

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 166

Sunday 10th July 2022

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

Welcome

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

Scripture Passages

Colossians 1: 1-14

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

² To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

³ In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel ⁶ that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. ⁷ This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, ⁸ and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. ¹¹ May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the

Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³ He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Luke 10: 25-37

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?”

²⁷ He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.”

²⁸ And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

³⁰ Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’

³⁶ “Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”

³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.”

Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Reflection

The parable of the Good Samaritan is not simply one of the central texts of the Christian church but it has also become a feature of our popular culture and imagination, whether or not people choose to describe themselves as Christians.

Indeed the Good Samaritan has become a proverbial phrase to describe any act of kindness, of going out of one’s way for other people.

And as a result everyone feels that they know what the parable is about regardless of how closely or recently they have read it.

But in doing so we tend to overlook the context of the parable which, as with many of Jesus’ parables, is so important. So when we interpret the parable we need to remember the historic enmity which existed between Jews and Samaritans. It is this which for the original Jewish audience of the story makes it so shocking and even outrageous.

As with many stories right across the world it depends on the ‘rule of three’. So, for instance, there are the two ugly sisters and then there is Cinderella. We expect the third character in the story to be a complete contrast to the preceding two and to show us an example to emulate rather than a warning to avoid.

So when the priest and Levite, both representatives of the religious establishment, simply walk by on the other side of the road who might the Jewish audience have been expecting to turn up next? Surely a good Jewish layman who would put to shame the actions of those religious professionals whose faith was supposedly purer than the rest of their people.

But, no, the third character was a Samaritan. A member of a reviled community which lived on the very borders of Israel. However, although they were near neighbours the Samaritans had committed atrocities such as defiling the sacred Jerusalem temple by scattering bones in it during Passover. Later on the Jewish historian Josephus records that they massacred a group of Galilean pilgrims. In our troubled world today it is not difficult to think of similarly unpopular nations. So would we dare to tell a story in which a representative of such a nation turned out to be the hero or heroine?

But that is what Jesus did and that is what makes the story so shocking and unexpected. However, the popular understanding is a simpler and more straightforward one. And it can be used as a criticism both of Christians and of Christianity.

So the argument is made that true Christians are like the Good Samaritan. However, there is no need to call yourself a Christian to be like that. You just need to be a brave and generous hearted person who instinctively knows the right way to respond to those who are in need.

And there is some truth in this. If we think of times of crisis such as at the beginning of the lockdowns, yes, the church in many cases was active in helping those in need. However, the church had no monopoly on acts of kindness and of love. Many community initiatives came from outside the church by volunteers and voluntary organisations who simply wanted to be good neighbours. Some of the people involved might call themselves Christians but others would not.

And indeed the parable of the Good Samaritan can be used to portray Christians in a still harsher light. Often and sadly those who call themselves Christians do not live up to the compassionate example of the Good Samaritan and in that case they are seen as hypocrites. This is not attractive behaviour for those outside the church. As Gandhi put it, 'I like

your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.'

Perhaps first of all we need to admit that the parable itself shows us that people who profess faith are not necessarily people of love.

For it is the religious professionals, the priest and the Levite who pass by on the other side when they see the wounded man lying on the road. Why did they do that? The parable does not explain why. But surely one straightforward explanation would simply be that they were frightened. A violent incident had clearly taken place on a notoriously unsafe road. They may feel sympathetic to the person lying on the road but they think to themselves that they need to take care of themselves first. They may be the next victims of violence. So surely their priority is to look after themselves and make a quick getaway.

Or perhaps they just face very busy schedules and think that they simply do not have time to stop. Maybe even they are thinking of the religious rules in the Old Testament which forbids them from touching a corpse and they are not sure whether this person is dead.

Whatever their motivations we can surely see something of ourselves in these reactions. As Christians we can be too busy ordering what we think of as the important affairs of our church to care enough about the needs of the world. We too can be frightened of places and people that are dangerous and want to play it safe even if it does mean passing by on the other side.

However, do we really need to set faith against love in such a stark way? Can it not be that in an ideal world they are meant to work together and that the combination of the two is truly powerful? We could think perhaps of that famous passage from Paul's letter to the Corinthians which is so often read at weddings where faith, hope and love are linked together.

Similarly in our reading this morning from Colossians we find a relationship between faith, hope and love. They all have different and complementary roles to play.

For the Colossians, faith in Christ is linked with love for the saints, their fellow believers. And both are sustained and motivated by the hope of what is laid up in heaven for them. Faith, hope and love all belong together. And the gospel encapsulates all of these qualities so that they grow and bear fruit in the believer.

And if we think of ourselves and our capacity for love and the limitations on our love we will no doubt acknowledge these connections. For love on its own is extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, to sustain if it is not nurtured and sustained by faith and hope. We speak rightly of the compassion fatigue which can afflict even those of us who are most generous and giving by nature.

But when love is fed by faith then it is also sustained in these dry and difficult spells. And in that way love is the practical fruit and expression of faith, of an inner life which is hidden from the outside world but nonetheless informs all our actions and responses.

And hope matters too as a motive for faith and love. The questions of whether there is any ultimate purpose to life and whether the resurrection is real are not academic ones and nor are the answers to them. For if we have a living hope and knowledge of where we are going in life so this will inform and motivate the practical way in which we live.

So perhaps it is not an either/or and our true aim should be to be people not simply of love but also of faith and of hope. Someone described a relative of theirs in this way, 'Not simply is he a very committed Christian in what he professes to believe but he is also one of the most Christian people whom I have known in the way that he actually behaves.'

This remark was made in the context of a dispute about a family inheritance which had become quite acrimonious. On such occasions there is a need to display real character and to show what you truly believe. So while others were trying to get all they could from their inheritance even at the expense of others, this man was content with what he had been given and acted as an agent of peace to his siblings.

What an aim that would be for our lives that people would be able both to identify clearly where we stand in terms of our faith and also to see how this faith makes a difference in the practical way that love is shown in our lives. As our passage from Colossians puts it, this is what it means to 'lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.'

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Being people of faith, hope and love
- Need to choose new Prime Minister
- Rising number of new covid cases
- 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
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- For the Deanery in considering Pastoral Reorganisation
- 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 hymn this morning which reminds us of the breadth of God's love is 'There's a wideness in God's mercy.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 10 th July	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 10 th July	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 10 th July	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 10 th July	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton
Sunday 17 th July	9.30 am Communion. Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 17 th July	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 17 th July	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 17 th July	6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlinton

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 July 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)