

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 149

Sunday 6th March 2022

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday’s edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. The terrible conflict in the Ukraine continues to occupy our thoughts and prayers.

This is the first Sunday in Lent and our scripture passages and reflection focus on the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness.

Later, in ‘news’ items we have a farewell to our curate Anna. There are some photographs of the presentation made to her last Sunday at St Michael’s North Cadbury attached to the covering email. There is also a notice about an open meeting to take place at North Cheriton Village Hall this Friday to discuss the future of the Camelot Parishes.

Scripture Passages

Psalm 91

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,

² will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust.”

³ For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;

⁴ he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

⁵ You will not fear the terror of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,

- ⁶ or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.
- ⁷ A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
- ⁸ You will only look with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.
- ⁹ Because you have made the LORD your refuge,
the Most High your dwelling place,
¹⁰ no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent.
- ¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
- ¹² On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.
- ¹³ You will tread on the lion and the adder,
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.
- ¹⁴ Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
- ¹⁵ When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honour them.
- ¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.

Luke 4: 1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.

³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.”

⁴ Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”

⁵ Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.”

⁸ Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

⁹ Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰ for it is written,

‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’

¹¹ and

‘On their hands they will bear you up,

so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”

¹² Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

¹³ When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Reflection

This week as our minds and hearts have been occupied with the tragic events unfolding in Ukraine, we are rightly shocked and desire a just and peaceful end to this conflict. And at each Remembrance Sunday we also recall the terrible conflicts of the previous century.

As Christians our prayers are for the establishment of both peace and justice and yet the series of wars seem never ending.

All wars are fought in order to establish who has power and control within a particular geographical territory. In other words who owns this land?

However if we look at this from the perspective of our Christian faith we may find some very different answers to this question.

On this first Sunday of Lent we remember the time that Jesus spent in the wilderness where He was tempted by the devil. One of these temptations concerned worldly power.

The devil takes Jesus up to the top of a mountain and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world. So it is not simply the conquest of one particular country but universal world domination which the devil claims to be able to offer to Jesus.

He tells Jesus that he is able to give the glory and authority of the world to anyone he pleases. And he says that this right has been given to him.

But is it really the devil who can decide who rules the kingdoms of this world? Is it really up to us to decide this through military might or indeed other means?

Not if we recognise that God ultimately has authority over human life. For it is this authority which Jesus recognises and acknowledges. The devil asks Jesus to worship him. For this very simple price will come the reward that everything in this world will be His. But Jesus has no hesitation in dismissing this offer outright.

For worship means more than just saying a form of words. Worship involves our whole hearts, the very centre of our beings. Who we worship determines who we serve, the priorities and values we have and the purpose of our lives. Jesus is utterly clear that worship and service belongs only to God. Not

even all the kingdoms of the world are a price worth paying for shifting this ultimate allegiance.

There is another temptation which we can perhaps view as closely linked to this hunger for worldly power. And that is when the devil takes Jesus to Jerusalem and puts Him on the top of the temple. The devil invites Him to prove His status as the Son of God by throwing Himself down to the ground.

The temptation here is to put on some showy spectacle for the sake of it. 'If you are the Son of God' the devil says, then prove it by doing this. There is no other reason for this rash and presumptuous action.

This temptation of needing to prove to other people our own status or importance can be a strong one for us. So often we behave rashly when we are trying to impress or prove ourselves in front of other people. Indeed who knows how much this kind of motivation may lie behind the attack on Ukraine or other similar ventures?

And yet Jesus has no need to prove Himself in front of other people. He is secure in His own sense of identity and in His standing in the sight of God. What other people think cannot affect this.

So Jesus sees through the enticing way in which the devil quotes Psalm 91 from the Old Testament. The devil uses the promise in this psalm of angelic protection against injury when falling from a height to argue that if Jesus does this there will be no serious or lasting consequences.

And yet this quotation from Psalm 91 is made without an awareness of its context within the whole psalm. However, Jesus does understand this context and knows that this psalm does not give sweeping guarantees of God's protection regardless of how a person behaves. Rather its promises depend on and flow out of a continuing relationship of love for God.

And a sign of love is trust. So Jesus, quoting a different part of the Old Testament, the book of Deuteronomy reminds the devil that we are to trust God and not to put God to the test.

And Psalm 91 supports this understanding when we read it as a whole. It is addressed to a person who is completely faithful to God, someone who lives in the shelter of the Most High and says to God 'My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.'

As we continue in the security of such trust and are not concerned with proving ourselves in front of other people then we can claim God's promise of ongoing protection. This protection is so complete that if we do fall then God will send His angels to prevent us being hurt.

The protection is promised to those who love God and know His name. Knowing God's name is more than an intellectual exercise. It means living in such a way that God's character is honoured.

And then there is another temptation. At first sight this may seem more altruistic and philanthropic than the others. It is the temptation to command stones to become bread.

Surely this is a very reasonable and even helpful command. And yet again the devil speaks in an arbitrary way. The reason he gives for doing this is once more to prove that you have the power to do it and that you are someone. So again the devil prefaces this temptation with the words, 'If you are the Son of God.'

Yes bread and food are necessary for all of us to live. However, Jesus' response from scripture is that human beings do not live by bread alone. Rather they are fed by every word that comes from the mouth of God. This reminds us that, important though the material affairs of this world may be, of even greater importance are our spiritual lives.

So in different ways these temptations all present us with the same question, what ultimately matters? Is it the attaining of worldly power even when this is used for good and noble purposes? Sadly power when it is attained so often intoxicates and corrupts those who hold it. Is it living in such a way as to impress others and to prove ourselves in front of them? Who in the end is in charge of our world?

