

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 162

Trinity Sunday 12th June 2022

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday’s edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. This Sunday is Trinity Sunday, a challenging theme within Christian teaching. I do my best with this in my reflection below!

Scripture Passages

Romans 5: 1-5

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³ And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

John 16: 12-15

¹² “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

Reflection

I can't forgive myself. These are simple words and yet they are ones which many of us will have found ourselves saying at one point or another in our lives. Or if we have not said these words outwardly we have no doubt felt ourselves saying them inwardly.

They are simple words and yet they also express a profound truth. As human beings we have a need for forgiveness and yet we cannot forgive ourselves. Sometimes we can seek forgiveness from someone we have hurt. However, that is not always possible if, for instance, that person is now dead or has disappeared from our lives in some other way.

And there is more to forgiveness than simply being able to say sorry. Our actions have a cost to them in terms of their consequences. Sometimes these consequences can be reversed but at other times this is impossible. What action, for instance, can possibly be taken to restore the life of a person when this has cruelly been cut short by murder?

And as we watch and listen to the news we are reminded of the cost of terrible conflicts such as the one in the Ukraine. We long for them to end. And yet we also know that the damage that they have done is in many ways irreparable however many court trials or compensation payments do or do not eventually take place.

Murder and war crimes are, of course, at the extremes of human experience. If we are not affected by them personally we can be very grateful for this. And yet how often do we speak of ourselves as having to make a choice between the 'lesser of two evils'? So often we find ourselves caught up in a train of events and having to make such a choice.

In a very minor way, I was congratulating myself on the choice of an electric car and its environmental benefits. But then I found myself thinking of the

consequences of mining the lithium needed for its battery and the difficulties of disposing of batteries. There really seemed to be no environmentally cost-free choice.

Again at a more extreme level the film *Sophie's Choice* explores the dilemma of a mother who is sent to a concentration camp in the Second World War. She is forced to choose which of her two children will be sent to the gas chamber and which will be allowed to live. What a terrible choice to make and how can you even think that one of them is the lesser of two evils? But she has to make that choice. However, she is unable to live with her own sense of guilt and eventually this leads to her suicide.

We need to be forgiven and yet we are unable to forgive ourselves. It is a profound human truth but why are we thinking of this on Trinity Sunday?

When we try to understand how God can be both Three in One and also One in Three our immediate response might simply be to wonder why Christian teaching has to be so complicated and difficult to understand. Is the Trinity just a play on words which it is impossible to make sense of? And if we could make sense of it would it be of any practical help? And yet the mysteries of the Trinity do indeed speak deep into the heart of our need for forgiveness and how this is possible.

Perhaps in understanding the Trinity it is helpful to start by looking at it not as a theory which can be proved or disproved but as a short summary of the meaning of Jesus' life and ministry and what it tells us about God.

In the church's year Trinity Sunday forms a hinge. At Christmas the story of Jesus' life begins with His birth in a stable at Bethlehem. And, in theological terms, we understand that this is not just another story about the birth of a famous person but that in the words of John's gospel it means that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Or in other words, God became one of us, a human being.

And then on to Good Friday and Easter. This focusses our attention on Jesus' death and resurrection and the meaning of these events. And here we begin to get an answer to our question about how we can be forgiven. The Crucifixion, of course, demonstrates not simply God's love but God's forgiveness. How is this?

A famous mediaeval Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm, puts the question which we have been looking at in a very clear way when he says 'The problem is, how can God forgive human sin?' And he addresses the question of how we can possibly put right all the damage that sin has caused. Anselm concludes that this lies beyond our human capacity. Someone who is just a human being does not have the resources to do this. Only a person who is at one and the same time both God and a human being is able to do this. And that unique person is Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus had to die on the Cross and why it results in our sins being forgiven.

So far so good. And yet put like that it can all seem a bit cold, legal and transactional. If we think of God the Father and God the Son as being completely distinct from each other and their relationship as being just like any other human father and son then we ask ourselves what father would demand and accept the death of his son as a form of payment. Surely God the Father has to be involved in the agony of the Cross at a deeper level than that. So our understanding of the relationship between Jesus and God has to become a deeper, more complex and mysterious one.

