

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 215

Sunday 9th July 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Zechariah 9: 9-12

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you;

triumphant and victorious is he,

humble and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

¹⁰ He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim

and the war-horse from Jerusalem;

and the battle bow shall be cut off,

and he shall command peace to the nations;

his dominion shall be from sea to sea,

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

¹¹ As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,

I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

¹² Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;

today I declare that I will restore to you double.

Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

¹⁷ 'We played the flute for you,
and you did not dance;
we wailed,
and you did not mourn.'

¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; ¹⁹ the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

²⁷ "All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Reflection

From time to time, we all use caricatures to describe the behaviour of other people. Often, we do so because we lack the personal knowledge to depict them in any subtler or more varied colours.

Certainly, the last week has brought us an instance of this in the row that has developed over the second Ashes cricket Test Match. When the respective Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and Australia have given their differing opinions on this subject it is not for me to add anything to what they have said. But what is relevant is how many exchanges there

have been on the lines of what typical English behaviour or what typical Australian behaviour.

Such national comparisons are slightly complicated by the strong New Zealand connections of two of the leading English representatives. But that is just the kind of detail that gets lost when we deal in caricatures and stereotypes of this kind.

And when we are on the receiving end of this kind of caricature, being told that we are simply a typical 'this' or a typical 'that', does this not deny our real humanity? It is as if no-one recognises who we really are, people presume to know the inner motives of our hearts when in fact they simply do not know us.

Jesus, too, in His ministry suffered from caricatures of what someone who came in God's name should be like. And more than that, these stereotypes seemed to change in a wilful and arbitrary way. Whatever He did, some people were never going to be satisfied.

So when John the Baptist appeared on the scene, people said that he did not live up to their expectations of what a prophet should be like.

Yes, no doubt it was the role of a prophet to challenge the powers that be but did John really have to go so far? Wasn't the ascetic life of living in the desert, wearing camel's hair clothing and eating locusts and wild honey a bit extreme? Indeed, these critics went much further than that and rather than recognising John as a true man of God they said 'He has a demon'.

And when Jesus arrived on the scene and behaved in a very different way not living a lifestyle of extreme asceticism, you might have thought that He would be met with approval. Surely, no-one could say He was like John the Baptist.

But a different verdict came from His opponents who observed His ministry. Jesus might not have come in camel's hair clothing but He was nevertheless criticised on the opposite grounds. He ate and drank like a normal person but this simply excited the comment, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Surely a man of God should have better standards than that.

It was a 'no win' position that Jesus found Himself in. So much so that He compared people's arbitrary and contrary behaviour to children sitting in the marketplace and complaining that the other children are not playing the right game.

So, Jesus was not behaving in the way that He was expected to do. He did not fit the mould of other people's expectations and His ministry was caricatured in false and misleading terms.

But how did Jesus break through this mould? One important clue comes in the word 'humility'.

For, humility in God's terms does not mean simply giving in to whatever other people might like or tell us to do. Rather, it means a freedom from those expectations because our first priority is to acknowledge God and to ask what God wants us to do. So, we find a different perspective on our lives. This brings us the freedom to be truly ourselves, released from all the stereotypes and expectations that others might wish to place upon us.

In our gospel passage, Jesus speaks of Himself as being 'gentle and humble in heart'. And again, Jesus emphasises the importance of humility when He speaks of God's will being revealed to infants and yet hidden from the wise and intelligent who trust in their own powers of intellect and understanding.

These references to humility are echoed in our Old Testament reading from the prophet Zechariah.

We often read this passage in connection with Palm Sunday and Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It describes the coming of a king.

However, rather than the king riding on a warhorse as might be expected of a warrior, the mount of choice is the humble donkey. This signifies a king who comes to bring peace to the nations rather than war and destruction.

The call to humility is a relevant one as we seek to respond to Christ's call on our lives. For it takes humility for us to realise that we need to accept the help that Christ offers us.

We certainly need this help. For, we too can be imprisoned both by the caricatures which other people use to depict us and also by the unreasonable expectations that they place upon us.

And we experience these expectations as a heavy burden. It is this issue which Jesus goes on to address in our gospel reading.

He calls all those who are weary and carrying heavy burdens. In its immediate context, these burdens mean the very strict religious obligations of the Old Testament law as interpreted by groups such as the Pharisees.

It was just these kinds of obligations that Jesus Himself was accused of breaking when the charge was laid against Him that He was a glutton and a drunkard and a friend of sinners. Such strict lifestyle demands are in the end ones which none of us can live up to. And so, the people whom Jesus was addressing were indeed carrying heavy burdens which made them weary.

We too are likely to find this call of Jesus resonates with us. Even though we may not be facing the same strict religious expectations, there are many other expectations which people have of us which can weigh us down and make us feel weary.

These may be the family expectations, spoken or unspoken, of material success and prosperity. They may be the expectations of the institutions within which we work. They may be the expectations of younger members of our family that we will provide them with time and attention.

But whatever these expectations may be, whether they are justified or not, they can feel like a heavy burden on our shoulders.

I remember once crossing a busy railway station in London and seeing an advertisement with this verse of scripture on it, inviting those who were weary and carrying heavy burdens to come to Christ to find rest.

And this simple, yet direct, message had a great impact on me at the time. It resonated with all the weight of expectations that I felt I was under and it raised in my heart the hope and possibility that by coming to Christ I could find rest.

We do not need to be grown up to feel the pressures of expectations. Sadly, children find themselves under increasing pressure these days. For instance, the anxiety associated with exams, moving classes and indeed schools is a very real one.

In all of this the invitation to find rest in Christ is a powerful one. We often use the phrase 'May he/she rest in peace' of the dead and there is a profound theological truth which lies behind this hope of finding rest in death. And yet rest is something which we can also find in this life through coming to Christ here and now.

As we come to Christ in humility, we will find a release from the impossible expectations that others might place upon us and also the ability to be our true selves freed from all those imprisoning stereotypes and caricatures.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Responding in humility to Jesus' invitation to come to find true rest
- 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 as they approach the end of term

Hymn

One hymn which we are singing this Sunday is 'O worship the king.'

Services for this week and next

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
Sunday 16 th July	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 16 th July	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 16 th July	11.00 am Morning Service, Maperton
Sunday 16 th July	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 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)