

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 211**

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

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

## **Welcome**

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

## **Scripture Passages**

*Romans 4: 13-25*

For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith.

<sup>14</sup> If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. <sup>15</sup> For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

<sup>16</sup> For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, <sup>17</sup> as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”)-  
- in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

<sup>18</sup> Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So numerous shall your descendants be.” <sup>19</sup> He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. <sup>20</sup> No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup> being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. <sup>22</sup> Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.” <sup>23</sup> Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written

not for his sake alone, <sup>24</sup> but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, <sup>25</sup> who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

*Matthew 9: 9-13, 18-26*

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

<sup>10</sup> And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. <sup>11</sup> When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

<sup>12</sup> But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>13</sup> Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

<sup>18</sup> While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." <sup>19</sup> And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples.

<sup>20</sup> Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, <sup>21</sup> for she said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well."

<sup>22</sup> Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well.

<sup>23</sup> When Jesus came to the leader's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, <sup>24</sup> he said, "Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. <sup>25</sup> But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. <sup>26</sup> And the report of this spread throughout that district.

## Reflection

What's in a name? There were many tax collectors who met and followed Jesus. In this morning's gospel passage, a number of them have been invited to come and have dinner with Him.

They are grouped together with 'sinners'. The nature of the sin of those other people is not elaborated upon but that of the tax collectors did not need any introduction.

For, tax collectors were considered to be proverbial examples of sinners. First of all, they acted as the agents of a foreign power, the Roman Empire, which was occupying and oppressing the Judaea of the time. In today's language they would be called collaborators.

And over and above that, many of them were cheating people by claiming more taxes than were legally due. They would pocket the extra for themselves, so becoming wealthy at the expense of defrauding other people.

Jesus' ministry attracted this group of people. Although they were social outcasts because of the stigma that their profession carried, Jesus was not concerned by this. On the contrary He welcomed tax collectors as fellow guests and potential disciples.

Out of the many tax collectors, we know a few by name. Perhaps the most famous is Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, who had undoubtedly become very wealthy because of his fraudulent activities. Zacchaeus, being a short man, climbed up a sycamore tree to catch sight of Jesus. And when Jesus looks up and sees him, He immediately says that He must come and stay with him. This precipitates a dramatic conversion in which Zacchaeus promises to make generous restitution to all those whom he has cheated and to give half of all his possessions to the poor.

Less dramatic than the account of Zacchaeus' conversion is that of the call of Levi. This is found in both Mark and Luke's gospels. Jesus calls Levi to follow Him as he sits at his tax booth. Levi responds and He subsequently has dinner in Levi's house.

And then there is Matthew. It is possible that Matthew is another name for Levi as the accounts of their call are similar. However, this is by no means certain and they may in fact be two completely separate people. Whether or not this is the case, what is clear is that the call of Matthew, the tax collector, occurs only in Matthew's gospel.

Matthew subsequently became one of the twelve apostles and Matthew's gospel bears his name. So perhaps the account of his call is only found in this gospel because of eye witness testimony. In any event, we can easily imagine the great impact that Jesus' call would have had on Matthew. It was a moment in his life that he would always vividly remember.

For, it was the start of a completely new life. In this moment he was rescued from the shame and social exclusion of the profession of a tax collector. Instead, he found himself immediately welcomed as a guest at Jesus' dinner table and later on, he was given an honoured place among the inner circle of Jesus' followers, the twelve apostles.

It is a story which is resonant with grace, the undeserved love and mercy of God. And this grace fits in with the wider pattern of Jesus' ministry as this is recorded in our gospel reading this morning.

There are, of course, the other tax collectors who find themselves welcomed to eat with Jesus at the dinner table.

And then there is the woman suffering from haemorrhages. On a natural level, this condition would have been very embarrassing and no doubt would have resulted in people seeking to shy away from her.

But for religious people, there was a further and deeper barrier which prohibited contact. Because of the flow of blood, this woman was considered to be ritually unclean under the Old Testament regulations which prescribed purity. Indeed, under these regulations, not simply was the woman herself unclean, anyone who touched her would also have become unclean.

So, again, this woman is a social and religious outcast. And just as with the tax collectors, Jesus is prepared to break through all these barriers at the risk of attracting hostility and criticism.

So, rather than shying away from this woman when He learns that she has touched Him, He commends her faith and welcomes her with the words, 'Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.'

Again, this is a powerful demonstration of compassion, grace and mercy.

