

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 248

Palm Sunday 24th March 2024

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot on this Palm Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Philippians 2: 5-11

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Mark 11: 1-11

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.’”

⁴ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵ some of the bystanders said to them, “What are you

doing, untying the colt?” ⁶ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields.

⁹ Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

“Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹¹ Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Reflection

When someone we know suddenly becomes famous or is given an important and powerful position, we often observe a change in them. And not for the better. They're not such a nice person as they were before or they don't seem to want to know their old friends are the kind of comments which can be made.

Such changes may not take place all at once but step by step and gradually until the changes become impossible to overlook. Were they always like that we ask ourselves or have power and fame gone to their heads?

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday, He is greeted by the universal acclaim of the crowd. Those who go ahead and those who follow shout 'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

This is a greeting fit for a mighty king and warrior. And if Jesus had been someone else, we might easily understand if all this acclaim and seeming

power was to go to His head. It is easy to begin to 'believe our own publicity' and to think that we are in charge and can now do what we like.

But Jesus is not like other people. Instead of succumbing to this very common human tendency and temptation, Jesus provides us with a very different example of how to respond to power and fame.

Jesus is humble. Often, we remark upon the fact that on Palm Sunday Jesus chooses to enter Jerusalem mounted not on a warhorse but on a donkey. Here is a king who comes in humility and peace not in arrogance or war.

And our famous passage from the book of Philippians also celebrates Jesus' humility and places this in the context of Jesus' relationship with God. Jesus although He was equal with God did not consider this exalted position as something to be grasped or held onto. Rather, He gave up all His rightful claims to status and power in order to appear in human form as a servant. And from this already humble position, He descended still further to the ultimate humiliation of death on the Cross.

It was only from this lowest place that Jesus was subsequently exalted and became the One at whose name every knee should bow and every tongue confess Him as Lord. However, this was entirely the work of God. It was not the result of Jesus striving for position or status in any way.

But there are other signs of Jesus' humility which are more easily missed. These are highlighted Mark's gospel's account of Palm Sunday through little, telling details.

One aspect of humility is being a grounded or down to earth person. Indeed, in the etymology of the word itself these two qualities are closely connected.

Often powerful leaders feel the need to inspire their followers through setting out a bold and expansive vision. And this can have its value. And yet we need to beware of a kind of thinking which sees leadership purely in terms of setting out a grand vision and leaving others to work out the boring details of how this will work in practice. This is sometimes seen as a lower grade of work, unsuitable for the leader to get involved in.

But again, Jesus is not like this. He has the largest vision imaginable with which to inspire His followers, the good news of the kingdom of God. And yet He also shows Himself to have an eye for detail.

When Jesus approaches Jerusalem with His disciples, He gives very clear instructions to two of them. They are to go ahead of the rest of the party and find a donkey in the next village which has never been ridden before and to bring this donkey back for Jesus to ride on.

How did Jesus know that the donkey which had never been ridden before would be in the next village? Was this a God given insight? Or was this part of a prearranged plan? In any case, the detail of the donkey mattered to Jesus. A different donkey, one that had already been ridden would not suffice and He knew that this particular donkey was in the next village.

And Jesus' detailed planning is also shown when, after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem He goes into the temple. He has a look around at everything. But He does not take immediate action. Instead, He and His disciples return to Bethany where they are spending the night. Rather than dwelling on the excitement provided by the acclaim of the crowds, it seems that He spends this time pondering on what He has seen in the temple and no doubt praying to God to show Him what to do. For, having slept on it, in the morning there comes decisive action. He throws out the money changers and cleanses the Temple.

But is all of this simply the mark of a skilled administrator gifted in making detailed plans? Sometimes, people can separate out administrative and pastoral work as if they belonged to separate spheres in life. When I am preparing for weddings, part of my role is an administrative and legal one. You might ask why not leave this to someone else and simply focus on the service and preparing the couples for their forthcoming marriage?

However, I find that this administrative work and getting the often complex details of this right is also a way of expressing care and concern for these couples. In the process, I begin to get to know them better.

And likewise, we can see a link between the detail of Jesus' planning and His care and concern for other people. After all, as a king He did not need to give any explanation about the donkey. A king in that time was simply entitled to requisition other people's property especially in a time of war. There was no need to give explanation as to why this property was needed.

So, when the people of Israel ask the prophet Samuel to give them a king, Samuel warns them about the way their king will behave,

'These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers' (1 Samuel 8: 11-14).

And Samuel's warning is fulfilled in the behaviour of the kings who followed. If Jesus was to follow this example, there would have been no need to instruct His disciples to give a reason to the bystanders when they ask why the donkey is being untied. It was simply His prerogative as a king to take it. But more than that, Jesus tells His disciples to promise to return the donkey immediately once He has ridden it.

What lies behind this promise? No doubt Jesus recognised that the donkey had an economic and working value for its owners. The donkey needed to be returned as soon as possible. It was not just to be requisitioned permanently for God's purposes.

And as in Holy Week we walk through the last week of Jesus' life, we find that He continues to make detailed arrangements which enable other people to be properly cared for. So, even on the Cross He is still concerned in planning for the futures of other people. He sees His mother Mary standing next to the beloved disciple and so He sees the opportunity to place them together. He asks Mary to treat the beloved disciple as a son and the beloved disciple to treat Mary as his own mother. And indeed, this happens. From then on, the beloved disciples cares for Mary by taking her into his own home (see John 19: 26-27).

When we start looking closely at how Jesus behaves and how Jesus treats other people, it is like looking into a mirror. We are shown our own reflection and, in this, we discover how far we live up to the way Jesus lives.

How do we, how would we respond if power and fame were to come to us? Might the applause and acclaim of other people turn our heads? Might we succumb to the temptations of power and distance ourselves from other people? Might we think that it is beneath us to try and grapple with the details of how our plans are to be fulfilled? Or on the other hand, like Jesus, might we just go home to bed on the night after one of our greatest triumphs thinking about what we had seen on a brief visit after the main event and wondering how God might want us to respond to this? Are the details of our plans guided and governed by the desire to care for other people and to put ourselves in their shoes?

In Lent and particularly in Holy Week the call comes to us to see our vocation in terms of taking up our cross and following Jesus. For most of us this will not mean a literal call to the Cross. However, there will be a

metaphorical call to take up our cross and follow a different way of life in which we put the interests of others and of God before our own interests. Holy Week gives us the opportunity both to see how far we have come but also to recognise how far we still have to go.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Following Jesus by putting the interests of others and of God before our own interests
- For the services taking place in Holy Week and Easter Day
- For the health of the King and Princess of Wales
- 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 for Palm Sunday is 'Ride on, ride on in majesty.'

Services for Holy Week and Easter Sunday

Sunday 24th March 9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton

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

Maundy Thursday 28th March 7.00 pm Communion, Galhampton

Good Friday 29 th March	2.00 pm	Service, Compton Pauncefoot (NB please note change of venue)
Easter Sunday 31 st March	9.30 am	Communion, Bratton Seymour
Easter Sunday 31 st March	9.30 am	Communion, South Cadbury
Easter Sunday 31 st March	9.30 am	Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Easter Sunday 31 st March	9.30 am	Communion by Extension, Blackford
Easter Sunday 31 st March	11.00 am	Communion, North Cadbury
Easter Sunday 31 st March	11.00 am	Communion, Maperton
Easter Sunday 31 st March	11.00 am	Communion, Holton
Easter Sunday 31 st March	11.00 am	Communion by Extension, North Cheriton
Easter Sunday 31 st March	6.30 pm	Communion with Evensong, Yarlington

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)