

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 214

Sunday 2nd July 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passage

Matthew 10: 40-42

“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹ Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; ⁴² and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple - truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

Reflection

Recent research has shown that a lot of people are turning away from TV news, and even newspapers, because there is so much bad news about. Some of it depends on your point of view, but some, like news of natural disasters and wars, is bad news whichever way you look at it. People are getting bad news fatigue.

How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news! We know a song about that. But good news can be a bit thin on the ground.

According to the ancient historian Plutarch, an Athenian army got wiped out in Sicily, and the messenger who took the news back to Athens was tied to a

wheel and flogged half to death. They clearly hadn't heard the expression, *Don't shoot the messenger*. It's not his fault.

If someone brings us a message from a friend, with greetings, we invite him in, put a drink in his hand because any friend of old so-and-so is a friend of mine. A representative of someone we like and admire gets treated almost like we'd treat the one they're representing. The whole business of diplomacy depends on this. The Ambassador of Ruritania might be a loathsome tick, but we treat him as if he was the president he represents.

Anyway, Jesus sent the twelve out on a mission a couple of weeks ago, and he told them, "Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me." In other words, if you give a welcome to the messengers of Jesus, you're showing your love of God. Which is why after a morning's pastoral visiting, I'm sometimes awash with coffee. And if you praise a preacher, it's not just because he or she speaks well, it's because they're a messenger of Jesus.

In the New Testament, the word *prophet* usually means a preacher. They don't foretell, as in predict the future, but they tell forth the good news, God's word about the present. Jesus says preachers will be rewarded in heaven for what they've done.

But so will people who couldn't preach to save their lives, but who've been kind to the preacher because preachers speak to us for Jesus, as his representatives. Any kindness shown to Christians because you respect them for what they are, will bring you a reward in heaven, even a cup of water on a hot day. Actually, make that anybody. Kindness isn't restricted to Christians. Last week I had a go at the Jehovah's witnesses, but in the winter, if I see them by the bus stop in Castle Cary, I buy them a hot chocolate from the bakery. They may be misguided and wrong, but they don't have to be cold and miserable too.

The words used in Gospels for Christian ministers aren't the ones we normally choose. Nobody has ever called me a prophet, but if I tell forth God's word (and I do try), I suppose that's what I am. The twelve are just referred to as *the twelve*, and sometimes as the Apostles, which means missionaries, or messengers. We call people in our church who aren't ordained, *lay people*, but Jesus calls you disciples, which means students, or followers. Or he calls you his children - "one of these little ones of mine", which I think is rather nice. Apostles, prophets, disciples. There's a list of church officials in I Corinthians - "God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third preachers...." Why not priests?

Actually, there's no mention of Christian priests in the New Testament. Jewish priests, and High Priests, yes: Christian bishops, deacons, elders, yes, but only Jesus is referred to as our great High Priest. The function of the Jewish priests in those days was to offer prayers and sacrifices to God on behalf of the people, and to bring to the people the assurance of God's favour and forgiveness. A go-between, or bridge. (One of the titles of the Pope is *Pontifex Maximus*, which means really big bridge. Just thought I'd drop that in.)

And Jesus is the supreme example of that. He shows us what God is like in terms we can understand, and he represents us to God, as if he was a barrister pleading our case in court. And that's a bit true of priests today.

But what St Peter says is that the whole church acts as a priest. *Like living stones, let yourself be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* So our job as a community is to offer the world to God in prayer and Eucharist, and to offer God to the world in our words, and in loving sacrifice to our neighbours.

This isn't quite the same as "the priesthood of all believers", which was an idea that came up hundreds of years ago, which could be taken to mean

that everyone is their own priest, and no need for ministers with dog-collars. But if the whole church has a priestly role, then that priesthood is focussed in its leaders. It's still alright to call us priests, because we lead you in your priesthood, and we care for you, and you care for us, and don't forget that drink of water, offered to a fellow Christian gets you a reward in heaven. I think this ties in with another of Jesus' sayings, later in Matthew's gospel.

Remember the story of the sheep and the goats? Jesus says we will be judged by how we have treated other people - given food to the hungry, a drink to the thirsty, visits to the imprisoned ... or by how we have neglected others. And Jesus takes it personally. Neglecting others, we have neglected him - showing kindness to others, we have been kind to him.

"Whatever you do for the least of my little ones, you do for me." The little ones, remember, are us all. So this isn't just about giving the clergy a drink when they call, it's about recognising Jesus in everyone, and so treating everyone as if they were Jesus himself. What a tall order that is! But Greek myths are full of stories about the gods testing mortals by pretending to be mortals themselves. As one writer put it, they never knew which person they met might turn out to be a god testing them. But according to Jesus, we do know. We are assured that everyone we meet, in whatever situation or need, is our Lord, to be treated accordingly.

Ron

Points for Prayers

- Recognising Jesus in all those around us and treating them as we would treat Jesus
- Victims of Titanic submarine disaster
- Crisis in Russia and war in the Ukraine

- 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

A hymn which encourages us to see Christ in all things is 'O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 2 nd July	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 2 nd July	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 2 nd July	11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 9 th July	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 9 th July	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 9 th July	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 9 th July	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton

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 July 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)