Unreserved compassion is once more demonstrated in the way that Jesus responds to the request of the leader of the synagogue to bring his daughter to life. He goes out of His way to the man's house and takes the daughter by the hand. This precipitates an extraordinary and powerful miracle as the girl is raised from the dead.

To perform this miracle, Jesus once more has to break through religious and social restrictions. For, as with the woman suffering from haemorrhages touching a dead body was considered to make someone unclean. Once more Jesus was willing to risk His religious reputation to respond compassionately to the plea of the leader of the synagogue.

Grace, mercy and compassion, then, lie at the heart of Jesus's ministry. And our other reading, from the Book of Romans, sets out as it were the theory which lies behind the practice of this ministry.

In this reading there is a divide between the spiritual principles of grace and faith on the one hand and law on the other. In our passage from Romans, we learn that the promises given to Abraham did not come to him 'through the law but through the righteousness of faith'. Abraham's standing before God and our own is entirely dependent 'on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace'.

We can find this divide between the principles of grace and law illustrated also in our gospel reading. For, the Pharisees are not in the least delighted by how Matthew and the other tax collectors are welcomed in by Jesus. Rather, on their strict interpretation of religious law they would prefer that these people remain out in the cold, safely excluded from the warmth of human community and fellowship. And so, they ask disapprovingly, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?'

So we have two contrary principles, grace and law, and there is a choice as to which we live by.

That choice may well depend on what memories we choose to cherish and nurture.

For Matthew, the moment of his calling was one of unforgettable grace which he recorded and made known for all time. But what about us? What do we choose to remember in our lives?

When I think about grace, the memory that most immediately springs to mind is an occasion when we were on holiday in Cornwall. It was the end of a long, tiring day. Instead of going back to where we were staying, we decided to stop off at the supermarket just to buy some extra provisions and to fill the car up with petrol.

But having filled the car up with petrol, the car for some unknown reason simply refused to start again. The dashboard indicated that it could be a

serious problem. The supermarket and petrol station were busy, crowded places full of people wanting to get on with their own schedules. Who would help us? We just desperately wanted to get home.

And then a friendly face appeared at our window. He had been filling up with petrol nearby. 'I can see you're having some trouble there. Can I help?' It turned out that he was an expert mechanic and he was indeed able to help us and to get the car to start.

All this was done so willingly and cheerfully and with no sense that he grudged us his time. And when we asked him a bit about himself, we found out that he was a Christian missionary. Yes, we thought, that is grace in action.

And in contrast to that there is another story which also concerns cars. This time I was driving the family to Yeovil Hospital a couple of days after our second daughter had been born. Mother and baby needed to be seen by the medical staff there and then. This left me with our elder but still very young daughter to wait in the car. Now, we were only allowed to wait outside the hospital for a limited period of time. But what was I to do with a very young child anxious about her mother and baby sister? Were we to wait outside or to drive off into the multi storey car park and perhaps miss being at the door when the other two surfaced?

We waited, a few minutes too long as it happened. And the ominous closed circuit television camera took note. A few days later a fine duly arrived in the post. Technically, yes, that fine was correct but it felt extremely unfair and to take no notice of our circumstances. To me, this was an instance of law at work and not of grace.

I have to say, however, that the story did have a happy ending. When I wrote to the matron of the hospital to explain what had happened, she kindly arranged for the fine to be cancelled. And I in turn arranged for a

donation to be made to the hospital in thanks for this. So perhaps grace was there all along under an initial heavy disguise.

But the choice I have is which incident will I choose to remember and to focus on? For what we remember will play a great part in deciding what we choose to pass on to others.

Our thoughts in a very real sense determine the course of our lives. As the apostle Paul encourages us, 'Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.' (Philippians 4:8).

We can all think of incidents of grace and, by contrast, of law in our lives. But which do we choose to dwell on? In Matthew's gospel, the only mention of Matthew other than in a list of disciples is of this moment of grace which changed his life for ever. This is what he chose to remember. What, in our lives, will we choose to remember?

*Tristram*

## **Points for Prayers**

- Remembering moments of grace in our lives
- Resolution to 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

The all-embracing nature of God's love is portrayed in the hymn 'All people that on earth do dwell.'

## Services for this week and next

Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> June	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> June	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> June	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> June	6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlinton

## 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 June edition of Excalibur has now been published online at [camelotparishes.co.uk](http://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](mailto: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)