

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 194

Sunday 12th February 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday’s Cutting Edge Camelot.

Scripture Passages

Romans 8: 18-25

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰ for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; ²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Matthew 6: 25-34

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?

²⁸ And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you - you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' ³² For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Reflection

'And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?'

Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount are well known. They are widely recognised as being both true and wise. Of course there is no point in worrying, it is not going to achieve anything.

Often, I spend my time travelling to meetings or appointments where I have a fairly exact idea of what time the journey is going to take.

Sometimes I start off a couple of minutes later than usual. And then I think throughout the journey about whether or not I am going to be on time and how I can shave off a few seconds from my journey.

At other times I start off a couple of minutes earlier than usual. And then I think throughout the journey about how I am going to occupy the extra time I shall have at the end of the journey and whether there is any tactic I can use to slow myself down.

And the result of all this preoccupation and anxiety? Well, I arrive at pretty much exactly the same time as I would have done if I had just put all of this out of my mind and instead thought about something completely different during the journey.

So we know the truth of those words but somehow it is very difficult to put them into practice. And it is even more difficult to do this when we are living in times of uncertainty. Faced with Deanery wide pastoral reorganisation our churches are in a time of uncertainty. And this is in addition to all the uncertainty that we have faced over the past few years due to the covid pandemic.

When life is uncertain, we are unable to plan properly because we have no idea what might or might not happen. We have to live with outcomes of which we cannot be sure and very often we also have very little idea of when our time of uncertainty might end.

And when we are exposed to uncertainty over a long period of time it has an impact on the quality of our faith. This impact may not be immediately noticeable. It is a bit like the way that metal corrodes. For a long time, we may not notice any changes but suddenly we have a look, say, at a metal bar that used to be shiny and new and now it has become covered with rust.

Uncertainty corrodes and eats away at our faith and it can be far more difficult to deal with than a sudden challenge or crisis which can often energise us towards a positive response.

So, if uncertainty corrodes our faith surely we need to look for an antidote to such corrosion.

One such antidote is to have definite goals in our lives that we can look forward to and aim at, goals that remain unaffected by the uncertainties of our circumstances. At a very practical level, Ron mentioned last week about

how, despite the rigours of needing a new passport photograph, he was looking forward to taking his first holiday since before the pandemic, a sign that at long last life was getting back to normal.

These kinds of goals such as learning a new language or taking up a new hobby can indeed give us something to look forward to. Such projects can sustain, cheer us up and take our minds off our immediate circumstances. As such they have a valuable role to play in our lives.

And yet as Christians we need something more. We need a goal and a hope that is not tied to any outward circumstances but will always last and be relevant no matter what happens to us.

Put in this way this type of hope may seem somewhat ethereal and difficult to get hold of. And yet as we immerse ourselves in scripture and especially as this speaks of Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection we are continually reminded of the reality of such a hope.

Paul in our reading from his letter to the Romans is writing to those who in their present lives are facing considerable suffering. And yet he is able to say that he considers that 'the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us'.

In other words, there is really no meaningful comparison to be made between the present and the future. That might at first sound counterintuitive. For so often the concerns of the present seem immediate and pressing and indeed can consume all our attention.

And yet if we consciously spend time with God then our perspective begins to change. We realise that, in comparison with eternity, our present lives are just very fleeting. So which should we really take note of in our thinking?

In Christ God has a future for us which is infinitely bigger, more glorious and all embracing than we could ever imagine. And yet we need to have the spiritual eyes to see this.

For while we can visualise the hope of holidays and such like in very concrete and indeed vivid terms it can be more difficult to do this when we think of our Christian hope of heaven. Yes, the Bible does give us some important clues when it speaks in terms of such images as cities and feasts. And yet for all that Paul reminds us that hope which we can fully see and visualise is not truly hope. Rather our hope is based on faith and on what we cannot see and this means that our hope needs to be accompanied by patience.

Hope is one antidote to the long term threats of corrosion of our faith through the anxieties caused by uncertainty.

And yet our faith can also be encouraged simply by looking at what we can see around us. Jesus points us to this in our reading from the Sermon on the Mount.

He tells us not to worry and then He gives us some reasons for this. He tells us to 'Look at the birds of the air' and to 'Consider the lilies of the field.' These everyday aspects of nature can be deeply revealing of God's purposes and as we contemplate them so they can be very strengthening to our faith.

For the birds of the air do not plan for the future by storing up food in barns and yet for all that God continues to provide for them. Similarly, the lilies of the field are not anxiously striving for growth. Rather their growth and their clothing is glorious and God given.

And the simple theological lesson of all this? God provides and cares for all aspects of Creation including what seems to be very small and insignificant.

And if that is so for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field is His care for us not infinitely greater in comparison?

We are fortunate to live in a part of the world where it is relatively easy to put into practice Jesus' words to look at and consider the wonders of the natural world around us. We can take a walk or even just look out of the window. And as we do so in faith so our realisation that we are all part of a much bigger picture to which we are all connected comes to be renewed and refreshed. Such contemplation can put many of our concerns into a different perspective. We may ask ourselves whether say even in a year's time what is worrying us now will still concern us. And even if it will then we can still be reminded as we look at the generosity of God's care and provision for the natural world that wonderful though all of this is we as human beings are even more important to God.

So what does this mean when we have to face the fears and anxieties that times of uncertainty present for us?

One thing seems clear and that is that although Jesus' words about not worrying are very clear we cannot just exercise our own willpower in order to stop worrying. After all, periods of uncertainty may last for a long time and may well be indefinite in their extent.

No, we need to find antidotes to our anxiety that will regularly and over the long term counteract the corrosive impact of uncertainty on our faith. Our passages point us to two different spiritual resources which can help us.

The first is scripture and Christian fellowship. As we engage with them we are continually reminded, refreshed and inspired by the great truth that in Christ we have a hope that lasts beyond this present life. A hope that we can depend on whatever our outward circumstances.

And the other perhaps more mundane but very accessible way is simply to have a look at the natural world around us. And as we do so let us consider our part in it and the way in which God sustains and cares for all aspects of Creation.

Yes, both of these are certainly more effective than trying to make the clock go faster or slower when on a journey with a tight time schedule!

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Receiving the encouragement of Christian hope and the lessons to be found in the natural world when facing times of uncertainty
- Victims of the Turkish earthquake and those who are helping to rescue them
- For those facing shortages of the essentials of life such as food or the means of 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
- Resolution to various industrial disputes
- 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

Hymn

One hymn for this morning is 'O worship the King.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 12 th February	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 12 th February	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 12 th February	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 12 th February	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton
Sunday 19 th February	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 19 th February	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 19 th February	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 19 th February	4.00 pm Evensong, Yarlington

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 February 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)