

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 228

Sunday 5th November 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Matthew 24: 1-14

As Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ² Then he asked them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”

³ When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

⁴ Jesus answered them, “Beware that no one leads you astray. ⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah!’ and they will lead many astray. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: ⁸ all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

⁹ “Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. ¹⁰ Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹² And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this good news of the kingdom will

be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.”

Reflection

A lady in the village shop picked up her paper and looked at the front page. Then she looked at me gloomily and asked, “Do you think we’re heading for the end?” It was a few minutes past 8 o’clock, way too early for theology, so I just said, “no, I don’t think so, not just yet.” But I could see her point. Wars close by and wars far away? Check. Earthquakes? Check. Famines? Check. But these, Jesus assured his followers, are not the signs of the end. He says they are like the first twinges of childbirth. Oh dear. I’ve witnessed childbirth twice, and if these things happening are like the first twinges, then the end, when it comes, is going to be severely scary. It sounds like Jesus is saying, “You think this is bad? You’ve not seen nothing yet!” But Jesus wasn’t speaking of an apocalypse, he was warning his followers that they were in for a bumpy ride, while assuring them that if they trusted him he would pull them through it all.

Time after time, in the history of the world, long before Jesus was born, and at all times since, all the things that Jesus spoke of have been happening, and for most of human history, the vast majority of the human race has had little knowledge of it. During our own medieval period, a farm labourer in south Somerset might not even have known the name of the king. Unless a passing army happened to actually stamp on his crops, a whole war could pass him by.

Earthquakes could flatten distant cities in foreign parts, but before there were newspapers, people here would have been unaware. But we live in a time of mass media like never before. Newspapers are becoming old hat. TV news makes sure we know about earthquakes in Afghanistan and Morocco, famines in Africa, floods in Libya, war in Ukraine, the unfolding horror of Israel and Gaza, and the images of human suffering are in the corners of our

rooms, or in the palm of our hand, on smartphone and pad. And Jesus says, “Do not be troubled”? That sounds like telling somebody not to worry when their house is on fire.

Putting the Gospel reading in context, Jesus and his disciples were leaving the temple, and looking back, they stopped to marvel at it. He may have been a wicked old tyrant, but the temple Herod built was an architectural wonder, white marble pillars and courts, dominating the city, and visible for miles on its hill. Jesus’ friends were country boys from up North, and they were seriously impressed. But Jesus sadly predicted that the whole lot would be destroyed. It wouldn’t just fall into ruin, it would be deliberately knocked down. If the Romans had had bulldozers, they’d have bulldozed it. Why would the Romans do that?

It was because they knew it was all the Jewish people had. The Romans had already stripped them of every other sign of their nationhood, tried to incorporate them into the Empire, and deprived them of everything about their national identity, except their faith. But as long as the temple stood, it was a symbol of Jewishness. Here they still were. So when the Jews rebelled against Rome, not just fiddling little revolts by small parties of zealots, but a proper uprising, this was Rome’s response. About forty years after Jesus’ time on earth, Roman troops crushed the rebellion, and then destroyed the temple, and carried away vast numbers of people to Rome. The Colosseum was built by Jewish slave labour. And Jesus saw it all coming, because he understood how his people hated Rome, and how the Romans would react, and warned his disciples.

These revolutionary leaders, he said, they’ll claim to be the Messiah - the proper, military leader that Jesus himself absolutely refused to be. And people would follow them, and die. We know the names of some of these Messiah figures, men like Judah bar Kochba, and they all came to sticky ends. But Jesus went on - all these disasters, the earthquakes and famines and wars, are all part of the very fabric of the way the planet is. They’re not

omens, or portents, they're just what happens in a world that was built crusty on the outside and soft in the middle, a world full of people who put their own interests, their own power, over the well-being of others. People who have more than enough to eat, and look the other way when people around them starve. How we deal with this stuff on a humanitarian level is a huge challenge. We can, of course, not deal with it at all, and ignore the appeals for help that come to us in the post, on TV, or in our papers. But what would that make us? So I hope we respond with whatever we can afford, however little that may be, as long as it's done with love and concern.

But going back to Jesus' words about this terrible calamity to come. In the verses after our reading, he makes it clear that he isn't talking about the end of the world, but the fall of Jerusalem. He tells people to get out, head for the hills, and not wait to pack a bag- this is fleeing from an enemy, not facing the end of all things. At the end of all things, there will be no refuge on high ground, or anywhere else. But before that, Jesus gives his followers the promise that despite the false prophets, would-be Messiahs and deceivers, spreading evil and discouragement, if we trust him, there will come a time when the world will be full of the glory of God, and in his own good time, God will put everything right for those who have trusted him. This isn't just a pious hope.

We have to take the long view. Christians have often been accused of preaching "pie in the sky" - the idea of putting up with the way the world is now, because after our death, everything will be better. And this is to some extent true - we really do believe that our entry into the Kingdom of Heaven is dependent on nothing but our dying - that trusting Jesus is all we have to do. But meanwhile, we are children of earth, and as Christians we have the responsibility of raising it to the highest level we can. By our love for each other, and our love for all people, we should be aiming to spread the love of God around us. We are the agents of God's love, and he's given us the responsibility of showing him as a good God, a caring God, a loving God.

We have no idea when the end might come. Jesus said that nobody knows, so anyone claiming to know, or predict, is by definition, wrong. The best we might be able to do is live our lives as well as we can to honour and please God, serving him by serving others, not losing sight of the present, working for a brighter future, and bearing in mind that in his good time, God will put all things right, and establish his kingdom forever.

Ron

Points for Prayers

- Serving and loving others and trusting God to bring in His Kingdom
- For Israel, Gaza and the Middle East
- 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

Hymn

A hymn set for this Sunday which reminds us to put our trust in God is 'All my hope on God is founded.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 5 th November	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 5 th November	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 5 th November	11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 12 th November	10.50 am Remembrance Service, North Cadbury

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Sunday 12 th November	10.50 am Remembrance Service, South Cadbury
Sunday 12 th November	10.50 am Remembrance Service, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 12 th November	10.50 am Remembrance Service, Maperton
Sunday 12 th November	10.50 am Remembrance Service, Holton
Sunday 12 th November	10.50 am Remembrance Service, North Cheriton

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 November 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)