

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 221

Sunday 10th September 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

2 Corinthians 9: 6-15

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. ⁹ As it is written,

“He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever.”

¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; ¹² for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Luke 12: 16-30

Then Jesus told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. ¹⁷ And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’

¹⁸ “Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’

²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’

²¹ “So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

²² He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest?

²⁷ “Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you – you of little faith!

²⁹ And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. ³⁰ For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them.”

Reflection

As we look to plan our garden in what will be our new home, I have become very aware of the different variety of trees that we might plant, of their colours, shapes and the mood that they create. It is an exercise in very careful and detailed planning.

Similarly, harvest requires careful planning. It does not just happen of its own accord. A decision needs to be made as to which fields to use and how often to rotate them. Maybe a scientific analysis of the soil will be made to aid this process of decision making. And then there is the vital question of looking at the weather forecasts and deciding when the best time is to start the harvest itself.

The rich farmer in Jesus' parable also makes plans. One year his land produces a bumper crop. This is indeed a bountiful gift but it presents him with the problem of what to do with all the excess crops. He has run out of storage space and if he makes no plans then these extra crops will simply go to waste. That would surely not be right.

And so, he thinks of a plan which, on the face of it, seems very pragmatic and sensible. He will tear down his existing barns and build bigger ones so that he has enough space to store all his grain and also his other possessions.

But then disaster comes overturning all these carefully made plans. It comes, as disasters so often do, suddenly and unexpectedly. One night, God tells him 'This very night your life is being demanded of you.' And so, he dies never having the opportunity to enjoy the abundant gift that God has given him.

It is a stark reminder to all of us that, however well and carefully we plan our futures, these plans are always provisional. In the end they depend on

God's grace and favour to come into reality. So, even with the most carefully planned harvest, we still need the weather and other factors to work in the way we think they will. It is always possible that this will not happen. God and life always have the power to disturb and overthrow our plans without warning.

So does this mean that we should not make plans? Should we just live for the moment and trust that God will take care of us?

That might be the impression we take away from a first reading of Jesus' words about the birds of the air and the lilies of the field.

Jesus tells us not to worry. As an example, He asks us to consider the ravens who do not sow or reap and have no storehouses or barns. However, despite this lack of forward planning God still makes sure that they are properly fed and have all that they need.

And then again, the lilies do not work for their living. They simply grow freely and God adorns them with magnificent splendour. All this is so even though such glory is transient, lasting only for the moment before being thrown into the fire.

Nevertheless, to live without any plans or thought for the future is probably not possible and is not always wise. We may think of planned giving as a phrase which modern church treasurers use in order to encourage us to set up standing orders with the benefit of Gift Aid!

But the concept of planned giving has a long history stretching back to New Testament times. It is not unspiritual to make financial plans which enable us to give generously towards God and other people. This understanding lies behind the apostle Paul's clear and detailed instructions to the congregation at Corinth in relation to the contribution that he wishes them to make to help needy Christians in Jerusalem, 'On the first day of every

week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come.' (1 Corinthians 16: 2)

However, there is a vital difference between the plans which Paul is encouraging his congregation to make and the plans which the rich farmer makes to deal with the bumper crop that has been given to him.

The rich farmer's plans revolve completely around himself. There is no awareness either of God's claims on his wealth or of the needs of other people. He is purely concerned with his own comfort and pleasures, saying to himself, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'

And so, when his life is suddenly demanded from him, it is indeed a disaster. All his plans come to nothing. The farmer has given no thought as to who else might share in his good fortune. So, when he dies, he does not know those other people who will take over all the possessions that he has stored up for his own enjoyment. It is this attitude, of storing up treasures for himself but not being rich towards God, which results in God calling him a fool.

On the other hand, if we do include both God and other people in our plans, then when hard times and even death itself comes, all is not lost. We still have a relationship with God to be our comfort and strength. And we will leave behind us a legacy of generosity towards other people. These are true riches which cannot be taken away from us.

In our reading from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul encourages us to share our material wealth generously with other people. We are to sow bountifully rather than sparingly and to give cheerfully rather than reluctantly or under compulsion. As we do this, we will both experience God's blessing and also be used in meeting the needs of other people. In this way our generosity will result in true and lasting riches.

So, it is not planning itself which is the issue. Although we do need spontaneously to enjoy and enter into the richness of life in the present moment, there are also many circumstances for which we need to make plans. Indeed, it would be unwise not to make plans. As a modern proverb puts it, 'Remember, if you fail to prepare you are preparing to fail.'

But for all that, our plans always need to be provisional. Their fulfilment depends on God's favour and blessing. And God may take us down a very different route from the one we thought we were going to take. But even if this does happen, we need not suffer the fate and loss of the rich farmer. For, if our plans truly are centred around God and consider the needs of others as well as ourselves then even a sudden change of direction cannot take God's rich blessing away from us.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Giving thanks for the harvest and submitting all our plans to God
- Ongoing war in the Ukraine
- Morocco earthquake and its victims
- 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 as they start the new school term

Hymn

A thanksgiving hymn for this Sunday is 'To thee, O Lord, our hearts we raise.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 10 th September	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 10 th September	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 10 th September	11.00 am Harvest Service, Galhampton
Sunday 10 th September	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton
Sunday 17 th September	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 17 th September	11.00 am Harvest Service, North Cadbury
Sunday 17 th September	11.00 am Harvest Service, Maperton
Sunday 17 th September	6.00 pm Harvest Service, 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 September 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)