

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 190

Sunday 15th January 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday’s Cutting Edge Camelot.

Scripture Passages

Isaiah 49: 1-7

Listen to me, O coastlands,

pay attention, you peoples from far away!

The LORD called me before I was born,

while I was in my mother’s womb he named me.

² He made my mouth like a sharp sword,

in the shadow of his hand he hid me;

he made me a polished arrow,

in his quiver he hid me away.

³ And he said to me, “You are my servant,

Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”

⁴ But I said, “I have laboured in vain,

I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my cause is with the LORD,

and my reward with my God.”

⁵ And now the LORD says,

who formed me in the womb to be his servant,
to bring Jacob back to him,

and that Israel might be gathered to him,
for I am honoured in the sight of the LORD,
and my God has become my strength -

⁶ he says,

“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to restore the survivors of Israel;
I will give you as a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

⁷ Thus says the LORD,

the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations,
the slave of rulers,
“Kings shall see and stand up,
princes, and they shall prostrate themselves,
because of the LORD, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

John 1: 29-42

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.”

³² And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³ I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

³⁵ The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!”

³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?”

They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?”

³⁹ He said to them, “Come and see.”

They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon.

⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹ He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed).

⁴² He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

Reflection

‘What I want to know is why are we all here at all?’ That was the response I received recently to a fairly standard opening question ‘How has life been with you in the past few weeks?’ This response was an unexpected one. I had been expecting some vague generalities ‘Not too bad...’ which perhaps would develop into a conversation about the weather or another similarly neutral subject.

And yet that question ‘Why are we all here?’ is a vital one. We all, in different ways, are concerned with it. The question speaks of our purpose in life and whether there is any. As Christians, we often use the word ‘calling’ to describe our purpose in life and at the centre of our calling lies our relationship with Jesus Christ. It is Jesus, we discover, who makes a lasting difference to our lives and makes them worth living.

The question of calling is at the centre of both our readings this morning from Isaiah and from John’s gospel.

As in last week's passage, Isaiah speaks of a person called the servant, whom as Christians we identify with Jesus Christ.

The servant is a person who has been called by God for a reason, in order to fulfil a particular purpose. There is a strong emphasis on the lifelong nature of the servant's calling and purpose in life. This begins even in the womb, before birth. 'The LORD called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me.'

But the servant's pathway is not a completely smooth one. There are even moments when the servant is tempted to despair and to give up. He believes that his labour has been in vain and that his strength has been spent for nothing.

This temptation to give up in despair in terms of our calling and purpose in life is an ever present one for all of us when we hit difficult times. However, the servant is sustained by reminding himself that his labour is for God and it is not for the visible reward of human recognition or results. Such recognition may come but then again it may not and it is not for that reason that we persist in pursuing our calling.

And when we accept that we are to be loyal to God in our calling no matter what our outward circumstances or any visible sign of success might be, then we are rewarded by being given a greater measure of responsibility. For the servant is told after his moment of temptation and restoration by God that 'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.'

Our gospel passage concerns itself with the calling of Jesus' first disciples. John the Baptist points out Jesus to two of his disciples and tells them 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' And with that, the two disciples leave John and begin to follow Jesus. In other words, they become disciples of Jesus.

And to follow Jesus means for them taking an active decision, to leave John the Baptist and to come to Jesus. For in Jesus, they sense, their deepest questions about calling and purpose in life will be answered. Being a disciple of Jesus is indeed an active decision that they and we need to make.

And yet their desire is not simply to follow Jesus but to be with Jesus. The two disciples want to know where Jesus is staying and they then want to come with Him to that place. This is a desire which Jesus welcomes and encourages. He tells them simply to come and see. And so they come to the place where Jesus is staying and then they stay there.

This suggests that as well as an active following of Jesus there also needs to be the capacity simply to stay and be with Jesus, to get to know Jesus better and to receive all that He has to offer them.

This theme of staying and remaining with Jesus also emerges in John the Baptist's testimony that the mark of Jesus' unique identity is given by the Spirit descending on Jesus at His baptism and then remaining on Him.

And elsewhere in John's gospel we find that remaining or abiding with Jesus is of crucial importance in terms of our discipleship. At the last supper, Jesus urges His disciples to 'abide in me as I abide in you' (John. 15:4) and tells them that 'If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.' (John. 15:7).

We need not simply to follow Jesus but also to stay and remain with Him. This remaining or staying where we are with Jesus might seem to lead to a very passive form of discipleship where we may be growing in our own knowledge of Jesus but where our lives are of very limited outward effectiveness.

But in fact the opposite is true. The key to a fruitful and effective outward ministry lies in the extent to which we first spend time with Jesus. When

we do this our outward routines may remain exactly the same but they will be powerfully used in a new way by God.

So we find that Andrew, one of those two first disciples of Jesus, who comes to Jesus and remains with Him is immediately used in a powerful way to bring others to come to know Jesus. It does not take Andrew months or even years of training to discover the truth that we are called as followers of Jesus to share that good news with others. On the contrary, once Andrew has stayed with Jesus this is a calling which just seems to come naturally to him.

Andrew is not perhaps the best known of the twelve apostles. His brother, Simon who is also called Peter, is far better known. And yet in human terms Simon Peter's faith is vitally dependent on his brother Andrew telling him about Jesus. For when Andrew leaves the place where Jesus is staying the first thing he does is to find his brother and tell him "We have found the Messiah".

And then Andrew brings his brother to Jesus. He responds by speaking prophetically into Simon Peter's future by saying "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (or Peter). The meaning of the name Peter is that of a rock and it is on this rock that the church is to be built. Peter, in other words, is absolutely essential to God's future plans. And yet it is the lesser known Andrew who has been responsible for bringing his brother Simon Peter to Jesus.

So we all need to find our purpose in life, to know why we are here at all. As Christians, we find this purpose in Jesus Christ. It is indeed good news which we need to share with others. And yet the key to doing this in a fruitful and effective way is, first of all, to spend time with Jesus and to remain with Him. It is this pattern which we find reflected in Andrew's pattern of discipleship. And it is this pattern which will enable our discipleship to be one of lifelong faithfulness, to enable us to persist not

simply in times of encouragement but also in times of difficulty. So may this pattern also be our pattern.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Remaining and staying with Jesus to be fruitful in ministry
- All those facing hardship this winter, needing to choose between food and heating
- Those seeking to help those facing hardship through projects such as the Lord's Larder and other foodbanks, community fridges and the provision of warm spaces
- Disruption caused by flooding and cold weather
- Resolution to various industrial disputes, especially those involving the NHS
- Conflict between Russia and the Ukraine and those who are refugees from this conflict
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton and its residents
- For teachers, children and parents of North Cadbury church school on the return to school

Hymn

The theme of coming to Jesus is reflected in one of the hymns this morning 'Just as I am'.

Services for this week and next

Sunday 15 th January	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 15 th January	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 15 th January	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 15 th January	4.00 pm Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 22 nd January	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 22 nd January	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 22 nd January	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 22 nd January	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 22 nd January	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 22 nd January	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 22 nd January	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 22 nd January	4.00 pm Evening Service, 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 December and January editions of Excalibur have 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)