

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 240

Sunday 28th January 2024

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Deuteronomy 18: 15-20

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. ¹⁶ This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: “If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die.”

¹⁷ Then the LORD replied to me: “They are right in what they have said. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. ¹⁹ Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. ²⁰ But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak - that prophet shall die.”

Mark 1: 21-28

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²² They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴ and he cried

out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God."

²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

²⁷ They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching - with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." ²⁸ At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Reflection

Jesus taught as one who had authority. This authority was evident to those people who heard Him for the first time. It is still acknowledged today even among those who would not call themselves committed Christians. Gandhi, for instance, said 'Live like Jesus did and the world will listen'.

And as we ourselves reflect on Jesus' teaching, we are likely to find that many aspects of it have shaped our own lives and the lives of those around us at a deep and lasting level. For instance, we can think of a parable like the Good Samaritan. Such an apparently simple and straightforward story but so powerful in helping us to think about who our neighbour is and what it means to love him or her.

Or then there are the proverbial sayings such as going the extra mile which have passed into common use even to the point that many have forgotten that their origin lies in Jesus' teaching such as the Sermon on the Mount.

And throughout the Sermon on the Mount, we find Jesus emphasising His special authority as He says, 'You have heard that it was said ... But I say to you' (Matthew 5: 21-22).

And in the passage from Mark's gospel for this Sunday, Jesus' authority is linked with His extraordinary ability to cast out unclean spirits.

In all of this, Jesus claims to have a first-hand knowledge of what God is saying and doing. It is such a contrast to so many of us who tend to rely on second hand opinions about God based on what others have said and taught about God.

It is this distinction between first- and second-hand knowledge which distinguishes Jesus' teaching from that of His contemporaries, such as the scribes and the Pharisees. For Jesus teaches as one who has authority and not as the scribes do.

However, one person before Jesus also had a unique capacity to hear from God at first hand and to teach and proclaim what he heard and saw. That person was Moses, whose teaching, such as the Ten Commandments, is foundational to the Old Testament and continues to be upheld. As Jesus says, 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil' (Matthew 5:17).

Before Jesus there had been no-one else who had such a first-hand knowledge of God. At the end of his life, the book of Deuteronomy sums up Moses' life and ministry with the simple words 'Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face' (Deuteronomy 34: 10).

And yet our Old Testament reading today, also from the Book of Deuteronomy, promises that one day Moses will have a successor who will in fact be still greater than Moses himself. And this person will, like Moses, speak the very words of God. It is this prophetic promise of someone speaking the very words of God which is fulfilled in Jesus.

However, Jesus is even more than someone who fulfils the promise of Moses, the law and the prophets.

In this season of Epiphany, we focus on how God's presence and glory shines out through Jesus Christ. Last week we saw this through the miracle of Jesus changing water into wine.

And Jesus' teaching as well as His miraculous signs also display God's presence giving His words a unique authority.

So, how do we respond to this authority of Jesus? Or to put it another way, what is it in Jesus' teaching that really sticks in our minds and hearts?

For each one of us, there may be different aspects of Jesus' teaching which we remember and which have had a special impact.

Sometimes, this happens when we notice and puzzle over some unusual details of His teaching. So, when I was looking recently at Jesus' quite difficult parable about the guest who entered a feast without having a wedding garment, I was struck by the connection between this image and the spiritual clothes of Christ which we need to put on each day.

As I began to let the image of the wedding garment lodge in my heart so my mind was focussed on my need to face each day fully prepared spiritually for whatever that day might bring. This meant consciously putting on Christ's clothes of 'compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience' (Colossians 3:12). If we do this each day then it will make a difference in the way that we respond to other people.

And then there are those striking and powerful wise sayings with which Jesus was able to defuse potential conflict and confrontation. Sayings such as 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's' (Mark 12:17) when asked a tricky question about whether or not it was right to pay taxes. Or again 'if any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone' (John 8:7) when asked whether a woman caught in adultery should be stoned in accordance with the law of Moses.

However, the question is not simply whether we recognise the authority of Jesus but whether in some way we can share in this authority in our everyday lives. There is, first of all, the authority of compassion. We may not be saying anything original or extraordinary but if our words come from a heart which is full of the compassion of Jesus then those words will come across with a quiet but powerful authority.

And then what about those times when, like Jesus, we find ourselves put in a corner by other people and needing to know how to escape this trap? At such times we can pray that the Holy Spirit will help and guide us to respond in an appropriate way and to be able to speak with wisdom. As we pray, so time and time again we will find that God will come to our rescue. We might find ourselves saying something completely spontaneous and unprepared which, completely against all expectation, resolves those difficult circumstances in which we find ourselves. At such times, we ourselves are encouraged but we may well find that others are amazed.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Finding the authority of Jesus in our own lives
- For continuing and new conflicts including those in the Yemen, Israel, Gaza and 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

One hymn we are singing this Sunday is 'O for a thousand tongues to sing.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 28 th January	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 28 th January	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 28 th January	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 28 th January	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 28 th January	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 28 th January	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 28 th January	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlinton
Sunday 28 th January	4.00 pm Evening Service, Galhampton
Sunday 4 th February	9.00 am Communion, Yarlinton
Sunday 4 th February	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 4 th February	11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury

Excalibur online

The February edition of Excalibur has now been published online at camelotparishes.co.uk. It contains details of Camelot people, a record of baptisms, weddings and funerals undertaken through the church in the Camelot Parishes.

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)