

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 217

Sunday 23rd July 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Romans 8: 14-17

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ - if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43

[Jesus] put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵ but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well.

²⁷ “And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’

²⁸ “He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’

“The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’

²⁹ “But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

³⁶ Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.”

³⁷ He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸ the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.

⁴⁰ “Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, ⁴² and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!”

Reflection

It is so easy to look at the world around us and think ‘If God is real, why does God allow such terrible behaviour? Surely God should do something about it !’

And sometimes we may also wish that those who have the power to do so, governments or other authorities, should do what is necessary on God’s behalf.

And there is a powerful element of truth in this. Surely it cannot be right passively to accept terrible injustices or abusive behaviour by powerful

people who use their power not to enrich the lives of other people but to damage and hurt them.

And yet in the parable of the wheat and the weeds this morning we find that there can be great wisdom in God not immediately putting right all that is wrong in the world.

This parable is a vividly realistic portrayal of the world in which we live. For in our world just as in the parable, wheat and weeds, good and evil exist and grow up side by side.

On the one hand, we can experience countless acts of kindness and generosity from other human beings. Human skill and ingenuity in the field of medicine, for instance, can result in extraordinary advances.

But on the other hand, there are actions such as the blowing up of a dam in the Ukraine which caused devastating flooding. This was not the result of human error but a deliberate act of war. All the skill and care that had gone into the construction of the dam was wasted as the dam was turned into a brutal instrument of destruction.

So perhaps we are not surprised when the servants of the owner of the field are puzzled by this mixture of wheat and weeds appearing where they had sown only wheat. Where had the weeds come from? The owner explains to them that this is the malicious action of an enemy.

So, the servants' first thought is that the appropriate response is for them to put right the damage which the enemy has caused. They volunteer immediately to go and gather up all the weeds so that only a pure field of wheat is left.

However, the owner explains to them that such immediate action will cause another problem. While the wheat and the weeds are still growing they are

so intertwined with each other that by uprooting the weeds the wheat will also be damaged. Because of this the owner decides to wait until the time of harvest. Only then will it be possible to separate out the wheat and the weeds effectively without causing unnecessary 'collateral' damage.

Again, this is a vividly realistic portrayal of the world in which we live. So often we act against one form of evil and our actions end up having other, quite unintended consequences. Opinions differ on the necessity, timing and effectiveness of the covid lockdowns and indeed there is a public enquiry going on into this at the moment.

However, there seems to be a growing agreement that, necessary or not, the lockdowns had harmful side effects which were difficult to envisage at the time. So, for instance, some recent studies have suggested that babies born during the lockdown period are less developed in their communication skills because of their social isolation experienced at a very young age. Yes, the weeds of the covid pandemic did need to be uprooted but it seemed impossible to do this without also damaging the wheat of the human need for social interaction.

So, there is wisdom in the owner's refusal to take immediate action to remedy the state of his field. And if we see the parable of the field with its mixture of wheat and weeds as not simply a portrayal of the world in which we live but also as a portrayal of our own hearts then we are likely to become even more sympathetic to a plan of delayed action.

For the motives of our own hearts can also be very mixed. On the one hand, we might be deeply concerned to fulfil a role or ministry into which God is calling us. But on the other we may (consciously or not) wonder what is in it for us. What will it do for our own reputation? How will others see us? And it can be very difficult for us to tell which set of motives are uppermost in our hearts and minds. Like the wheat and the weeds, these motives can be very difficult to disentangle.

Or we can think of our own shortcomings. We know that we should exercise patience at all times with people but in reality we can on occasions have a short fuse. We know that we should trust God in all circumstances and yet we find ourselves unable to prevent ourselves from worrying about financial insecurities, perceived or real.

In all of this, our cry to God is for patience. We need a little more time for God to work and to change us. In the meantime, we ask for some grace and mercy. A delay in experiencing God's judgement is needed and welcomed.

However, the parable of the weeds and the wheat shows us that even though there is a delay God will act in the end. Good and evil do matter and evil will not be allowed to flourish indefinitely. At the end of time when human history is complete the harvest will be gathered in. And at that point, the wheat and the weeds can safely be distinguished from one another. The wheat can be gathered into the barn, while the weeds can be collected and then burnt.

Reflecting on this coming reality may cause us some anxiety. For if our lives are so mixed in their quality how will we survive this separation of wheat from weeds? Indeed, how can we be sure that, in the end, we will be like the wheat not the weeds?

If we are concerned in this way, then the words of our other reading from the Book of Romans provide us with a powerful source of comfort and reassurance.

They speak of how we, as Christians, have a relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. Rather than being afraid of God, we are assured that we still belong to God no matter how much work is necessary to refine and purify our hearts.

As Christians we are adopted into God's family and, like Jesus, we too can call God our Father. And when we call on God as Father, the Holy Spirit assures us that we are indeed children of God.

So despite all the work that God needs to do with each one of us, we can still be sure of God's grace and love. And if this is the way we would like God to deal with us then instead of demanding that God or other people should act instantly as agents of God's judgement should we not see the wisdom of the owner's response to his servants? Let the wheat and the weeds grow together until harvest and only then can they safely be separated. Only God has the wisdom to know in full the motives of each person's heart.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Accepting the need for God's patience both with ourselves and with other people
- 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 refreshment for teachers, children and parents of North Cadbury church school in the school holidays

Hymn

One hymn which we are singing this morning is 'Praise my soul the king of heaven.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 23 rd July	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 23 rd July	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 23 rd July	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 23 rd July	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 23 rd July	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 23 rd July	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 23 rd July	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlinton
Sunday 23 rd July	6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton
Sunday 30 th July	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 30 th July	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Bratton Seymour
Sunday 30 th July	6.30 pm Evensong, 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.

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)