

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 145

Sunday 6th February 2022

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

Welcome

Welcome to this edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. Who are we as Christians and what are we called to do? George reflects on these topics below.

Scripture Passages

Isaiah 6: 1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. ² Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³ And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴ The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

⁵ And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

⁶ Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ⁷ The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.”

⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”

Luke 5: 1-11

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, ² he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”

⁵ Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.”

⁶ When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. ⁷ So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.

⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” ⁹ For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

Then Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” ¹¹ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Reflection

Isaiah is granted a vision of God that amazes him, fills him with awe, and give him deep sense of his own sinfulness. His sinfulness is symbolically purged. He realises that the vision has been granted for a purpose. When he hears a voice asking ‘Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?’ he, as it were, puts his hand up. ‘Here am I. Send me.’

In a very different way, something of the same thing happens to Simon Peter in the reading from Luke. He and his partners have been out all night fishing. They have returned having caught nothing, and are now packing up. Jesus asks to borrow one of their boats, from which to teach the people standing on the shore. Simon is evidently in the boat with him. When Jesus has finished, he tells Simon to have another go at fishing.

Simon is a professional fisherman. He has been trying all night to catch fish, and they are just not there. Sometimes it's like that. He is tired. It is time to go home. Why do what this carpenter from Nazareth suggests? But he does. The catch is enormous. Simon senses the hand of God in what has happened. Like Isaiah, he is overcome by a deep sense of his own sinfulness. He is afraid. 'Don't be afraid', says Jesus. 'Come with me and catch people.' And Simon, his brother Andrew, and their partners James and John, all drop everything and become followers of Jesus.

John Greenleaf Whittier refers to this episode in his hymn *Dear Lord and Father of Mankind*.

*In simple trust like theirs who heard,
beside the Syrian sea,
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word,
rise up and follow thee.*

(If we asked Mr Whittier why he calls the Sea of Galilee the 'Syrian' sea, when it isn't in Syria, I think he would reply that at the time Palestine was part of the Roman province of Syria - and "Sea of Galilee" or "Lake Tiberias" wouldn't fit the metre of the hymn).

It is a hymn often sung at funerals. Suppose that after a funeral a stranger approaches us and says, 'I saw you singing that hymn. What does it mean to rise up and follow Jesus?' How might we reply?

The hymn itself provides a starting point. To be a follower of Jesus may look like a life-style choice on our part, but it isn't. Faith in God is not something we can decide on for ourselves, perhaps having looked at all the major world faiths and decided that Christianity suits us best. It is a gift from God. Jesus calls us to receive that gift because he has chosen to do so.

There was and is something extraordinarily attractive about Jesus. So when he calls us (and when we allow ourselves to hear the call) we drop what we are doing and respond 'in simple trust', not knowing what the future will hold, imposing no conditions; and before long following Jesus becomes the overriding priority in our lives.

Simple trust is needed too because being a follower of Jesus takes us into the mystery of God. God has revealed his nature to us in the person of Jesus, and so has enabled us to love him and in that way come to know him. But to know him intellectually, to make him part of our scientific knowledge, is far beyond what our human minds can do. We can't even prove that God does or does not exist.

So whenever in the Bible heaven and earth, this world and the next, touch each other or overlap (the Resurrection is one example), we are likely to be faced with mystery and have to accept 'in simple trust' things we cannot fully understand or explain. If we insist on a full understanding before we will believe, we will never believe. One of the great figures in the history of the Church used to say 'I believe in order that I may understand'. It has to be that way round.

To be a follower of Jesus is to enter into relationships. The most important is with Jesus himself and therefore with God. God's very nature is love, and a relationship is needed within which that love can be expressed. But it doesn't stop there.

Followers of Jesus become, through baptism, members of the Church. St Paul speaks of the Church as Christ's body on earth, remembering what Jesus had said to him on the road to Damascus. Membership of the Church gives all Jesus' followers a relationship with each other. We are all in it together. And 'it' is the shared endeavour of completing the task Jesus gave to his first followers of 'making disciples of all nations'. It is a task we perform as individuals through the witness of our lives. But it calls for much more than we can do as individuals. It requires us to join forces and, in all sorts of different ways, act collectively as members of a Church community.

To begin with, our concern as followers may be with our own personal salvation. People may ask us 'Are you saved?' and perhaps we may wonder if we are. But then comes a confidence from realising that we are in the hands of God who loves us with an unconditional, limitless love, from which nothing can separate us. It is a love that includes a similarly unconditional, limitless forgiveness. Concern for our own salvation then starts to fade. We become more focused on how, as Archbishop William Temple put it, the Church exists for the benefit of those who are not its members. We realise that we ourselves are called to live our lives for others, both within and outside the Church.

And so - a small point but an important one - we don't attend Church services for what we get out of them, but for what we can contribute to them. We may hope to hear a sermon that arouses our interest and strengthens our faith. We may hope to sing uplifting hymns that will take us out of ourselves. But we go to worship God in fellowship with other church members, to add our voice to theirs in singing and in saying 'Amen' or 'Hear our prayer'. And we go because perhaps (who knows?) our presence at the service may help to give comfort and support to someone else in the congregation who is needing that support more than we will ever know.

Jesus calls us to be his followers. If we respond, he may later call us to do more. Some of us will remember Ron Oswald, a retired priest who lived and took services in the Camelot Group. He once said to me “The fact is, George, once the Lord gets his foot in the door, one thing tends to lead to another.” When it does, and we are asked to take on some role in the life of the Church, our immediate reaction may be to think that we couldn’t possibly. It’s not our thing. We are not up to it, wouldn’t be good at it. And anyway we haven’t the time, and perhaps are privately worried about the expense.

Such reservations are almost a qualification for the job. Think Moses, think Jeremiah even think St Paul. We followers of Jesus, members of his Church, are here to do what he wants done, when and how he wants it done. If he is calling us to do something, he will ensure that we have all the resources we are going to need.

It is his Church and in these troubled times it is comforting to remember that he is in charge. If we remain faithful, he will not allow it to fail.

George

Points for Prayers

- To trust God’s love for us and to know what it means to follow Jesus
- Giving thanks on this seventieth anniversary of the Queen’s accession
- 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
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- Impact of energy prices on poorest and most vulnerable

- Our curate Anna and her family as they prepare for their move to Cornwall
- 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
- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton now reopened and for its first residents
- For North Cadbury Church School and other local schools
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Hymn

George refers in his reflection to the hymn ‘Dear Lord and Father of mankind.’

Services for February

Sunday 6 th February	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 6 th February	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 6 th February	11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 13 th February	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 13 th February	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 13 th February	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 13 th February	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton
Sunday 20 th February	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 20 th February	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 20 th February	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury

Sunday 20 th February	4.00 pm Evensong, Yarlinton
Sunday 27 th February	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 27 th February	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 27 th February	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 27 th February	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 27 th February	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 27 th February	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 27 th February	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlinton
Sunday 27 th February	4.00 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 February edition of Excalibur has now been published 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)