

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 151**

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

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

## **Welcome**

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

## **Scripture Passages**

*Isaiah 55: 1-9*

Ho, everyone who thirsts,

come to the waters;

and you that have no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price.

<sup>2</sup> Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,

and your labour for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,

and delight yourselves in rich food.

<sup>3</sup> Incline your ear, and come to me;

listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,

my steadfast, sure love for David.

<sup>4</sup> See, I made him a witness to the peoples,

a leader and commander for the peoples.

<sup>5</sup> See, you shall call nations that you do not know,

and nations that do not know you shall run to you,

because of the LORD your God,

the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

<sup>6</sup> Seek the LORD while he may be found,  
call upon him while he is near;  
<sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake their way,  
and the unrighteous their thoughts;  
let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.  
<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.  
<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

*Luke 13: 1-9*

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup> He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? <sup>3</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. <sup>4</sup> Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them - do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

<sup>6</sup> Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup> So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?'

<sup>8</sup> He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. <sup>9</sup> If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

## Reflection

When times are hard as they have been with the pandemic or as the people of Ukraine are experiencing at the moment it is inevitable and entirely human that we will want to make sense of what is happening. And if we are people of faith our questions are very likely to take the form of 'What is God doing in this? Why does God allow this to happen?'

And sometimes if we are honest we may admit that our search for explanations is also a search for a reason why this extreme suffering is happening to other people and not ourselves. However the problem with doing this is that we look for ways in which we are different from other people.

Indeed we can become quite judgemental. For one well known way to explain why suffering happens is to say very simply that suffering is the result of sin. And we can be very quick to see the sin in other people and very slow to see it in ourselves.

In our gospel reading perhaps this was the train of thought of those who were listening to and discussing the news of the disasters of the day, the political dissidents whose blood Pilate had mingled with the sacrifices of animals or those who had died when a tower in Siloam had collapsed.

Such stories remind us sadly that political brutality and barbarism is nothing new. Nor is it new that some who hold influential and responsible positions should abuse their power. But surely there is a reason why such terrible disasters should be happening to other people and not ourselves?

However, Jesus confronts such comfortable and self-centred thoughts very directly when He asks, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?'

Of course, He expects the answer to this question to be no. There is no neat answer to the question of why other people are suffering. However, this question, important though it undoubtedly is, was not the one on which Jesus wished to focus.

Instead, He challenges the judgemental way of thinking that lies behind the comfortable assumption that we are better than those who experience great suffering in life. No, sin is not a condition that afflicts a few particularly wicked people. Sin is to be found in all of us, however moral or upright we may be. And sin is serious. Left unchecked it will lead to judgement and to death.

For there is nothing morally to distinguish us from those whose blood was mingled with sacrifices or from those on whom the tower fell. We need to learn from their fate, for Jesus says ‘unless you repent, you will all perish as they did.’

The need to repent is universal. None of us is good enough for God on our own. We need repentance and God’s grace otherwise we will perish. This is an urgent message.

And yet once we take on board the seriousness of our predicament there is hope. For when it is viewed against the background of God’s judgement then we truly appreciate the amazing nature of God’s grace.

It is God’s grace which is emphasised both in the parable which immediately follows these sayings about the need to repent and in the passage from Isaiah.

In the parable, there is a fruitless fig tree. This is entirely against the natural order of life. The tree has received every care and attention and so naturally fruit should follow. However, the owner of the fig tree is unable to discover fruit on his tree.

The tree is taking up valuable soil, ground that could be used for better purposes. So, the expected and fair verdict is that the tree should simply be cut down. But God is a God of the unexpected. Although God is fair, God is also gracious and merciful. The gardener in the parable, perhaps a representation of Jesus, pleads with the owner to give the tree just one more chance.

Although all the outward appearances are that the tree is worthless and good for nothing except to be cut down such appearances are not everything. Perhaps, against all expectation, a miracle can occur if the tree is given enough attention, tenderness, love and care. Only if all these special measures fail can we think of cutting the tree down. Everything possible must be done to save the tree even if this goes way beyond what the tree deserves.

And in Isaiah too the note of gracious abundance comes to the fore. The invitation is made to anyone who is spiritually thirsty to come and drink in of God's grace and limitless generosity. Wine and milk are offered without money and price.

And yet despite this overflowing generosity and grace Isaiah will not allow us to forget about the need for repentance. For the passage ends with this challenge, 'Your thoughts are not my thoughts and your ways are not my ways.'

As I have reflected on these words, I have been reminded of the discussions that we have recently been having in the benefice about the future of Camelot. In these discussions we have had to acknowledge that there is a great deal of uncertainty, many questions to which we do not as yet know the answers.

Only God knows the answers. And though it is right that we do such planning as we are able to do so, equally it is right that we acknowledge that

our thoughts are not God's thoughts. What we want may not be what God wants. And how can we find out what God wants? We need to do this through humble prayer and listening.

For repentance means seeing life from a different perspective. There is a gap between God's thoughts and ways that we cannot bridge simply through trying harder. We need a new way of looking at life, one that is centred on God and not on ourselves. But as we humbly come to God in prayer and ask ourselves what God wants then our priorities and the way that we live can begin to be reshaped.

And this is what Isaiah calls us to do. We are to 'seek the LORD while he may be found' and 'call upon him while he is near'. Those who are spending their energies fruitlessly without listening to and coming to God must change their ways. They need to respond to the gracious invitation to come and listen to God. The priorities of their hearts and minds need to be turned round so that God's thoughts and ways are right at the centre of them.

*Tristram*

## **Points for Prayers**

- Seeking God and God's thoughts and ways
- The conflict between Russia and the Ukraine and the efforts to help Ukrainian refugees
- New rise in covid cases 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
- 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

At Compton Pauncefoot this morning we are singing 'Be still for the presence of the Lord.'

## Services for rest of March

Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> March	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> March	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> March	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> March	4.00 pm Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> March	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> March	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> March	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> March	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> March	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> March	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> March	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> 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](http://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](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)