

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 222

Sunday 17th September 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passage

Matthew 18: 21-35

Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?”

²² Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

²³ “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵ and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made.

²⁶ “So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.

²⁸ “But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’

²⁹ “Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’

³⁰ “But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were

greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place.

³² “Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt.

³⁵ “So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Reflection

Cast your minds back to February 1995. Does the name Nick Leeson ring any bells? He was the trader who lost Baring’s Bank one point three billion dollars. That’s thirteen thousand million dollars. Baring’s Bank went under, and Mr Leeson went to prison for six years, but only served four. Now what if Mr Leeson, when his bosses had him on the carpet, had said, “Have patience with me, and I’ll pay you back”? They would have fallen about laughing. I mention this because Jesus deliberately chose a stupid sum of money - ten thousand talents - for the servant to owe the king. Never mind how he worked up that amount of debt - that wasn’t Jesus’ point. But threatened with being sold into slavery, and all his family, the guy does some heavy duty grovelling, saying “Have patience and I’ll pay you back.” Oh yes, thinks the king, this guy means to live a thousand years, and so am I. But he says, “Ok, forget it. It’s sorted. You don’t owe me a bean. Just get out of my sight.”

Why would the king do that? *Because he knows he’s never going to get it back anyway!*

He recognises that some debts are never going to be paid, and so he might as well give up on it. And it would give him no joy to sell the man and his

family. At least he knows this servant is good for a laugh.

This happens all the time. I knew a couple once who had debt-collectors leaning on them. Their original debt was to a furniture company, and when they realised they weren't going to get paid back, they sold the debt on for about 80% of the sum to some hard bitten Glaswegians. So they at least had some money. But the debt collectors, they've bought this debt, and the only way they can get their money back, and make a profit, is by leaning heavily on the original debtors for the whole sum. Who were in despair. Knowing you owe more than you can ever pay back must be a scary situation.

Now then. I am a sinful man. I try not to be, but it happens. Which means I should be in debt to God. The wages of sin is death, says Paul. The logic is that I owe him my life. But I can't pay my debt to God. And so God has forgiven every sin I ever have and ever will commit. Why would he do that? Because he might as well. There is no amount of good I can do, or penance, or prayers, to undo my sin. And it wouldn't give God any pleasure to throw me into hell anyway. Because he loves me.

Jesus on the cross is God dropping dead to the whole idea of my sin and yours.

A word about forgiveness. For years, the church spread it about that our forgiveness is dependent on our repentance. It's there in this service, that God has promised forgiveness to those who truly and earnestly repent. The church spread it about that your sins aren't forgiven until and unless I say so, what with me being a priest. And this is not the case at all. This was the church trying to have power over people, by saying you need this, and it's in my power to give it you, but you've got to be good and do what I say, or I won't. The idea that your sins are forgiven, absolutely, unconditionally, no ifs or bits or maybes, wasn't one the church was happy to hear anyone spreading around.

But God demands that we forgive each other's sins without limit, without condition. Seventy times seven times - and that was just Jesus picking a random figure out of the air. Now is God going to ask from us anything he won't do himself? No. So I'm forgiven. And so are you, every one of you. It's why we're here - the Gospel is, as I always say, *Your Sins Are Forgiven*.

So back to the story. Here's a man with a huge weight taken off his shoulders, leaving the king's presence with a song in his heart. Except. He hasn't really grasped the idea of forgiveness, has he? Because when he meets another servant who owes him the price of a Starbucks coffee, what does he do? Takes him by the throat and demands his money. And the poor guy uses exactly the same line as the first one did - *Have patience with me, and I'll pay you back* - and in this case, it's a realistic proposition. But no, he has the man thrown into the debtors' prison. This is a story, remember. Jesus is going over the top for dramatic effect. I always thought debtors' prison was a stupid idea. It crops up a few times in Charles Dickens' books. A person in prison is in no position to pay back a debt. All he can hope is that someone will pay his debt for him, and be more sympathetic about the repayment.

But somebody snitches to the king. *You remember that man you let off ten thousand talents? Well...* And the king has the man back in, crosses out his crossing out, and he's in a worse state than when he started, and throws him in the debtor's prison and it all ends in tears. *And that, says Jesus, is how my Father will treat every one of you if you don't forgive your brother from your heart.* The End.

Have I just talked myself out of my great truth that God in Jesus has not only died *for* my sins, but has died *to* my sins - in other words, given up on the whole idea of my sin? Well no. Here is the unforgiveable sin, which is to not forgive others. This forgiveness has to be spread around. In the story, Jesus sets up a cartoon image of a man so dumb he doesn't recognise his own forgiveness, and so isn't about to share what he doesn't believe deep

down he has.

There will, apparently, be people who will meet Jesus in their death, stand before him in judgement, and surrounded by his love and forgiveness, will say *no*. Keep your forgiveness. I don't deserve it, or I don't need it, or I never trusted you anyway. I promise that won't be me, and I trust it won't be you.

What do we take away from this? That forgiveness has to be appreciated and shared. I get texts from my sons sharing jokes they've heard, that they can't resist sharing. My friend Ian finds something daft online and immediately forwards it to all his friends. That's how forgiveness should be, shared around. Sometimes it's hard. The man who had an affair with my first wife and broke up my marriage? He was a hard case. But really, he gave me Pam. Why would I not forgive him?

If there's an eleventh commandment, it has to be *Thou shalt not bear a grudge*. God has forgiven you every sin you will ever commit. So forgive.

Ron

Points for Prayers

- Learning to forgive others
- Giving thanks for the harvest
- 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 teachers and children of North Cadbury church school in their new school term

Hymn

One hymn set for this Sunday is 'Make me a channel of your peace.'

Services for this week and next

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
Sunday 24 th September	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 24 th September	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 24 th September	9.30 am Harvest Service, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 24 th September	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 24 th September	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 24 th September	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 24 th September	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlinton
Sunday 24 th September	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 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)