

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 220

Sunday 27th August 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Romans 12: 1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God -- what is good and acceptable and perfect.

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶ We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸ the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Matthew 16: 13-20

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Reflection

Most of us have moved house in our lives, probably more than once. And these moves usually involve a change in the wider area, city, town or village in which we live. For my next move, I am fortunate enough to be considering a move back to a place and a house which I have known all my life. Nevertheless, in the meantime, I have lived in a number of different locations in this country.

And if we belong to a church, we find that these moves involve the need for us to find a new and different church. Inevitably, this church is not quite what we expected it to be even if we have chosen the location in which we are to live very carefully and on the basis of what church we can expect to find in it.

Sometimes, we come into such churches believing that they need to be changed in order to conform more closely to what we have been used to in the past and what we may consider a church should be like. But these agendas do not work if we stick to them rigidly. If we are wise, we will look

more for a fruitful interchange between what has been good and valuable in our past church experience and the different and perhaps surprisingly positive aspects of the new church that we find ourselves in. This is more likely to be a positive kind of approach to our new church environment.

We are aware, of course, that for all of us, even if we are not considering a geographical move the question of change in the church is a relevant one. So much time has been spent in discussing the possible future groupings of our local churches and the advantages and disadvantages of this group of parishes or that group of parishes. So perhaps this is an appropriate time to ask ourselves what the church is all about in the first place. What is a church? What could it be? What should it be?

To answer this question I am not going to begin with an Ordnance Survey Map, no matter how complex or detailed this might be. Rather, my starting point will be Jesus' question to His disciples at Caesarea Philippi as to who He is and the answers that the disciples give to this question.

Jesus begins by asking the disciples a relatively safe question. Who do other people say Jesus is? At this point all they are asked to do is to remember and report accurately what they have heard other people say. These answers range from John the Baptist to Elijah, Jeremiah or some other prophet.

But then Jesus' questioning becomes personal and challenging. He no longer allows the disciples to hide behind other people's opinions and to keep their own thoughts to themselves. Next, He asks them what they think.

Typically, it is Peter who is the first of the disciples to show his hand. He gives a bold and unequivocal answer, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'

And Peter's answer is right. His boldness is rewarded when Jesus affirms him and tells him that his answer is a God given one. As a result, Jesus tells Peter that he will be the rock on which Jesus will build His church.

At this point we might have an important question to ask. Is Peter in his personal capacity to be the rock on which the church is to be built? Or is the church to be built not on Peter personally but on the confession of faith which he represents and which he has been the first to articulate? This faith is that Jesus is the Son of God.

Both options have their part to play. Yes, Jesus does affirm Peter's role as the chief of His disciples and the rest of the church is to be built around him. However, this role is given to him and depends on his confession of faith in Jesus.

So, in order to be truly part of the church we do not have to trace back a personal and undivided line of succession from ourselves to the apostle Peter. King Charles, for instance, may need to trace back an undivided line of succession to previous monarchs in order to show that he now has a valid claim to the throne.

However, God's kingdom does not work on these lines even though I do have to admit that I once received a job application from someone who seemed very uncertain of his relationship to the Church of England. Nevertheless, he could provide me with a long list of ordinations, some in quite obscure branches of the church. The importance of this list was that at one end was himself and at the other end was the Apostle Peter. This list was impressive but I am afraid it was not quite enough to land him the job.

Laying this aside, however, we know that we are part of the church not because we are able to trace back such a personal line of descent but because we are able to echo Peter's confession of faith in Jesus as the

Messiah. In this way, we are built on Peter's foundation. This is what the church is essentially all about, a company of believers in Jesus.

But is this declaration of faith all a matter of intellectual assent or does it need to go deeper? After all, truths that we may believe intellectually (such as whether Europe or Asia has the greater land mass) do not necessarily have any deep personal impact.

However, in Jesus' reply to Peter, we find that this declaration of faith is not a matter of coming to some logical and intellectual conclusion. Rather it is a direct response of faith to God. It is Jesus' Father in heaven, not flesh and blood, who has shown him who Jesus truly is.

So, faith requires a personal response to God. In our reading from Romans, Paul appeals to his readers to give themselves wholly and without reservation to God.

Sometimes people who do not believe can give a number of intellectual arguments as to why they think this is so. But it may be that what is holding them back from faith is not simply that they lack the answers to these questions but they sense that a response in faith to the claims of Jesus would mean personal changes to their lives which they feel threatened by.

And there are further challenges as well. Up to this point we have looked at the need for an individual believer to respond to Christ. Crucial though this is, the church also involves relating to other people. And these relationships, though potentially very rewarding, can provide their own challenges.

For, the church is not just a collection of self-contained individuals who happen to believe in Jesus but, other than that, have nothing in common with one another. Our reading from Romans also teaches us that the church is a community of people who are mutually dependent on one

another. This is described in the metaphor of a body in which each member has a particular part to play in the functioning of the whole.

If we look at our own lives, we will no doubt recognise that we have both particular areas of strengths and gifts and also other areas of weakness. In these areas, we need other people to help us. None of us has within ourselves all the gifts that are needed for the church to function effectively.

So, it is foolish for us to isolate ourselves from our fellow Christians and pretend that we do not need them. Rather, as we seek them out and are prepared both to offer and to receive help and service, so we will find the church operating to its full effectiveness.

We have 'gifts that differ according to the grace given to us'. There are gifts of communication such as teaching and prophecy, gifts of encouragement and leadership alongside gifts of compassion and service. All these gifts need to work in conjunction with one other. But not everyone can or should have all these gifts and so no-one can simply 'go it alone' as a Christian.

And so what is the church all about? Yes, the place in which a church is based does matter and it will make an impact on the character of that church. And yet, for all the individual differences between churches, it is important to remember and go back to the constant foundations on which a church needs to be built. This starts with a confession of faith in Jesus Christ as first articulated by the apostle Peter. It involves a personal response and offering of ourselves to Christ and working together with other members of the church, contributing all our gifts so that the church as a whole can be effective in its calling.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Finding our part in the church
- Small boats crossing in the Channel
- Ongoing 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 at the end of the school holidays

Hymn

A modern hymn which expresses the need to have Christ as the foundation of our faith and hope is 'In Christ alone my hope is found.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 27 th August	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 27 th August	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 27 th August	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 27 th August	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 27 th August	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 27 th August	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 27 th August	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 27 th August	6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton
Sunday 3 rd September	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 3 rd September	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 3 rd September	11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury

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)