, "X, Y or Z has happened, so Jesus is coming any day now". Obviously, Jesus does offer some signs of what may occur before his return, but we need to be very wary of obsessing about these signs, rather than focusing on the here and now.

So, if this passage isn't to be used as a checklist, what exactly is its relevance for us today? Especially as we begin the season of Advent. The season of watching and waiting.

I think the last few verses are key for us, and I think *The Message* version of the passage offers an interesting way of putting it:

“But be on your guard. Don't let the sharp edge of your expectation get dulled by parties and drinking and shopping. Otherwise, that Day is going to take you by complete surprise, spring on you suddenly like a trap, for it's going to come on everyone, everywhere, at once. So, whatever you do, don't fall asleep at the wheel. Pray constantly that you will have the strength and wits to make it through everything that's coming and end up on your feet before the Son of Man.” (v.34-36)

It's a message about keeping going, about being patient; even when you feel like you've been watching and waiting for a long time and nothing seems to be happening. The start of Advent probably isn't the most comfortable time to be told not to be distracted by parties, drinking or shopping, but that doesn't make it any less true. I don't think Jesus was saying never to enjoy yourself – we know Jesus went to a wedding party and made sure they didn't run out of wine! – but he is saying that we need to make sure we don't lose focus on what really matters. What is actually important? What is our real purpose?

I think we find the answer to these questions each time we pray the Lord's Prayer: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is heaven. *Your kingdom come, your will be done.* Our prayerful watching and waiting can enable us to see in the here and now where God is at work, where his kingdom is growing, where his will is being done, and to join in with and support what is already happening.

This may not necessarily be big, dramatic things. As Bishop Tom Wright says, This is what it's about: not an exciting battle, with adrenaline flowing and banners flying, but the steady tread, of prayer and hope and

scripture and sacrament and witness, day by day and week by week (Luke for Everyone, p.260).

Our watching and waiting isn't passive – it's active. That's why we find the words 'May the Lord, when he comes, find us watching and waiting' in the concluding section of Evening Prayer during Advent. **Our watching and waiting is in itself a witness to the one we are watching and waiting for.**

So, as we begin this season, I wonder what it might look like for you to watch and wait? Might it mean committing to spending some time simply *being* rather than *doing*, or reading an Advent Book, or something else that might counteract the temptation to get caught up in the busyness of the season? What might watching and waiting mean for you this Advent?

May the Lord, when he comes, find us watching and waiting.

Amen.

Anna

Points for Prayers

- Finding ways during Advent to watch and wait for the coming of God's Kingdom
- COVID plans for winter in the light of the new variant 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
- Aftermath of Storm Arwen
- Actions to be taken following 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 now reopened and for its first residents
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Hymn

A traditional Advent hymn is 'O come, o come Emmanuel.'

Services for next two Sundays

Sunday 28 th November	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 28 th November	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 28 th November	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 28 th November	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 28 th November	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 28 th November	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 28 th November	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlinton
Sunday 28 th November	4.00 pm Evening Service, Galhampton
Sunday 5 th December	9.00 am Communion, Yarlinton
Sunday 5 th December	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 5 th December	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury

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 November 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)