

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 216**

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

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

## **Welcome**

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

## **Scripture Passages**

*Psalm 126*

*A Song of Ascents.*

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.

<sup>2</sup> Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then it was said among the nations,  
“The LORD has done great things for them.”

<sup>3</sup> The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we rejoiced.

<sup>4</sup> Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like the watercourses in the Negeb.

<sup>5</sup> May those who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy.

<sup>6</sup> Those who go out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves.

### *Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23*

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. <sup>2</sup> Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup> And he told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup> Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup> Let anyone with ears listen!”

<sup>18</sup> “Hear then the parable of the sower. <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. <sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup> yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. <sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. <sup>23</sup> But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

### **Reflection**

‘Where there is no love, put in love - and you will find love’. This is a saying of St John of the Cross, a famous sixteenth century Christian.

It is an encouragement to all of us who find ourselves in hopeless and desperate circumstances to know how to respond positively and to take the next step.

Certainly, this advice could have applied in the circumstances in which Psalm 126 was composed. This psalm is one of a series entitled the Songs of Ascent. It is believed that they were sung by worshippers as they ascended the road to Jerusalem on their way to one of the festivals held there.

The context of this psalm is most likely to be the devastating Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and Judah. What hope was there for those who had been sent into exile to suffer under a foreign and oppressive regime?

Nevertheless, these exiles did not despair. One of the ways in which we can put love in where there seems to be no love is to pray. The close of the psalm speaks of 'those who sow in tears' and this is likely to refer to prayers uttered in circumstances of extreme hardship.

However, as the exiles sow love in through their prayers, they find that God rewards their faithfulness. For their whole lives are dramatically turned around by God as the Persians succeed to the Babylonian empire and then decree that the exiles can return home to their native land.

This seemed incredible, 'When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream'. And just as before their lives had been filled with pain and sorrow, so now they came to experience the other end of the spectrum where their mouths are filled with laughter and their tongues with shouts of joy. They could indeed declare that the Lord had done great things for them and rejoice in this.

One further aspect of this sowing is worth noting. The seed that is sown is precious because there is no guarantee that it will result in a harvest the

next year. Sometimes harvests were known to fail and for the subsistence farmers of those ancient days this would be a disaster. Having sunk the fortune of their precious seed into the soil and drawn nothing out, would they have enough seed left to sow in the next year?

We often speak of the risks of faith and these are very real. Even though the principle may be that if we sow in faith we will reap a harvest of love, there is no guarantee that this will happen in each and every case. Sometimes the harvest does fail. As we go on sowing, we just have to take the risk that this may be the case. For unless we sow there can certainly be no harvest.

I was reminded of this truth recently when I was looking through some old papers of mine. They dated from a time when I had no permanent job and was looking for one. I was struck by quite how many and what a different variety of applications I made.

But the result in each case was the same. The message was conveyed in different ways. Sometimes it was simple and unadorned. We do not have a lot of call for people in your position. Some applications were carefully considered but ... Others would like to thank me for my interest in their organisation but regretted that they were not able to interview me. Some said that they would take matters no further on this occasion but maybe in the future who knows? But the outcome in each case was the same, however this was conveyed. It could have been expressed in a single word which was 'No'.

As I read these letters, I was struck by how many seeds had been sown and had simply disappeared into the ground producing no harvest at all. And yet had I not gone on sowing I would have been left simply to accept this result. But I was also struck by the kindness and generosity of those who went out of their way to offer me such help as they were able to give. So, in that sense there was a harvest of love for which to be grateful.

Perhaps Jesus was thinking of some of these dynamics when He told the well known parable of the Sower. Often we apply this parable as an encouragement to look at the state of our own heart. What kind of ground and what kind of people are we? Are we like the path where any message from God simply 'bounces' off us? Are our hearts rocky ground where our faith can find no deep roots in which to grow so that we have no strength to withstand any difficulties or challenges? Or do we have obstructions and distractions in our lives which prevent us from truly focussing on God?

Surely we need to be aware of and on our guard against all these dangers so that we can aspire to be like the good soil which continues to produce good fruit.

Such encouragement is necessary and a valid way of responding to the parable. And yet there is also another application which is relevant both to us and to those first hearers of the parable.

For, as Jesus went around sowing God's word and encouraging His disciples to follow Him in this mission, they met with some very mixed results. There was the outright opposition of the Pharisees and other groups. There were those who simply found Jesus' message a complete mystery and were unable to understand what He was saying. And perhaps most discouraging of all were those who initially seemed to be enthusiastic converts but who, at the first sign of trouble and opposition, just fell by the wayside.

In all of this, the disciples needed the encouragement to keep going in their mission of spreading the Word about Jesus. They were not to be put off by any apparent lack of results. Rather they should remember that some of the seed which they were sowing would indeed result in a rich harvest of faith.

But which soil would in fact enable the seed of the Word to take deep root in people's lives and hearts? If the sower had known in advance the state of the soil was into which he was sowing, surely he would not have sown any

of the precious seed into those rocky places or ones where he knew that weeds would spring up.

But the sower does not know this in advance. Nor do the disciples and nor do we. Rather we have to accept the possibility that some of our best efforts to sow in love and faith may meet with no visible result.

And surely that is what risk is all about. As we sow and put in love there is a very real possibility that we will not, in any individual instance, see faith and love being drawn out. I remember recently listening to someone at a Christian training session who had a great track record of nurturing people for all forms of Christian vocation and service. But he said that his stories were all about his successes. On the other hand, there were many other people on whom he had spent much time and effort without seeing any visible result. And there were yet others with whom he had worked for many years where he was simply not sure whether or not in the end this would make any difference to their lives.

And that is the point. The encouragement which we take from both the psalm and the parable of the Sower is that, to act in faith, we need to take a risk.

When times are tough and we can see no love around us, those are the occasions when we need to sow our precious seed through our prayers, our message of faith and through showing love to others.

And yet our success in this cannot be predicted. Sometimes it might be with the most unlikely people that we find encouragement and a harvest. After all, the people with whom Jesus found most success, tax collectors and the like, were hardly the most obvious ones to become His followers.

And yet at other times we can confidently take an initiative in the belief that we will find success and we are met with a closed door and a rebuff. Perhaps we do not know other people as well as we think we know them.

But none of this means that we become discouraged and just stop sowing. For what alternative do we have? Without sowing, without putting love in, we cannot reap a harvest or draw love out. So, like those who were returning from exile and like Jesus' earliest followers we need to be encouraged simply to keep on sowing seed and to trust that God will do the rest.

*Tristram*

## **Points for Prayers**

- Being encouraged to keep on putting love in and sowing faith even when there seems to be no positive result
- 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**

A hymn which relates to the theme of sowing and reaping is 'Come ye thankful people come.'

## **Services for this week and next**

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July

9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot

Sunday 16 <sup>th</sup> July	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 16 <sup>th</sup> July	11.00 am Morning Service, Maperton
Sunday 16 <sup>th</sup> July	6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> July	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> July	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> July	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> July	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> July	11 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> July	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> July	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> July	6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton

## **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](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)