

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 247

Sunday 17th March 2024

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Jeremiah 31: 31-34

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt - a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

John 12: 20-33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

²³ Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth

and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

²⁵ Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

²⁷ “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say - ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name.”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” ²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”

³⁰ Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.

³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

³³ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Reflection

‘Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.’

Jesus’ words are full of striking images which capture our attention and engage our hearts. And this saying surely ranks high among them. Anyone who is involved in gardening or farming will immediately recognise the force and truth of what He is saying.

I have begun to clear out accumulated belongings from the Rectory in preparation for my retirement later this year. One of the items that I found was a packet of seeds. I must have bought this some years ago, probably as a visual illustration for the Parable of the Sower.

And yet these seeds have never been used. They have remained in exactly the same condition as when they were bought, lifeless and inert. And until they are sown into the ground that is exactly how they will remain. There is no productive future for them if they simply remain on their own.

By contrast, I looked at a pot full of soil in which my daughter Tahlia had planted a seed in preparation for Mothering Sunday. Already the seed is different from when its life began.

Indeed it is no longer visible as a seed. When it was planted the seed died. But now pushing above the soil I can see the exciting and attractive shoots of new, green life which one day will blossom and flower.

Jesus uses this image of the death and fruitfulness of the seed as an explanation of the meaning of His own coming death on the Cross. Why did this have to happen? It seems so contrary to all our expectations. Here was this young and inspiring teacher and healer, someone who might even be the promised liberator of God's people, with many years of life ahead of Him sacrificing His life on the Cross. And for what? It seems such a waste.

But to these very understandable questions, Jesus' response comes in the form of an image. Just like the seed, He has to die in order that future fruit might come. If He does not die then His mission and destiny will never be fulfilled.

But nevertheless, we must not think that this was an easy or straightforward calling even for Jesus. If we imagine ourselves trying to fall onto and into the ground we find that everything within us resists this idea. We seek to protect ourselves and to remain upright so that we do not fall.

So, for Jesus, there is an internal dialogue even a struggle taking place as He moves towards His destiny. He confesses that his soul is troubled as He

contemplates what is to come. He even debates whether to say 'Father save me from this hour'.

And yet these thoughts, natural and understandable as they may be, are not Jesus' final words on this subject. Rather, He returns to His understanding of the destiny and purpose which God has for Him. Instead of asking God to save Him from this hour, He reminds Himself that death on the Cross rather than being a supreme waste of life is at the centre of what He has come to do, the reason why He has come to this hour.

So, in choosing to continue on this path of sacrifice and death, Jesus is demonstrating His complete trust in God and in God's power to raise Him from the dead. One of Jesus' last words from the Cross is taken from Psalm 31, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!' (see Luke 23:46 and Psalm 31:5). It is an expression of pure, childlike trust in God, of perfect peace that whatever is to come is in God's hands and can safely be entrusted to God.

Surely that expression of complete trust in God is one in which we would all like to share at the moment of our own death. It is a trust based on faith that all God's promises will come to fruition, even through death.

As we turn to our passage from Jeremiah, we are given further insight into why Jesus needed to die and how His death gives us an extraordinary gift. This gift could not have been given to us in any other way.

Jeremiah speaks of the moral law given to God's people through Moses. There is nothing lacking in this law, such as the Ten Commandments. Indeed, we may say of the summary of this law given to us in Jesus' teaching, to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbours as ourselves, that it is indeed the way to life.

There is just one problem with this and it is a fatal one. The Ten Commandments were brought down by Moses from Mount Sinai inscribed on tablets of stone. In other words, the covenant which this represented was an external one, objective standards and principles which were right in themselves but which, by themselves, did not have the power to change hearts. For this reason, no-one was able to live up to this covenant. It was, as Jeremiah comments 'a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband.'

Something more is needed if we are to enjoy the loving relationship and eternal life which God longs to give to us. And that something comes through Jesus' sacrifice. As we look at the Cross, so its power pierces and penetrates our hearts. It has the ability to change them from the inside. Rather than God's standards and laws being something external to us, through the Holy Spirit they become internalised, written on our hearts.

For this reason, Jeremiah tells us that this new covenant will not be like the old, Mosaic one. It is one where the law of God is inside us and written on our hearts. The need to teach or encourage people to know God will become redundant because that knowledge will already be within them and through this, they will know God's complete forgiveness.

The Cross indeed has a power and an attraction to it, just as it is attractive to consider the journey of a seed as it falls into the ground and then produces fruit. I look at the tree which was given to us and has been planted just beginning to produce buds for the first time. This gives the promise of a greater flowering to come and is a reminder to me of God's promise of resurrection through Christ.

Through the Cross, we come to know God working within us through the Holy Spirit. We find that our desires become increasingly to mirror God's own desires for us and that God's laws are indeed written in our hearts.

Jesus' death is not a senseless sacrifice. Rather it has a profound and life changing meaning. The Cross is attractive and powerful rather like a very strong magnetic field that draws us inexorably towards it. Jesus speaks of this attraction when He says, 'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.'

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Being drawn into God's love and new life through the power of the Cross
- For the services taking place as we approach Easter
- For continuing and new conflicts including those in the Ukraine and the Middle East
- 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 set for this Sunday is 'Christ triumphant, ever reigning.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 17 th March	9.30 am	Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 17 th March	11.00 am	Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 17 th March	11.00 am	Morning Service, Maperton
Sunday 17 th March	4.00 pm	St Matthew Passion, Yarlington
Sunday 24 th March	9.30 am	Communion, North Cheriton

Sunday 24th March 10.50 am Palm Sunday service, North Cadbury
(beginning outside Village Hall)

Excalibur online

The March 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)