

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 180

Sunday 30th October 2022

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Job 19: 23-27a

“O that my words were written down!

O that they were inscribed in a book!

²⁴ O that with an iron pen and with lead

they were engraved on a rock forever!

²⁵ For I know that my Redeemer lives,

and that at the last he will stand upon the earth;

²⁶ and after my skin has been thus destroyed,

then in my flesh I shall see God,

²⁷ whom I shall see on my side,

and my eyes shall behold, and not another.

Luke 20: 27-38

Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him

²⁸ and asked him a question, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s

brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow

and raise up children for his brother. ²⁹ Now there were seven brothers; the

first married, and died childless; ³⁰ then the second ³¹ and the third married

her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. ³² Finally the woman

also died. ³³ In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be?

For the seven had married her.”

³⁴ Jesus said to them, “Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; ³⁵ but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. ³⁶ Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. ³⁷ And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. ³⁸ Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.”

Reflection

There was a Vicar I once knew, who never used the name of the dead person at a funeral. OK, he was quite old, and he always used the service from the Book of Common Prayer, and you look it up - there's no provision for the minister to say the person's name. In the marriage service, and baptism, yes, you have to. But at a funeral, no. So here was this weird Vicar - if it wasn't in his book, he wasn't going to do it. I seem to have been doing more than my share of funerals lately, partly because there are neighbouring benefices that don't have clergy, so I get to pick up the slack. And I always use the person's name.

Talking about weird, the Sadducees were an odd lot. Jesus was used to crossing swords with the Pharisees, who were determined to keep all the Law, and thought he was a sinner and a backslider because he sat a bit lightly to the Law sometimes. Actually, to be fair, what Jesus did was make a distinction between God's law, which he regarded as sacrosanct, and all the strange regulations that had been built up around it, that some people thought were just as important. Like how many inches of blue fringe you had to have on your ephod. Doesn't matter.

But the Sadducees were a group who only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament - the Pentateuch - as scripture. That was it. Their's was a

very short Bible. They rejected all the prophets after Moses, and they had no truck with the Psalms and Proverbs. So if it wasn't in the first five books, they wouldn't accept it. And as there is nothing in the Pentateuch about resurrection, or life after death, they said it couldn't happen. Not in our Bible, they said. Curiously, most of the ruling classes at the time were Sadducees - the High Priest was, Herod and his family, and other people with influence. And these were people who wanted nothing to do with a Messiah. Somebody who would raise the nation up, chuck out the Romans and establish God's rule would really upset their way of life. Whatever authority and wealth they had, came from the Romans, and they didn't want that mucked about with.

They tended to be judgemental, unsympathetic and uncharitable, because if you believe in a God who is just and righteous, who blesses the good and punishes the wicked, but you don't believe in life after death, then it stands to reason that any blessing and punishing has to be here and now. So, if a man is wealthy and successful, in good health, he must be good, mustn't he? Look how God is blessing him! And the beggar in the gutter, the blind man or the cripple, must be sinners, to have incurred God's punishment. The best thing we can say about the Sadducees is that there were only about six hundred of them at any time.

Maybe it was this that made people think about life beyond this one. If this life is all there is, then God can't be good and just and fair, because look how good people do suffer. There's no point in saying somebody is being punished for his wickedness if everyone who knows her says she's a good, upright, God-fearing woman. And see how the wicked man flourishes like the green bay tree. Some obvious rotters get away with it, and retire to Spain. If God is going to put things right, and he doesn't appear to do it in our lifetimes, then belief in God requires a belief in eternity. But the Sadducees wouldn't have that. So Jesus comes along, talking some nonsense about resurrection, so they put forward a proposition for him. A

highly unlikely scenario. One bride for seven brothers. If there's a resurrection, or a heaven, who will she be married to?

Jesus didn't get cross. He didn't question their assumptions. He started from where they were - with the first five books of the Bible, and said that there, God is regularly referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was how God introduced himself to Moses at the burning bush. He said, *I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Joseph*. Is, not was. And as Jesus points out, he isn't the God of the dead, but of the living, so somewhere, somehow, these people must be still alive. God doesn't want to preside over a bunch of corpses, but have real live people to love, who'll love him back.

What this shows us is that Jesus always started out from where people actually were, and spoke to them on their own terms, in their own language. If you wanted to argue a point with a Muslim, there'd be no point in saying *it says in the Bible...* because that isn't his book. You'd have to start from the Koran. And if we want to share the Gospel with people today, we need to do it in twenty-first century terms. The Salvation Army is brilliant at this. Their paper, *The War Cry* always headlines with a story about soap stars or plotlines, or football, even Doctor Who, the cost of living, or whatever is in the news, and then slants it towards the Gospel. They grab your attention with something you already know about, then *wham!*

There are a lot of people who still go on about the Book of Common Prayer, and the King James Version of the Bible, and how our children are being deprived of its poetry, and the splendour of its language. But if we want to reach young people with the Gospel, we have to do it in a language they'll understand. Jesus did. I'm not saying we should abandon the lovely old words, but we must be prepared to explain them in contemporary terms.

Remember the story about St Paul in Athens? He was walking about the city, getting his bearings, waiting for Timothy and Silas to show up, and he saw there were altars and temples and shrines to every god and goddess the

Greeks could imagine, and just to be sure, there was an altar dedicated *To the Unknown God*. And so that was where Paul started. When he had the chance to talk to the people, *This unknown God*, he said, *Let me tell you about him*. He later wrote, *When I'm among Jews I behave like a Jew, and when I'm speaking to Greeks I speak like A Greek. I have become all things to all people, so that by all means I may win some*.

Jesus wants us to persuade everyone that he loves them; that their sins are forgiven. That means we have to put ourselves in the shoes of the people who might listen to us, so we start where they are - let them give us the opening. And importantly, listen to God all the time. Let him give us words to say, and let him tell us when to shut up. Sometimes a hug says more than any of our words can.

God loves us as real people, with all our quirks and oddities, so we're free to love God without trying to be somebody different. God put us here to learn love, so we can go on giving love, and receiving his love after we die in these bodies. So there must be life after death, as Jesus tried to show the Sadducees, whichever words you choose to explain it. This time last year, I was caring for Pam, who knew she was dying. And she said she knew where she was going, and who she was going to see, and it gave her dignity and courage. For her, those last few weeks weren't an end, but a beginning.

Ron

Points for Prayers

- Putting ourselves in the shoes of those to whom we talk and listening to God as we do so
- Our new Prime Minister and government as they face many different challenges
- 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 and its 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 which celebrates the Resurrection is 'Thine be the glory.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 6 th November	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 6 th November	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 6 th November	11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 13 th November	10.50 am Remembrance Day Service North Cadbury
Sunday 13 th November	10.50 am Remembrance Day Service Yarlington
Sunday 13 th November	10.50 am Remembrance Day Service South Cadbury
Sunday 13 th November	10.50 am Remembrance Day Service Blackford

Sunday 13 th November	10.50 am Remembrance Day Service Maperton
Sunday 13 th November	10.50 am Remembrance Day Service Holton
Sunday 13 th November	10.50 am Remembrance Day 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 November 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)