

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 170

Sunday 7th August 2022

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday’s edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. I will be on leave as from this Sunday and so the next Cutting Edge Camelot will not be until September.

Tristram

Scripture Passages

Hebrews 11: 1-3, 8-16

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval.

³ By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹ By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old -- and Sarah herself was barren -- because he considered him faithful who had promised.

¹² Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, “as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.”

¹³ All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, ¹⁴ for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

Luke 12: 32-40

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

³⁵ “Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; ³⁶ be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. ³⁷ Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸ If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. ³⁹ “But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

Reflection

In one way or another we all look for security and certainty. Last week we considered the response of a rich man who enjoyed a bumper harvest. His way of finding security was to store up this crop by building bigger barns. He thought this would enable him to live in comfort and indeed luxury for

the rest of his life. But then unexpectedly God demanded his life from him and tragically he found that he had placed his security in the wrong place.

And so true security is not to be found in the most obvious places such as material possessions. But if as an alternative we turn to the life of faith this may not at first seem an obvious source of security. Indeed it may seem uncertain and risky.

For our passage from Hebrews reminds us that faith means believing in a world which we cannot see. It is 'the conviction of things not seen'. So how can we possibly be sure of what we cannot see? Many people think that it is only what you can measure by your five senses that is real. But faith believes in what cannot be measured in this way. So is faith real and can we really rely on the promises which faith gives us?

This is a question which we will never be able to answer if we simply stand still and ponder it. For to be a person of faith requires more than simply an intellectual assent to various beliefs. It requires action.

It is said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. And in our passage from Hebrews Abraham who is viewed as a model person of faith needs to trust God by taking the first step on a journey. However, he has to take this first step without knowing exactly where his journey will take him.

And so we may be wondering whether some feeling which we are experiencing really comes from God or not. Or we can even wonder whether God is real at all. But until like Abraham we are willing to take that first step in terms of trusting God we will never get any further. And to take the first step is a risk. Abraham's journey was not one which was fully mapped out for him in advance.

So the journey of faith always involves risk. We may have a rough idea of

where we are going and even a few definite first steps. But beyond that lies the unknown where we simply have to trust God.

And even when Abraham had taken this first step and started out on his journey still he did not receive any obvious form of security. Abraham was called to leave behind a comfortable and settled lifestyle for a different country which God had promised to him. But when he has reached this promised country his circumstances are far from secure. Rather his faith leads him into a transient form of existence as he lives like a foreigner in tents in this promised land.

And even at the end of his life his lifestyle is still outwardly very insecure. Abraham and the other heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews die without receiving all that has been promised to them. They only see this from a distance. And to the end they remain simply strangers and foreigners.

So far we may be wondering what the attraction of the life of faith might be. If it is so full of risk and uncertainty why choose it over and above the more obvious forms of security which we might seek such as possessions or status?

And yet we have deep spiritual needs into which faith speaks. As we look at our world today we find so much uncertainty and so much which can make us feel very anxious. War in the Ukraine, global warming, the renewed threat of covid, economic crises. And that is before we even begin to think about personal challenges or crises that we may be facing.

So where in all of this are we to find peace? For peace is one of the many spiritual rewards which faith brings us. A well known form of Christian blessing speaks of the peace 'which passes all understanding'. Surely this is a peace which we all deeply crave. It is a peace which is to be found not through ignoring our challenges and problems but one which gives us the inner strength to work our way through them.

So faith is undoubtedly attractive. Jesus reinforces this point when He speaks of treasure in heaven which unlike worldly forms of treasure cannot be stolen or destroyed. So faith does offer us a lasting security. And our hearts need to be captivated by the spiritual riches which faith offers us, 'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'

So far, however, we have looked at faith very much in terms of an individual decision. That is right so far as it goes but there is more to it than that.

So it is Abraham's own responsibility to take that first step on this journey where he does not know exactly where he is going. But Abraham does not go on his own. He takes his relatives and whole entourage along with him. And on his journey God's promise to him of children and descendants is fulfilled, so much so that his descendants are impossible to number but are like the grains of sand by the seashore or the stars of heaven.

And so we too as Christians do not live out our faith on our own but do so within a community of faith, the church. This can encourage us to keep going when we might be tempted to give up. One of the features of lockdown which was so hard and testing in terms of our faith was when we were unable to meet face to face as a church.

Our passages this morning offer a number of images which remind us of the communal nature of our faith.

For instance, the Kingdom of God is compared by Jesus to a shared meal. In this meal, the normal roles are reversed as the servants are served by their master, 'Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them.'

And again God's promises to Abraham are given in the form of a city. Many people are to be caught up in and to share the life of heaven. So Abraham's

journey of faith is motivated by the hope of looking forward to ‘the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.’

Indeed this city of God is part of an entire heavenly country. Not an earthly country with all its shortcomings and limitations but ‘a better country... a heavenly one.’

So what does all this mean for the way in which we live our lives? We are indeed as Christians called and challenged to leave behind old forms of certainty based on possessions and other material forms of security. Our faith will involve taking the risk, like Abraham, of embarking on a journey without knowing all the steps that we need to take. And yet as we do so we will find a different, inner form of security and hope and we will be sustained and encouraged by our fellow Christians who are travelling this journey along with us.

This all involves an openness to Christ, an expectancy and a hope of Christ’s coming. As Jesus puts it, we are to be ‘like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks’.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- An openness to Christ and to the challenge of faith
- Need to choose new Prime Minister
- Forecast of economic crisis
- Covid cases
- Climate emergency
- Conflict between Russia and the Ukraine

- 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

One hymn chosen for this morning is ‘O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder.’

Services for this week and next

Sunday 7 th August	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 7 th August	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 7 th August	11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 14 th August	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 14 th August	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 14 th August	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 14 th August	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton

For services later in August please consult Excalibur.

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 August 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)