

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 202**

**Good Friday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

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

## **Welcome**

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot on this Good Friday.

Below is my reflection for the Good Friday service at South Cadbury.

## **Reflection**

The need for peace is ever with us. In the times in which we live we seem to face a never ending series of challenges and upheavals.

From the pandemic we have moved on to the conflict in the Ukraine and all kinds of other political and economic turbulence.

And at a more local and church level we all have to grapple with all the uncertainties and challenges presented by the Deanery Pastoral Reorganisation plans.

And at a personal level each one of us may be facing yet further disruption.

Perhaps we could be forgiven for asking ‘When will life ever settle down?  
Where is peace to be found?’

As we have listened to and reflect upon Matthew’s account of the Passion, we look for signs of peace but almost universally we find that Matthew portrays turmoil, restlessness and violence.

This begins with the large crowd who arrive armed with swords and clubs to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Central to this crowd is, of course, Judas Iscariot the disciple who betrayed Jesus. Who can imagine the inner conflict he must have felt between his conscience and what he was actually doing?

It was an inner division which eventually Judas found himself unable to deal with. Tragically, the pangs of remorse were to lead to his suicide.

And what of Jesus' supporters? They seem unable to find peace or stability.

First, they wish to fight and resist Jesus' arrest. They meet sword with sword as one of them cuts off the high priest's servant's ear. But immediately Jesus tells His followers that violence is not the way forward. Those who live by the sword will die by the sword.

When we are confronted with dangers or threats our natural reaction is to choose between the responses of fight or flight. Jesus has prohibited the option of fight. So not unnaturally His followers choose the other option of flight. After Jesus' arrest, all the disciples desert Him and flee. Peter continues to follow at a distance but when challenged denies three times that he has ever known Jesus.

However, neither fight or flight offers a true way forward. But where can we find such a way? At this point the disciples simply seem adrift, lacking any stable centre.

And then there are the chief priests desperately trying to find a way to convict and sentence Jesus to death. However, they lack any proper evidence to enable them to do so. In their desperation they abandon any integrity and find false witnesses who will accuse Jesus of blasphemy and who will pervert the course of justice.

Equally desperate are the stratagems of Pilate. He is aware that there are no proper charges against Jesus and he has been warned by his wife to have nothing to do with Jesus, an innocent man.

His way of trying to deal with this is repeatedly to seek to absolve himself of any responsibility for Jesus' death. First of all, he offers the crowd a choice between releasing Jesus or a bandit called Barabbas. Unfortunately, this does not work because the crowd call for Barabbas to be released. So, in the end Pilate simply washes his hands in order to signify that he is innocent of Jesus' blood. And yet no peace can be found in passing on responsibility in this way.

And then there is the mindless violence and mockery, physical and verbal abuse, of those present at Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin and of the soldiers who are responsible for taking Jesus to be crucified. The former spit in Jesus' face, strike Him and mockingly ask Jesus to prophesy who struck Him. The latter strip Jesus of His clothing, put a crown of thorns on His head and again mock, spit and strike at Him.

Finally, the verbal violence of mockery even spreads to casual passers-by and to the bandits who are being crucified with Jesus. They too join in the taunting.

Where is peace to be found? Nowhere apart from Jesus.

And in Jesus we do indeed find a striking contrast to all this turmoil that is going on around Him.

When Jesus speaks to those who arrest Him it is with a sense of inner calm and assurance. To Judas, He says simply 'Friend, do what you are here to do.' And He does not resist His arrest.

Jesus' calm assurance is based on the inner security that His knowledge of scripture, prophecy and His Father's will gives Him. To His followers who are seeking to resist His arrest on His behalf, He reminds them that God has infinite power to save Him. However, He knows that what is happening is in fact fulfilling the prophecies of scripture. God has a hidden meaning and purpose in the unfolding of events which on the surface seem to be purely evil and destructive.

Similarly, in speaking to Pilate, Jesus displays the same calm assurance. To Pilate's potentially incriminating question, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' Jesus gives the simple but direct answer 'You say so.' And to the chief priests and elders who accuse Him before Pilate He gives no answer at all.

Jesus' composure at this critical time when He is on trial for His life amazes Pilate. If we think about it and how we might respond in such dire circumstances we too no doubt will be amazed.

And yet was this peace which Jesus displayed able to withstand the ultimate test of the physical and spiritual agony of crucifixion itself? At that last trial did Jesus continue to understand that there was a reason behind all that was happening? How do we understand Jesus' cry of abandonment on the Cross, 'My God, my God why have you forsaken me?'

As we think about this simple word 'Why?' we realise that it can be spoken in different ways and tones. There is the insistent 'Why?' of a child which demands an answer to satisfy their curiosity. There is the angry 'Why' of protest which suggests that there is no logic or meaning behind the events which are happening.

But there is also the 'Why?' which springs out of the dialogue of a deep relationship. And even though the question needs to be asked, the person who asks it knows that its answer is bound up with the very heart of this relationship.

It is this kind of 'Why?' that is perhaps expressed in Beethoven's enigmatic words written on the score of his last composition. 'Muss es sein' Beethoven writes and to this the reply comes 'Es muss sein'. That means 'Must it be?' with the reply 'It must be.' More colloquially, we might express this in the words 'Does it have to be like this' with the reply 'Yes it does.'

None of this is to negate the pain and lonely anguish that Jesus went through on the Cross. But it was not a purposeless suffering. It had to be like this.

But why did it have to be like this? The full answer will need to wait until we celebrate the Resurrection on Easter Sunday. But for now, we can find a pointer in our reading from Isaiah. This speaks of the ministry of the Suffering Servant. As Christians, we see this ministry fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The Servant is one who bears the sins and sicknesses of others. He may seem to be cursed and rejected by God and by everyone else but in fact His ministry fulfils God's purposes at a very deep level.

For through His suffering, we are brought to a place of healing and wholeness in our own lives and through His ministry we are given a way through which we can return to God.

Yes, there is a meaning to the suffering which Jesus went through. As we respond to this with our whole hearts, we too can find this same deep inner peace which Jesus displays even in the middle of extreme trials.

This is indeed the peace which passes all understanding. In His will is our peace, wrote Dante in *The Divine Comedy*. And St Augustine expresses the same truth in a slightly different way when he says, our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.

On this Good Friday may we too find this deep peace of God which Jesus brings to us.

*Tristram*

## **Hymn**

A traditional Good Friday hymn is 'When I survey the wondrous Cross.'

## **Services for Easter**

Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	9.30 am Communion, Blackford
Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	11.00 am Communion by extension, North Cheriton
Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	6.30 pm Evening Service (with Communion), Yarlington

*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)