

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 235

Sunday 17th December 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Advent Sunday.

Please find below the readings at the Camelot Carol Service yesterday evening together with my reflection.

Scripture Passages

Isaiah 9: 2, 6-7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 11: 1-9

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears

hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 61: 1-3, 11

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion -- to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."

Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Luke 2: 1-14

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see -- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a

Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!”

Matthew 2: 1-11

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.”

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

John 1: 1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Reflection

I have recently learnt that Father Christmas has a postal address. Apparently, he receives many letters at this time of year from children of all ages and, perhaps surprisingly, also from cats and dogs.

So, I visited Father Christmas at his postal address. I asked him whether I could see some of his letters. He said that the children's letters were confidential but, in very general terms, he could tell me how a dog's letter might read.

'Dear Father Christmas,

I have been told that unless I have been a good dog you will not come at Christmas.

So, I would like you to know that this year I have been an exceptionally good dog. I have deterred five hundred unwanted visitors from coming to my owners' house and I have also acted as my own kind of bomb disposal expert by testing and chewing up many of the suspicious looking parcels that they have left outside the door.

Just as an aside, I would like to mention that although no doubt my owners are no doubt very worthy people, I wonder whether you could sharpen up their act a bit. They seem obsessed by going outside in all weathers. Well, fine for them if they want this but why take me along with them? Much more sensible to stay in a nice, warm house. And they never thank me for all my efforts to keep them safe and secure. A bit of appreciation never comes amiss.

And now to cut to the chase. My dog bowl is cracked...'

Perhaps this is not an entirely good model for our prayers. I think that if we did pray like that Jesus might remind us of sayings such as taking out the beam in our own eyes before removing the mote in someone else's eyes or the parable of the Tax Collector and Pharisee.

For God does not want to be told how good we have been or how bad other people have been. Rather in our prayers God values honesty and simplicity. One very simple, yet powerfully effective prayer is just 'God, I am in trouble. Please help me.'

And God does indeed answer this prayer through helping us and giving us what we truly need. God gives us a Saviour, His Son Jesus Christ. As John's gospel puts it, 'And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory' (John 1:14).

The coming of Jesus into this world also heralds the fulfilment of all kinds of other beautiful promises which God has given us. They can all be summed up in a single phrase 'The kingdom of God.' In Jesus, we find peace. He is

the Prince of Peace as Isaiah tells us and His authority will bring an endless peace which knows no bounds. This peace will be securely built on justice and righteousness.

The poor, the weak and the vulnerable who can so easily be exploited will enjoy the special protection of the Prince of Peace. Isaiah speaks of the Messiah's ministry as bringing good news to the oppressed and binding up the broken hearted.

And the peace which is established will extend to the whole natural world, as 'the wolf shall live with the lamb... and a little child shall lead them...the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.' (Isaiah 11: 6-9).

At the outset of His public ministry, Jesus reads the words from Isaiah about bringing good news to the oppressed and binding up the broken hearted at the synagogue at Nazareth. Then, He sits down and dramatically and simply says to His audience, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing'. (Luke 4: 21).

And indeed, it has. For, Jesus, across the ages and the world, has brought freedom and healing, peace, love and joy into countless hearts and lives, including my own.

And yet...

If we lived today in Gaza, Israel or the Ukraine would we be able to say that we have seen the promise of endless peace, justice and righteousness, fulfilled among us?

Or if we were struggling to make ends meet, relying perhaps on food banks would we feel that God's promise of help and freedom for the poor and oppressed was fully realised?

And what about the promise that the wolf will live side by side with the lamb and the earth will be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea? As we look around and see our beautiful Creation broken in so many ways how far have these promises been fulfilled?

In Advent we, of course, together with the shepherds and angels, the wise men and Joseph and Mary look forward to celebrating the birth of Christ at Christmas. And yet Advent is also a season when we look towards the end of time when we believe that Jesus will come again and when the kingdom of God will come at last in all its fullness.

For many of us, the hope of what will be at the end of time is a personal one. We long to be with Christ in an even deeper way than is possible in this life.

Recently, I took a funeral of someone who, when she first met me, told me of her experience when she had been declared clinically dead. She told me that in this time she had been to paradise and seen Jesus and all her loved ones who had gone before her. It was beautiful, she said, and she did not want to come back. But she did because she knew that, at that point, God had further work for her to do in this world.

And He did. Because the hope of the kingdom of God is more than simply a personal one. One theologian spoke of the kingdom of God as Creation healed. This is a hope for a new and changed world in which pain, suffering and evil has no place. And when we have this hope in our hearts and when we pray, as we do in the Lord's Prayer, for God's kingdom to come, our waiting for this new world is not simply a passive one. We have a part in ushering in God's kingdom.

So, in Advent we wait with an expectant hope and longing. We both give thanks for all that we have already experienced of God's grace and goodness and also ask for more to come.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Our hope in Christ and our part in ushering in God's Kingdom
- Preparations for Christmas and the people we will meet over this season
- 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 during the Christmas holidays

Hymn

One carol sung with a special arrangement at the Camelot carol service yesterday was 'Silent Night.'

Services leading up to Christmas

Monday 18 th December	10.00 am Communion, South Cadbury
Monday 18 th December	6.30 pm Carol Service, Blackford
Tuesday 19 th December	6.00 pm Carol Service, Compton Pauncefoot
Friday 22 nd December	6.00 pm Carol Service, Yarlinton
Saturday 23 rd December	6.00 pm Carol Service, Galhampton
Christmas Eve	9.30 am Communion, Blackford
Christmas Eve	4.00 pm Christmas Tree Service, North Cadbury
Christmas Eve	11.30 pm Midnight Communion, North Cadbury

Christmas Day	9.30 am Communion, Yarlington
Christmas Day	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Christmas Day	9.30 am Carols and Readings, South Cadbury
Christmas Day	10.00 am Carols and Readings, North Cheriton
Christmas Day	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Christmas Day	11.00 am Carols and Readings, Holton
Christmas Day	11.00 am Carols and Readings, Maperton

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)