

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 232

Sunday 26th November 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Ephesians 1: 15-23

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸ so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰ God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²² And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Matthew 25: 31-46

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd

separates the sheep from the goats, ³³ and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

³⁴ “Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?

³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’

⁴⁰ “And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’

⁴⁴ “Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’

⁴⁵ “Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’

⁴⁶ “And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Reflection

'I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'

For all of us at certain times in our lives these words of Jesus can come across to us with a compelling force and challenge. There may be various reasons. Sometimes, we may fail to offer help to a person in need because we are too busy. Perhaps we are in such a rush that we quite literally walk past the person on the other side of the street not noticing their existence let alone being conscious of any needs they may have.

Sometimes, we may have become preoccupied with our own problems. These seem to us to be so pressing and important that we have no energy to spare to look around us at the needs of the world. And the needs of the world may seem so overwhelming that as we realise that we cannot respond to all of them so we find ourselves paralysed in being able to respond to any of them.

Or sometimes, we may have made a more conscious decision to shut someone out of our lives. They may have caused us hurt and we have been unable to forget what has happened. And so the resentment that we feel and the lack of forgiveness that we carry with us creates a kind of 'wall' between us so that we cease to notice their needs.

And again, although some of the needs of which the parable speaks such as providing food, drink and clothing can be fulfilled indirectly through making financial contributions to charities, others such as welcoming the stranger seem to require a more personal form of response. And we can all be afraid of getting too involved with those whom we do not know for fear of what this might lead to and what might be required of us.

Perhaps also we find it difficult to put ourselves in someone else's shoes. In that case, we may physically see the other person and yet at a deeper level remain unaware of what their true needs are and how we might help them.

A different form of challenge which might come to us as we reflect on this parable of the sheep and the goats is the part played by faith in the respective responses of the sheep and the goats.

Faith is not overtly mentioned in the parable. However, we do learn that a response to those in need is also a response to Christ Himself. Christ is seen in the form of those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick or in prison. But this is a truth of which both the righteous and the unrighteous have been unaware at the time when they did or did not respond to such people.

We may find our other reading from Paul's letter to the Ephesians helpful as we ponder this relationship between love and faith. For, just as in Paul's famous words 'And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love' (see 1 Corinthians 13:13), so in this letter faith and love are connected with one another. Paul declares 'I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints'.

As we reflect on this, we may consider that it would be strange indeed if a person professed faith in Christ but absolutely no sign of love for other people could be seen in his or her life. Granted that we all fall short in expressing perfect love and all of us continue to need the grace and mercy of God, surely any genuine profession of faith will result in some practical expression of love towards other people.

Perhaps it may be a question of what it means for us to see Christ. Paul prays that his Ephesian congregation may be spiritually awakened so that they see Christ in their innermost beings. He prays that 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and

revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you’.

But to see Christ is not simply a matter of an inner spiritual vision. Truly to see and know Christ in our hearts will mean that we see Christ in the form of other people.

‘When did we see you?’ is the question that both the sheep and the goats ask. And the answer to both groups of people is the same, they saw or did not see Christ in the shape of those who were hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick or in prison.

So how do we respond to this parable? Undoubtedly it is very challenging but nevertheless it is meant to encourage us in our faith rather than to lead to guilt and despair.

So first of all we need to remember both the security that our faith gives us in the sight of God and the necessary connection that faith has with the way that love is practically expressed in our lives.

However, it is always possible for us to see more of Christ, both in our inner spiritual lives and in our responses to other people.

To come back to the list of reasons which I gave at the beginning as to why we might find this parable challenging there can be ways in which we can address such concerns.

We may genuinely be too busy to deal with someone’s difficulties at this very instant but is it possible for us to offer them another time in which we could be available for them?

And certainly, we all go through periods in our lives when we are overwhelmed by our own immediate problems. We need to recognise this

and give ourselves the time and compassion that we need to work through them. In this way, we will come once more to be able to help other people.

The inner walls that we build up between ourselves and other people need, of course, to be dealt with by forgiveness. And as we do this we can pray for the gift of empathy to develop, to put ourselves in the shoes of other people, to see life as they see it and to see Christ in them.

And as for being overwhelmed by the needs of the world, we need to realise that we cannot deal with everything and that we are not expected to do this. As we realise this, we will become freed in our thinking to realise that there are nevertheless some needs that we can address and that this is important

And the fear of what might happen when we get involved with people whom we do not know very well? Well, there is a wisdom to be exercised here. When preparing this reflection I received a message from a stranger in Uganda asking for money to pay some school fees. It was accompanied by a very official looking letter signed by the principal of the school.

The request sounded very genuine to me so I decided to look into it further. The name of the school certainly appeared on an internet search. However, both the telephone number and the email address of the school were different from the ones given on the letter. And the email address on the letter ending in 'gamial.com'? Google knew of no such company and suggested to me that it might be an attempt to spell 'gmail.com'. Anyway, something did not seem right and I decided that it would be better to support a recognised charity.

Of course, some requests from strangers are perfectly genuine. However, this might be and whatever wisdom we need in this and other areas of life, we can all take this parable of the sheep and the goats as an encouragement to grow in both love and faith.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Seeing Christ both spiritually and in the form of other people
- For Israel, Gaza and the Middle East, release of hostages
- 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 which we are singing this Sunday is 'Rejoice, the Lord is king.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 26 th November	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 26 th November	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 26 th November	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 26 th November	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 26 th November	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 26 th November	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 26 th November	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 26 th November	4.00 pm Evening Service, Galhampton
Sunday 3 rd December	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 3 rd December	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 3 rd December	11.00 am Advent Carols, 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 December and January 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)