

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 168

Sunday 24th July 2022

'Virtually Church but with some way to go...'

Welcome

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

Scripture Passage

Luke 11: 1-13

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."

² He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴ And forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial."

⁵ And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' ⁷ And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.'

⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

⁹ "So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks

receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

¹¹ “Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? ¹² Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Reflection

Persistence is, in general, an admirable quality. How many of us have given up half way through some difficult project only to wish later on that we had stuck with it and seen these difficulties through?

So, yes, persistence is, in general, admirable. But being on the receiving end of persistence can have its challenges. It can come in the form of a small child insisting that now, not later, is the right time for her to go on the trampoline. Or in the form of a small dog watching you eat and insisting that contrary to what any vet might say he is simply not being fed adequately.

And so we can probably sympathise with the position of the man in this morning’s gospel reading who is snugly tucked up in bed with his children and who has locked the door for the night in readiness for a good and refreshing night’s sleep. And then he is interrupted by an unexpected knock on the door. Who can this be? Oh yes, this is a familiar voice that is calling to him. It is a friend of his. But what an inconvenient time to be calling! Does he understand nothing about how his family life works?

And so it is not surprising that to start off he does not want to be bothered with his friend’s request for food in the middle of the night. Yes, he is this

man's friend but friendship has its limits. So he tells him that he cannot get up and give him what he wants.

The problem is, however, that the friend does not take 'No' for an answer. He goes on asking and he goes on bothering the man in bed. Eventually this persistence wears the man down so that simply in order to get rid of him he gets up and gives his friend what he wants. But this is not done for the sake of friendship. He does it because he cannot take the repeated requests any longer and he sees that in order to get any peace he will simply have to give in and give the friend what he wants. Then at least the friend will go away.

But that, of course, raises another question. Is it always right to give in to repeated requests? Are there not circumstances in which 'No' should mean 'No' and in which we should stand our ground no matter how annoyed we are by another person's persistence? Persistence is indeed a valuable quality but what are its limits?

To answer that question we need to understand that this story of the friend who comes with his demands at an inconvenient time and persists with his requests is a parable which illustrates the importance of persistence in prayer.

And this forms part of a whole section on prayer in Luke's gospel. Immediately before the parable there has come Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer. This contains the same basic elements as Matthew's version but in a slightly shorter form.

So the setting within which we make our requests for daily bread in the Lord's Prayer is one of recognising God's character. Jesus begins the Prayer with these words, 'Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.' God's name stands for God's character. God's kingdom means God's rule.

So our starting point in prayer has to be a recognition of who God is and what God wants. Everything else is subordinate to this.

So when later on the prayer we are to pray 'Give us each day our daily bread' this does indeed encourage us to ask God for the whole range of our needs day by day. And yet in framing these requests we cannot ask God for what is contrary to His will. These requests are all to be understood in the context of seeking God's will and recognising God's character.

And so, persistent though we may be, we always need to ask ourselves whether what we are asking is in line with God's character. Are our requests truly based on what God wants for us? Or might they in fact not be best either for ourselves or for other people? Indeed could they be positively harmful?

Thinking about this, we pass on to the final section in this morning's reading. This very directly encourages persistence in prayer. There a number of different ways in which this is expressed but the motto of this section could be expressed very simply as never give up on God, always keep going.

So first there is a threefold repetition of this need to keep going, with each repetition representing a step up in intensity from the previous one.

To begin with, we are simply to ask. No doubt we do this each when we think about what the day holds and what help we need to receive from God.

But more than that, we are to search both for what we need and for what God wants. Searching requires an active effort, not letting our first impressions that God might not be giving us what we are asking for just rest without looking more deeply into the matter.

And then finally we are to knock. So many of us take a very polite approach to God. We think that we must not make too much trouble, that what we are looking for might be something that is not sufficiently important to merit God's action or attention. But, no, just as the friend who came at midnight was totally prepared to disturb the man in bed by coming to the door and making a noise so we are encouraged to knock at God's door and to be a disturbance if that is what is needed.

And we are promised simply that God will respond to all these persistent actions,

'For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.'

But what about those occasions when we feel that we have been as persistent as we can be before God and still no obvious answer has been received? We might say that the reason is that, for some reason, our requests are not in line with what God wants but what if there is no obvious reason why this might be so?

We probably all of us in different ways wrestle with the problem of prayers that have not been answered. Perhaps we need to achieve a balance in this. On the one hand, we should not completely give up but on the other we should not let them consume the whole of our attention. We may indeed come to see an answer in time, but answers may not necessarily come in this life. We cannot understand everything about God. But nevertheless we need to trust God and to keep going.

For the most important thing is our relationship with God. This matters over and above any gifts He might give us. This relationship is like a parent with a child. Jesus asks,

'Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion?'

This reminds us that God is our heavenly Father and not a heartless and selfish friend just intent on his own peace and quiet. We are invited to put ourselves in the position of a parent and child and to ask ourselves whether we would give our children something that is harmful and damaging such as a snake or a scorpion rather than something nourishing and life giving such as a fish or an egg.

And the most important gift which God has to give us is the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is one of His very presence. Whatever specific answers to prayer may or may not be given to us this one surely is always available, a rock on which we can rely and a source of strength and comfort throughout our lives.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Persistence and being able to accept God's answers to prayer
- Need to choose new Prime Minister
- Rising number of new covid cases
- Conflict between Russia and the Ukraine remembering possible beacon of hope in relation to grain deal
- 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 refreshment for teachers, children and parents of North Cadbury church school and other local schools in their school holidays
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Hymn

A reminder of our need to seek God is given in the hymn 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God.'

Services for this week and next

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Sunday 24 th July | 8.00 am Communion, Blackford |
| Sunday 24 th July | 9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury |
| Sunday 24 th July | 9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot |
| Sunday 24 th July | 9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton |
| Sunday 24 th July | 11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury |
| Sunday 24 th July | 11.00 am Communion, Holton |
| Sunday 24 th July | 11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlinton |
| Sunday 24 th July | 6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton |
| Sunday 31 st July | 8.00 am Communion, Blackford |
| Sunday 31 st July | 9.30 am Family Service, North Cheriton |
| Sunday 31 st July | 11.00 am Sunday Worship, Bratton Seymour |
| Sunday 31 st July | 11.00 am Matins, Maperton |
| Sunday 31 st July | 6.30 pm Evensong, 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 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)