

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 163

Sunday 19th June 2022

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

Welcome

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

Scripture Passages

Psalm 22: 19-28

But you, O LORD, do not be far away!

O my help, come quickly to my aid!

²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword,

my life from the power of the dog!

²¹ Save me from the mouth of the lion!

From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.

²² I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;

in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:

²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him!

All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;

stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

²⁴ For he did not despise or abhor

the affliction of the afflicted;

he did not hide his face from me,

but heard when I cried to him.

²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great congregation;

my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

²⁶ The poor shall eat and be satisfied;

those who seek him shall praise the LORD.

May your hearts live forever!

²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember

and turn to the LORD;

and all the families of the nations

shall worship before him.

²⁸ For dominion belongs to the LORD,

and he rules over the nations.

Luke 8: 26-39

Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.

²⁷ As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him.

For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in

the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at

the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most

High God? I beg you, do not torment me" -- ²⁹ for Jesus had commanded

the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized

him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he

would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.)

³⁰ Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?"

He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. ³¹ They begged him

not to order them to go back into the abyss.

³² Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission.

³³ Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the

herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

³⁴ When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵ Then people came out to see what had

happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right

mind. And they were afraid. ³⁶ Those who had seen it told them how the one

who had been possessed by demons had been healed. ³⁷ Then all the people

of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned.

³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

Reflection

How do we respond to the extremes of human experience? Vera Brittain in her book about her experiences as a nurse in the First World War, *Testament of Youth*, recounted how difficult she found it to readjust to everyday life following the horrors that she witnessed working in war hospitals. People around her, especially those who had not experienced the war directly, seemed to want to blot it out of their memory immediately it was over.

And indeed if we think of the last couple of years in our national life it is striking how quickly the memory of the Covid pandemic has faded from our national consciousness. Sometimes we almost act as if nothing happened. However, Covid itself and the suffering that it has caused is still very much with us. Indeed for those who are vulnerable the need to take care continues to be a daily reality.

So the extremes of human experience are ones which we can find difficult to negotiate. Instead we can seek to want to move away from such extremes as soon as we can. And when we witness their reality in the lives of those around us we can find this hard to cope with.

The extremes of human experience are very much in evidence in both our readings this morning.

Our first reading is an extract from Psalm 22. The opening of this psalm was, of course, on the lips of Jesus when He died on the Cross. And traditionally the context of this psalm has been the sufferings of King David.

The opening of the psalm, *'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'* does indeed record extreme suffering. This note continues at the beginning of our own extract which comes from a later part in the psalm, *'But you, O LORD, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid! Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog!'*

And this psalm is appropriately coupled with our gospel reading. Jesus and His disciples have just arrived in a new place, the country of the Gerasenes. Immediately they are confronted by a man who is very strange and different. He is demon possessed and the effects of this on his life and behaviour are dramatic and striking.

He has been driven out far away from the mainstream of society. He does not live in a house as part of a living community but among the tombs, a society of the dead. He does not wear clothes. He shouts out in torment. All the markers of normal, civilised society are absent.

And not surprisingly perhaps the people living normal lives around him are afraid. They try to exclude him from their company in an effort to protect themselves. So the man is kept under guard, imprisoned and bound with chains and shackles.

And yet our passages speak not simply of the extremes of human suffering but also of the way in which this suffering can be redeemed and transformed by God's power.

For the psalmist a dramatic point of rescue comes. One final desperate plea is made *'Save me from the mouth of the lion!'* This is immediately followed

by a cry of relief and a declaration to God that *'From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.'*

We do not know exactly how God rescued the psalmist. But this is the pivotal point of the psalm. From this point on its tone and mood completely changes and becomes full of hope, redemption and promise.

And the life of the man afflicted by demons is also wholly transformed after Jesus has thrown the demons out of him. The violence and destructive effects of the demons are illustrated by their impact on the herd of pigs. Some have always found this rather unfair on the pigs but nevertheless it does show both the power of the demons and the even greater power of Jesus to deliver and rescue.

And so this man is now ready once more to engage with normal society. He is found at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. There is no reason why he should not get on with everyday life.

However, being free to get on with everyday life and actually being able to do this are two very different matters. I think of someone whom I knew who had served a long prison sentence. The sentence had been served and so there was no legal reason why he should not return into the mainstream of society. But was he ready in personal terms?

His life had been lived within an institution for so long that the freedom to make choices for himself was one that he found very challenging. Catching a bus was a major enterprise and hurdle to be overcome. Living in a 'halfway house' on his way to full release he was expected to find a job. But when you go along to the Job Centre and are asked where you have been and what you have been doing for the last few years how do you reply?

So fear, suspicion and difficulty accompany both sides of the reintegration process. They are realities on both sides, both for the person who has been

excluded and seeks to return to mainstream society and for the community into which he or she is to be reintegrated.

Perhaps an awareness of this background may help us understand the responses of the people of the country of the Gerasenes who have witnessed this great miracle and also of the man who has been delivered of his demons.

Not unnaturally perhaps, the people are afraid of what has happened and so they ask Jesus to leave them without delay. No doubt they would like Jesus to take the man away also. They wish to put this strange and challenging occurrence as far away from them as possible, out of sight and out of mind.

And we might also suppose that the man himself might prefer to be with a different group of people, Jesus and His disciples. For they have not known him over a period of years, as the people of his home city have done, in his former state. So they may not be so afraid and prejudiced. Perhaps the man thinks that at last he has found a group of people with whom he feels comfortable and with whom he belongs. At any rate he begs Jesus to stay with Him and the other disciples.

However, Jesus has different plans for this man's life which are not so immediately comfortable. The man does indeed need to return to his home city but on a very radically different basis. No longer is he to be seen as a person in need or a potential threat to others. No, he is someone who has experienced a dramatic healing and transformation and who is a witness to Christ's work. This may indeed present a different kind of threat to those who are comfortable with the status quo. But there has to be a radical reordering of the relationship between the man and the people of his own city.

The psalmist too is presented with the challenge of being reintegrated into the community of faith following extreme suffering. The need to seek out the

fellowship of believers is important. Responding to this this the psalmist declares,

'I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you...

From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him.'

It is within the congregation of God's people that God's goodness and mercy needs to be proclaimed. Both corporately and individually the congregation is to be a witness to Christ. This power of praise and praise as expressed within the church community is for its own benefit and also for the benefit of those who are yet to be drawn into this community.

If we ourselves have faced, either now or in the past, the challenge of returning to our community after an extreme experience and a period of isolation these passages are likely to resonate with us on an immediate level. On the other hand, we may be conscious of others who are going through such a process and we can ask ourselves what we can do to help them.

But more than that both passages witness to the power of God in transforming our circumstances and healing us. Are we open to God working so radically in our lives and have we experienced this? And if so, how might we bear witness to and praise God for all He has done for us?

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Challenges faced by those seeking to be reintegrated into society following isolation and extreme suffering
- Thanksgiving for God's works of healing and deliverance

- 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 continue their school terms
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Hymn

One of the hymns set for this Sunday is 'The Church's one foundation.' It relates to the need for the Christian church to have a universal message, a world-wide appeal.

Services for this week and next

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, Yarlington
Sunday 26 th June	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 26 th June	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 26 th June	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot

Sunday 26 th June	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 26 th June	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 26 th June	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 26 th June	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlinton
Sunday 26 th June	6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton

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)