

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 175

Sunday 2nd October 2022

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

2 Timothy 1: 1-14

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

² To Timothy, my beloved child:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ I am grateful to God – whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did – when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. ⁴ Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy.

⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.

⁶ For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; ⁷ for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

⁸ Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death

and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹ For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, ¹² and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. ¹³ Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Luke 17: 5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

⁶ The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

⁷ "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from ploughing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? ⁸ Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink'? ⁹ Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded?

¹⁰ So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!'"

Reflection

In the many reports of the Queen's life, the word 'service' was very often mentioned as one of her key characteristics. Less often mentioned was her strong Christian faith. And yet when we ask ourselves what motivated and fed her sense of service and duty surely her faith was the root which sustained and nourished all that she did in the public sphere.

And service and faith do indeed belong to one another and cannot be separated. For if we serve without any faith why go against our natural instincts to put ourselves first? And what ultimate hope do we have?

On the other hand, if we have faith but it is not combined with any form of service then what does our faith actually mean? Is it anything more than words without anything else to back it up?

As we look at our gospel passage this morning, it does indeed begin with a simple request from the apostles to Jesus to increase their faith.

And yet if we are to understand the nature of this request we need to look at its context. Immediately beforehand Luke's gospel recounts how the apostles have been discussing with Jesus how many times they need to forgive. Jesus' response is that forgiveness needs effectively to be unlimited. Even if someone sins against you seven times a day and asks your forgiveness each time because they realise that they have done wrong then you need to keep on forgiving them.

This reminds me of a conversation that I had in a Collective Worship session that I was leading at our local school. We were talking about the need for forgiveness and one pupil perceptively commented that while you may well offer forgiveness how could you keep on offering forgiveness when you knew full well that the next day the person whom you were forgiving was likely to go on being just as nasty to you.

In other words isn't this standard of unlimited forgiveness just, in practical terms, an impossible expectation?

And so Jesus speaks to them about how faith works. Through faith the impossible becomes possible. Even though it seems impossible to keep on forgiving someone for the same kind of behaviour it is in faith possible to do just that.

So Jesus uses the dramatic example of faith which is as tiny as a mustard seed causing a huge and visible upheaval as a mulberry tree is uprooted and planted in the sea.

This is a dramatic and indeed spectacular example of the power of faith. And so we might think that the life of faith is one that is characterised by a certain glamour and power, being able to do things that ordinary mortals are unable to do.

But here again we need to remember the context of this illustration. It comes immediately after a challenge to keep on forgiving. So it is deeply rooted in everyday life and is relevant to us all. And then the next part of the gospel focusses on some very routine and distinctly unglamorous acts of service. Faith and service do indeed belong to one another.

But before we turn to this, our reading from Paul's letter to Timothy also reminds us of how faith is so often displayed through the very ordinary, undramatic circumstances of life.

As Paul longs to see Timothy and will be overjoyed when he is actually able to do so, he remembers the quality of Timothy's faith and its origins.

In the end, of course, it is God's work to bring someone to faith. And yet God uses human agents. In the case of Timothy it seems that members of his family played a key role in sparking off and nurturing his faith.

For as Paul thinks of Timothy's faith he is reminded both of the faith of Timothy's mother Eunice and the faith of his grandmother Lois. In this family, faith has been handed down and reproduced through the generations.

It would be wonderful if we were able to transport ourselves back to Timothy's home as he grew up and to see for ourselves the impact that his

mother and grandmother had on his life as they lived out their faith before him in the ordinary activities of daily life. We cannot of course do this but we can be reminded of the role that families play in providing a hospitable environment within which faith can develop. Indeed, quite apart from family members, the power that ordinary lives have in transmitting faith and the love of God should never be underestimated.

As we move back to our gospel passage, we are encouraged to look in more detail as to what the nature of Christian service is actually like.

The slave (or we would say servant) is the one who is told what to do by the master. So even after a long day's work out in the fields, ploughing or looking after sheep, the servant's work is not done. For there are domestic duties to be undertaken. The servant is expected to prepare and serve the meal for the master. And only after that is he or she free to enjoy their own meal.

And in case we might think that this is some kind of exceptional and commendable behaviour we are quickly told that it is not. The servant is only doing his or her job, what was expected and required. So why should there be any need for thanks?

This comment may well remind us of the distinction that we tend to make (rightly or wrongly) between paid workers and volunteers. Yes, paid workers do need to be appreciated and encouraged and hopefully we remember to do this from time to time. On the other hand, we can also think to ourselves 'Well, yes, they are just doing their job, what they are expected to do.' However, with the case of volunteers we remember that the only payment they receive is one of appreciation and gratitude.

Jesus then goes on to apply to our Christian discipleship this principle of not being thanked for simply doing our jobs. For after we have done all that God has asked to do we should not be expecting any recognition, thanks or

reward. Rather we should say 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!'

We may think this rather harsh. Surely we all want recognition for what we do, this is a natural human trait. And is it really that healthy to think of ourselves as being worthless slaves? Surely our view of our own worth should be a bit more positive?

In answering this question we need to remember that Jesus is making a particular point to His disciples. He is challenging the very common tendency that we all have to do tasks on our own terms and to be given the type of recognition for them that we think we deserve. It can be tempting, for instance, when looking after someone else's garden to think of it as being 'my' garden. And the same applies to God's work. We can begin to think of it as 'my' work when it is nothing of the kind. So as Christians we need to forego these kinds of expectations and sense of entitlement.

And in other places Jesus does balance what He says by emphasising that human beings are indeed of infinite worth in God's sight. So, in the Sermon on the Mount, He reminds us that although God cares and provides for the birds of the air we as human beings are of much more value to God. And in another place we find this scenario about the master, the servant and the meal table reversed when the servants who are found to be waiting when their master returns from a wedding banquet are asked to sit down to eat and are then served by the master (see Luke 12: 36-37).

So faith and service belong together. But how easy do we find this in practical terms to do this?

Some of us may veer towards the faith side of the equation. We can be full of fine words about what we believe God to be doing. And yet perhaps we are not quite so ready to undertake some form of unglamorous and unrecognised service where it is just a question of getting on with it.

Or on the other hand we may veer towards the service side of the equation. We see ourselves as a Martha and even fall into self-pity about all the tasks we have to do which no-one thanks us for. If that is the case then our need is for an inspiring vision of faith and hope, one which can indeed make the impossible possible and cause mulberry trees to be uprooted and planted in the sea.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Holding faith and service together in our Christian lives
- Thanksgiving for Queen's life and service and prayers for King Charles and the Royal Family as they take up new responsibilities
- Our response to the cost of living and wider economic crisis
- 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 teachers, children and parents of North Cadbury church school and other local schools
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Hymn

A hymn chosen for this morning which encourages us to apply our faith to everyday life is 'Teach me, my God and King.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 2 nd October	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 2 nd October	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 2 nd October	9.30 am Harvest and Patronal, Blackford
Sunday 2 nd October	11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 2 nd October	11.00 am Harvest Service, South Cadbury
Sunday 9 th October	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 9 th October	11.00 am Harvest Service, Galhampton
Sunday 9 th October	11.00 am Harvest Service, Holton
Sunday 9 th October	11.00 am Harvest Service, North Cheriton

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 October 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)