And so we move to Pentecost where, after the risen Jesus' ascension into heaven, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us and the love of God becomes real in our hearts.

So now we have met God in three different forms, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. But are they just three completely separate entities, all on the same level and all being God in their own right? That is a simple and

straightforward understanding but it leaves us with the questions which we have about the Cross and also about what we make of the belief that there is only one God and not three.

And so after much reflection on scripture and on Christian experience, the early church came to understand God in a Trinitarian way. God is both Three in One and One in Three. So in some way God the Father is right there in the agony and mystery of the Cross not just looking on as an uninvolved bystander. All three Persons of the Trinity are in essence one and the same. Or as the apostle Paul puts it, 'in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them,' (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Can we go further? Probably not without falling into some kind of heresy. But no doubt I have already done this in the course of this reflection! For we are trying to put into words and into formulas what lies beyond our understanding. However we can still reach out in love and worship to what we do not fully understand. A hymn of Charles Wesley puts it this way, 'Tis mystery all! The immortal dies! Who can explore His strange design?'

Our passages this morning give some hints of the complexity that exists in the relationship between the various Persons of the Trinity.

On the one hand, they are quite clearly distinct from one another. It is through the Son's work that we have peace with and are able to approach God. And it is the Holy Spirit who guides us into truth and through whom God's love is poured out into our hearts.

And yet on the other hand these three Persons of the Trinity are all deeply and mysteriously connected with one another. They are One. So Jesus can say of the Father, 'All that the Father has is mine' and of the Holy Spirit 'he will take what is mine and declare it to you'.

But to come back to our opening question. Why does the Trinity matter? I would suggest that one reason is because it addresses this question of our being unable to forgive ourselves. Only God is able to forgive us and the more we examine the Trinity and the depths of its meaning the more we can understand how God can forgive even when we cannot. Of course, the fullness of this understanding lies beyond the scope of any words.

Nonetheless we can accept what we cannot fully understand. And this step of acceptance is vital and life changing. For acceptance leads to trust, worship and love of our Trinitarian God.

And our passage from Romans reminds us that this leads to a deep and profound peace with God. A peace that is based on the fact that everything has been put right between us and God through Christ's work. A peace that through the work of the Holy Spirit is made real to us in our hearts as we experience God's love poured into us. And a peace that changes our characters as we are given hope and the capacity to endure hardship.

No, we cannot forgive ourselves. But God can forgive us. And as we accept that truth God will change us and give us a love, joy and peace in our hearts that is beyond anything that we could wish for or imagine.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Accepting God's forgiveness through the work of the Trinity and responding in love and worship
- Peace and justice to prevail in the conflict between Russia and the Ukraine and for humanitarian efforts to help all those harmed by the conflict
- All those affected by the cost of living crisis

- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- For our new Bishop, Rt Revd Michael Beasley
- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton now reopened and for its first residents
- For North Cadbury church school and our other local schools as they prepare to continue their school terms after half term
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Hymn

The Wesley hymn mentioned in my reflection is 'And can it be?'

Services for this week and next

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| Sunday 12 th June | 9.30 am Communion, Galhampton |
| Sunday 12 th June | 9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton |
| Sunday 12 th June | 9.30 am Matins, Blackford |
| Sunday 12 th June | 11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton |
| Sunday 19 th June | 9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot |
| Sunday 19 th June | 11.00 am Communion, Maperton |
| Sunday 19 th June | 11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury |
| Sunday 19 th June | 6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlinton |

Quiet Day

There will be a Quiet Day on Saturday 2nd July from 10 am to 4 pm at Woolston Manor Farmhouse Barn, Woolston, North Cadbury, BA22 7BL

(Nigel and Ursula's barn). The purpose of this day is to provide some time and space for reflection and prayer concerning the future of the Camelot benefice. Drinks will be provided, but bring a sandwich, a notebook a pen and a Bible. It will be led by Jan-Rebecca Brown, a licensed lay Minister in Salisbury Diocese.

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 June 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)