

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 164

Sunday 26th June 2022

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

Welcome

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

Scripture Passages

Galatians 5: 1, 13-25

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” ¹⁵ If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

¹⁶ Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

Luke 9: 51-62

⁵¹ When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. ⁵² And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; ⁵³ but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" ⁵⁵ But he turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶ Then they went on to another village.

⁵⁷ As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

⁵⁹ To another he said, "Follow me."

But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

⁶⁰ But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

⁶¹ Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home."

⁶² Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Reflection

What is the meaning of freedom?

It is a question with a contemporary ring to it. The lockdowns showed us what happens when normal, everyday types of freedom which we had taken for granted such as being able to travel where and when we want to and to visit our friends and neighbours are suddenly and dramatically taken away from us.

For many of us this came as a shock and we longed for an easing of these restrictions and rejoiced when that time came.

And in the world at the moment we see freedom coming under pressure in various different ways. For instance, the conflict between Russia and the Ukraine which sadly seems set to continue for an indefinite period can be seen as a choice between national freedom and an oppressive tyranny.

But all these freedoms, important though these are, are external ones. The apostle Paul who wrote much of the New Testament also spent much of his ministry in prison. These two facts are related to one another as prison gave Paul the time to write.

From this you might think that Paul was an example of someone who was not free and who needed to be released from the shackles of his imprisonment. This is not, however, at all how Paul thinks of his condition.

Rather in our reading from the letter to the Galatians he proclaims that, 'For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery'

So what does freedom mean in this context? Clearly it is not about the external freedom to do what you like when you like or the freedom that we

can associate with a particular form of government? What is the freedom for which Christ has set us free?

In our gospel reading, the call that Christ gives is one of unconditional commitment to Him. Many might consider this to be very narrow and constrictive, a drastic limitation on our freedom to choose the shape of our lives for ourselves. On the other hand might this paradoxically also be the way to the truest and deepest form of freedom?

The replies that Jesus gives to potential new followers are uncompromising and severe. One person promises Jesus his allegiance. And yet instead of welcoming this new recruit Jesus challenges him. If he really is to be a disciple then he must be able to live without those markers of security, home and family, which play such a significant part in the lives of most of us. Is he ready for this? As Jesus puts it, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'

And then to another person His challenge is even more strong and direct when this enquirer is forbidden to bury his father before he becomes a disciple. The same note recurs with similar force when someone else is even forbidden to say goodbye to his family at home before setting out to follow Jesus.

We may well be taken aback by such severity. Indeed we might wonder how these directions fit in with God's commandment in the Old Testament to honour our father and mother.

And yet the question which Jesus is highlighting is what is most important to us. Are we prepared to put following Jesus over and above all other loyalties and commitments however important these may be in their own right? This is what needs to be clearly established.

And this also is what will bring us true freedom. When we know what matters most in our lives the way in which we make decisions becomes much clearer even if the decisions themselves may not necessarily be easy ones for us to make. Knowing that Christ comes first in our lives does not mean that other values such as the time which we give to our families become unimportant. These other values no longer rule or bind us. However, as we give our overriding commitment to Christ we find that that we can give them the degree of attention that is necessary and appropriate in the light of the whole purpose that God has for our lives.

Perhaps something of the way in which we need both to honour the past and yet at the same time not be bound by it has been illustrated by the recent Jubilee celebrations. People, yes, looked back with gratitude on our current Queen's reign but at the same time they also looked forward to the future reigns of her son and grandson.

And we realise that the future cannot be exactly the same as the past. So when Charles and in his turn William come to the throne they will need to ask themselves both how they might plan to continue their mother's and grandmother's example in the long years that they have learnt from her and also how they themselves might do things differently. And how are they going to be able to decide the right balance between honouring their parents and grandparents and doing what they believe to be right for a new age in this country's history even if this means a different approach? Surely they can only make such decisions wisely and appropriately if Christ comes first in their own lives.

Turning back to Paul's letter to the Galatians we learn more of what true freedom means. For Christ brings us freedom from the selfishness which enslaves all of us. Such selfishness can diminish ourselves as well as being hurtful to other people.

We are indeed free in Christ and yet we are warned about how we need to use this freedom wisely. So we are not to use our freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence.

No, this is not the true meaning and expression of freedom. Rather we become most fully ourselves and most free when we look outwards and consider how we can serve other people in love. 'For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."'

We need to avoid all kinds of self-centred and unattractive forms of behaviour such as jealousy, anger and quarrelling. And we also need to realise that we are not able to lead a truly Christian lifestyle by ourselves. On our own, we simply do not have the spiritual resources for this. Rather we need to rely on the Holy Spirit, to be led, as Paul puts it, 'by the Spirit'.

For the way of the Holy Spirit is the true way of freedom. And as we become more and more responsive to the Holy Spirit so our inner character changes. We begin to become people who bear the fruit of the Spirit which is described in terms of 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.'

So that is what it means to be truly free as a Christian. Surely we can agree that this is the deepest and truest form of freedom. Our outward circumstances, however constricted or otherwise they may be, do not define us as people. They do not make us who we are. For even if we are in outward terms just free to do whatever we like whenever we want what good will that be to us if inwardly we are imprisoned by bitterness and resentment?

These passages focus our minds and hearts on what our priorities in life truly are and what we are living for at the deepest level. Are we ourselves truly free? This is a matter of our own inner desires and hopes. For if we

have the humility to accept and follow Christ and to experience the leading of the Spirit then God's promise is that our inner characters will change in such a way that we become truly the people we were always meant to be.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Enjoying the freedom for which Christ has set us free
- 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

A hymn set for this Sunday which reminds us of the need for Christ to be at the centre of our lives is 'Be thou my vision.'

Services for this week and next

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| 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 |
| Sunday 3 rd July | 9.00 am Communion, Yarlinton |
| Sunday 3 rd July | 9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton |
| Sunday 3 rd July | 11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury |

Quiet Day

There will be a Quiet Day on Saturday 2nd July from 10.00 am to 4.00 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)