

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 218

Sunday 13th August 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Psalm 107: 23-32

Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
24 they saw the deeds of the LORD,
his wondrous works in the deep.
25 For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
26 They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
27 they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
28 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
29 he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
30 Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
31 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
32 Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

Matthew 14: 22-33

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them.

²⁵ And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea.

²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear.

²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

²⁸ Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

²⁹ He said, "Come."

So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

³² When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Reflection

Have you ever wondered why Jesus chose to walk on the water in the first place? As I started thinking about it, I wondered whether it could have been something in the nature of a 'test run'.

There He was, enjoying an evening's respite from a busy and draining period

of ministry which had culminated in the feeding of the 5,000. Alone in prayer with God was He prompted to think, this is an opportunity away from the pressures both of the crowds and His disciples, in which, unobserved by anyone else, I can try out some of these miraculous powers that I have been given?

But as I thought about it, this seemed neither likely nor right. After all, Jesus was tempted by the devil to throw Himself off the top of the temple in the belief that the angels would catch Him in order to prove that He was the Son of God. But Jesus rightly resisted this temptation, saying to the devil in the words of the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'

And although a private practice session might not have amounted to the same form of showing off of miraculous powers before other people as was involved in that temptation, nevertheless there does seem to be an element of putting God to the test.

So maybe the purpose of Jesus' walking on the water was to provide His disciples and Peter, in particular, with a dramatic visual illustration of what it means to walk in faith, a kind of school of faith. As we will go on to see, Peter and the other disciples do indeed learn much both about what it means to trust Jesus and about who Jesus really is as a result of seeing Him walk on the water. And yet I wonder whether providing this school of faith was the real starting point for Jesus walking on water.

In a number of other miracles, particularly those of healing, we find that Jesus' motivation for acting miraculously is grounded in compassion and a response to human need.

To give just a few examples. Jesus sees a crowd, has compassion on them and heals their sick (Matthew 14:14). Again, Jesus has compassion on the widow whose son has died and raises the son from the dead (Luke 7:13).

And the motivation for feeding the 4,000 is once more compassion (Matthew 15:32, Mark 8:2).

So, too, I believe with Jesus and His response to the needs of His disciples in the great and dangerous storm that has blown up over Lake Galilee. Jesus and His disciples have parted company on the shore. The disciples embark on their boat journey across the shore while Jesus goes up the mountain to be by Himself and to pray.

The motivation for this separation seems clear. Jesus urgently needs the time to be with God alone without needing to minister either to the crowds or to the disciples. The weather is fine at the time and so the disciples should simply be facing a routine journey across the lake.

But then the weather conditions change suddenly and unexpectedly. Jesus knows that His disciples are caught up in the middle of a life-threatening storm on the lake. How does He respond? Does He cling to those precious moments of respite and inner spiritual refreshment which He has so carefully carved out for Himself with God? No, this is an emergency and the needs of His disciples are immediate. He is motivated by compassion.

The waters are indeed a dangerous place as is well attested by the Old Testament. Psalm 107:23, 27 speaks of people going down to the sea in ships and doing business on the mighty waters when suddenly a stormy wind comes which lifts up the waves of the sea. The courage of the seafarers melts away and they are at their wits' end.

But how is Jesus to reach His disciples in their small boat on the water? Even if another boat had been available on the shore, the conditions were such that to venture out in it would not have been feasible. But just as in the case of the feeding of the 5,000, where human and natural resources have run out, through faith it is possible to call on God's unlimited and supernatural resources.

And this is what Jesus does. He begins to walk across the water to His disciples. Not unnaturally, the first response of the disciples to seeing Him is terror. They believe that they are seeing a ghost. Immediately, Jesus continues to demonstrate His compassion and concern for the disciples by addressing their fear. He encourages and reassures them that He, not a ghost, is there with them in the terror of the storm.

It is at this point that Jesus' walking on water does indeed become a school of faith for His disciples.

So often we wish that we could be given a precise road map for the journey of discipleship that we are to take with Jesus. It would be so much easier if we could see all the moves that we were to take in advance. But even though God may give us some promptings as to what lies in wait for us in the future, often we can only see one or two steps in advance. However, if we are living in faith that is all we need to see.

Peter volunteers to come to Jesus across the water. He too wants to experience the miraculous faith that He sees at work in Jesus, His Lord and Master. And Peter's journey of faith begins well. Jesus is at the very centre of his vision and he begins to take one step at a time. Peter, like Jesus, is indeed walking in faith.

But then he begins to think too much, perhaps wanting to see more than simply Jesus and the direction of the next step ahead. He begins noticing his surroundings and, in particular, he begins to think about the strong wind. And at this point, his walk of faith begins to falter. Indeed, he becomes frightened and begins to sink. He cries out to Jesus for help.

This is again in its own way an expression of faith in Jesus and Jesus responds to this cry of need. In compassion, Jesus reaches out His hand to Peter and catches him. And yet Peter also needs to realise that there is

much for him to learn in this school of faith. Jesus asks Peter why he has doubted God's power. There is a need for Peter's faith to grow.

Along with this lesson in the school of faith, Jesus' walking on water also shows His disciples who He truly is. Jesus is not simply an extraordinarily gifted human being. He is more than that. Jesus is the Son of God, God in human form.

In the Old Testament, a sign of God's rule and authority was God's ability to calm the dangerous and unruly behaviour of the sea. No-one else could do this, for human beings this was simply not possible.

And so Psalm 107 speaks of the miraculous works of God in the deep, how God commands and raises the stormy wind. And once the mariners cry to God in their distress, so God has the power to still the storm and to hush the waves of the sea.

In a similar way, this is what Jesus does. When He gets into the boat with His disciples immediately the wind ceases and the storm comes to an end. Who is it who has power to still storms? Only God. And yet if Jesus causes the sea and the storm to be still who does this mean that Jesus is? Recognising this, the disciples draw the only conclusion that is possible for them. They exclaim that Jesus is truly the Son of God and as they proclaim this truth, so it moves them to give to Jesus the worship that belongs to God.

There is much to reflect upon in this account of Jesus walking on the water. Perhaps our starting point might be to recognise Jesus' compassion. How far does compassion underlie all that we do? Might we on occasions be tempted to look for that which is spectacular and places us in a good light? And then there is the roadmap of faith which we might long for but which is hidden from us. Are we able, rather than becoming distracted by this, to

continue to keep our eyes on Jesus and to keep on taking one step at a time with Him?

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Sharing God's compassion and being willing to follow Jesus step by step
- Small boats crossing in the Channel and the recent deaths
- 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 emphasises our need to keep our eyes on Jesus at all times is 'Be thou my vision.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 13 th August	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 13 th August	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 13 th August	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 13 th August	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton
Sunday 20 th August	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 20 th August	11.00 am Communion, Maperton

Sunday 20 th August	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 20 th August	6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlington

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 August 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)