Jesus is straightforward and unequivocal in His answers to these questions. It is God who is in charge. The devil may claim to have the authority to determine the course of human history but such authority does not really belong to him.

Human life in its true sense depends on being fed spiritually by God. To lead a human life of any value and worth is only possible if our hearts are wholly given over to the worship and service of God. It is God whom we are to trust implicitly and we are not to betray that trust by putting God to the test.

This is a very different kind of world to the one in which so much of our politics and indeed other aspects of our community life take place. We assess the relative strengths of our position as against other people. We are concerned with what may impress them. And we tend to focus on what is material and visible when we look for solutions rather than what is intangible but of more lasting importance.

Love for God is the heartbeat of this different kind of world and it is love for God which is the hallmark of the kingdom of God.

And this brings us on to Lent and how we can best use it. For the radical transition from one perspective on the world to a different one does not usually happen overnight. It takes time.

And so we need to learn to value time and not to feel that we need to fill this time with endless activities however worthwhile these may be.

Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness and it was only at the very end of this that he experienced the temptations of the devil. From one perspective His extreme hunger meant that He was at His most vulnerable. But from another it meant that He had benefited from the gift of forty days alone with God, free from the demands of ministry and the crowds which were to follow Him. He had obviously used that time well as His readiness to give three different and appropriate quotations from the book of Deuteronomy in response to the temptations shows.

In our Ash Wednesday reading from Matthew's gospel the emphasis is on building up our private and personal relationship with God and not being tempted by public display, show or power. The examples given in that passage of a changed lifestyle relate to giving, prayer and fasting. But no doubt there are many other changes in our life which we could make as God prompts and guides us.

But in all ways, moving from one world to another takes time and we need to go step by step. So Lent is an opportunity to come close to and renew our relationship with God. And if the aftermath of the covid pandemic allows us slightly more time than usual then let's use it to renew and rebuild our relationship with God.

How will we value our time this Lent? The answer to this question lies between us and God. Other people cannot answer this for us. So in this Lent may we take the opportunity to draw close to God and may God renew our hearts, minds and spirits in the knowledge of His love.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- To value the time we have in Lent to build up our relationship with God
- The conflict between Russia and the Ukraine and the need for justice and peace
- Caring for those who are especially vulnerable following the raising of coronavirus restrictions and continued thanksgiving for the care, skill and courage of all healthcare workers
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- Thanksgiving for our curate Anna's ministry among us and prayers for her and her family in their forthcoming 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

A traditional hymn reminding us of the time which Jesus spent in the wilderness is 'Forty days and forty nights.'

Farewell to Anna

Last Sunday at North Cadbury we said a fond farewell to our curate Anna

and her family. Attached to the covering email are some photographs of the presentation which we made to her. Below are my words of thanks for her ministry with us together with a thank you note from Anna.

Service on Sunday 27th March at North Cadbury - Anna's ministry

It is three and a half years since Anna and I met in Bath to discuss the possibility of her becoming a curate with us.

Since then Anna has developed into an encouraging and inspiring leader and preacher. The warmth of her manner has endeared her to so many in these parishes and her ministry will be greatly missed. And her work with North Cadbury School and the services she has arranged for their children has stood out in their quality, commitment and enthusiasm.

Much also has happened in the circumstances in which she has served her curacy which I could never have predicted three and a half years ago. Only nine months into her curacy the first lockdown occurred and suddenly there were no more live services and all contact with other people was severely curtailed.

Anna's priesting was delayed but went ahead in October 2020 with far fewer people present than would normally be the case. And yet this service was in its own way very moving and powerful and marked a new phase in Anna's ministry.

And then the joyful news that Anna and Tim were expecting their first child Daniel who was born at the very end of 2020. A period of maternity leave followed and when Anna rejoined us at the end of November last year we quickly found out that there was a new development in their family life as Tim had a new posting in Cornwall.

So these have been exciting times of personal development and growth for Anna and her family. However, for us, these mean that we have to say goodbye to them sooner than we might have expected. However, they leave behind them a legacy of love and of faithful ministry which has enriched all of us. So they go with our prayers, love and blessing on the next stage of their lives as a family. Anna will be taking up another curacy in the Diocese of Truro.

We wanted to send them on their way with a token of our appreciation which hopefully will be a tangible memento of their time with us. And there is also a small envelope with a cheque which we hope that they will free to spend as they wish, whether it is on Anna's ministry, their family life or some interest that they have.

Tristram

Thank you from Anna, Tim and Daniel

Thank you all so much for the very kind gifts we were given on Sunday. The orchid is lovely and the Sturgeon print is beautiful and will remind us of the natural beauty of the Camelot Parishes, which we have so appreciated during our time here. Thank you also for the very generous financial gift, which we will probably split between something for our new home and something towards my continued ministry.

Anna

Open meeting to discuss the future of Camelot Parishes

There will be an open meeting at North Cheriton Village Hall at 11.00 am this coming Friday 11th March. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the future of the Camelot Group of Parishes bearing in mind that across the Diocese the number of full time clergy will be reduced over the next five years. All are welcome to this meeting but if you would like to come and

have not already done this could you please email our Reader George Renwick, gfrenwick@gmail.com. This will enable us to have an idea of the likely numbers for this meeting.

Services for March

Sunday 6 th March	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 6 th March	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 6 th March	11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 13 th March	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 13 th March	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 13 th March	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 13 th March	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton
Sunday 20 th March	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 20 th March	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 20 th March	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 20 th March	4.00 pm Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 27 th March	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 27 th March	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 27 th March	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 27 th March	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 27 th March	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 27 th March	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 27 th March	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 27 th March	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 March 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)