

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 261

Sunday 23rd June 2024

'Virtually Church but with some way to go...'

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Job 38:1-11

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind:

² “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

³ Gird up your loins like a man,

I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

⁴ “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

⁵ Who determined its measurements - surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

⁶ On what were its bases sunk,

or who laid its cornerstone

⁷ when the morning stars sang together

and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

⁸ “Or who shut in the sea with doors

when it burst out from the womb? -

⁹ when I made the clouds its garment,

and thick darkness its swaddling band,

¹⁰ and prescribed bounds for it,

and set bars and doors,

¹¹ and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther,

and here shall your proud waves be stopped’?

Mark 4: 35-41

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” ³⁶ And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. ³⁷ A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”

³⁹ He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.

⁴⁰ He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?”

⁴¹ And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

Reflection

Why does God allow so much evil and suffering in the world? It’s a question which comes to many people’s minds when they are exploring or questioning their faith. But this is so much more than simply an intellectual problem to be solved. Indeed, there are no easy or straightforward answers. For when we or others encounter the reality of evil and suffering, this is a question which springs directly from our hearts.

This was Job’s question. Job is an upright man who always takes care to do whatever God asks of him. And yet for all that Job suffers terribly and immensely. One calamity follows another. So often this happens in life. We can think, for instance, of families and people (even our own Royal Family) afflicted by one illness or misfortune after another.

Perhaps the most terrible of all Job’s misfortunes were the deaths of all his children. But in addition to this, his sheep and servants are killed and his

camels, the visible sign of his great wealth and possessions are taken off. And finally, he is afflicted with loathsome sores all over his body.

This morning's passage comes near the end of the book of Job. Finally, after all Job's complaints and prayers asking God why all these terrible events have happened to him, God gives him a direct answer. God speaks out of the whirlwind and these words are the beginning of what God has to say to Job.

And in our passage from Mark's gospel, we find the disciples asking a similarly direct question about whether God cares about us in all the threats and dangers of life. A dangerous and life threatening storm has blown up on Lake Galilee. Jesus meanwhile is asleep on a cushion. Does He care about the mortal danger that His disciples are in? The disciples ask Him 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?'

The storm at sea is, of course, a very frightening and threatening natural event. I am reminded at a much smaller level about the floods we experienced in and around North Cadbury and other villages last year. I found myself stuck in a small car with two young children and the routes into North Cadbury were cut off by the flood waters that had suddenly risen. As I looked out at a landscape full of water, prayer was indeed the natural response.

However, the sea in the Bible is more than simply part of the natural world. At a spiritual level, the sea stands for those forces of chaos which threaten to destroy life. In the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, heaven is described as a place where God will wipe away every tear and where death will be no more, where mourning and crying and pain will be no more (see Revelation 21:3). And what is the visible sign of this perfect new life? The sea is no more. This might disappoint those of us who yearn to get away for a holiday by the seaside. However, this illustrates the place of the sea within the symbolism of the Bible.

So, the waves which suddenly begin to swamp the boat in which Jesus and the disciples are sailing are a reminder and expression of all those great forces in life which can suddenly disrupt and threaten our very existence.

We speak about some tragedy coming to us from out of a clear, blue sky and often this does happen. Yes, there are occasions when we can foresee and prepare for challenges and pain that we know await us. For instance, we know that someone close to us is suffering greatly and that their death is inevitable in the near future. But what about those occasions when we wake up on a sunny day believing that all will be well with us and that the day will follow its normal pattern and all of a sudden a calamity happens which will change our lives for ever?

Recently, much media coverage has been given to the tragic story of Michael Mosley, a well known television presenter and doctor. There he was on holiday deciding to take a walk in the burning sun but never presumably guessing that this would be the last walk he would ever take. Nor did his widow when he set off on the walk. And then the hours passed without his return. Probably at the beginning the expectation was that he had simply taken a detour somewhere and would soon reappear. And yet as the hours passed this hope must have faded and instead a horrible nagging feeling that the worst must have happened would have taken its place.

Sadly, those fears were fulfilled with the discovery of his body. And yet, interestingly, his widow issued a statement in which she said, 'We're taking comfort in the fact that he so very nearly made it. He did an incredible climb, took the wrong route and collapsed'.

As I thought about it, I wondered whether I would have found it such a comfort. After all, it might have been an added source of anguish to know that he had died so close to the comfort and security of the beach to which he was returning. And yet she did find comfort in this, seeing it as a sign

that in the midst of terrible loss there was still hope, that all was not utterly meaningless.

Putting this into theological terms, we might say that God puts limits on the destructive power of evil and of chaos. This is the message which God gives to Job out of the whirlwind.

God's limits on the power of evil and its ability to destroy life are set out first of all at the beginning of the book of Job. In a dialogue between God and Satan, God limits Satan's capacity to harm Job by commanding him not to stretch out his hand against him (see Job 1:12).

And in a similar way, God sets limits on the destructive capacity of the sea. He asks Job, 'who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb? ... when I ... prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped?'

In the Second World War, a Dutch Christian Corrie Ten Boom and her sister encountered at first hand the evil of the concentration camps when they were imprisoned at Ravensbruck. They spent much time in prayer and even in their desperate circumstances continued to thank and praise God. However, one aspect of their imprisonment for which they found it very difficult to thank God for or to find any meaning in were the fleas which infested their dormitory.

Nevertheless, Corrie and her sister were able to hold prayer meetings in the dormitory without interruption from the guards. They wondered why the guards never entered the room in which they were meeting in order to close this down. Then one day Corrie's sister discovered the reason. The guards never entered the room and allowed the prayer meetings to carry on because the infestation of fleas revolted them. So even in the darkness and evil

which surrounded them, God was still protecting them and had set limits to the powers of evil.

And I too at times of great darkness have been conscious of the limits which God has put on the power of evil. This is much more than finding a silver lining in an otherwise dark sky of suffering. It is an active and powerful sense of God's protection and help.

And just as in the Old Testament, God puts limits on the destructive power of the sea, so in the New Testament, Jesus shares in this authority.

So when Jesus does wake up all He does is to rebuke the wind and speak a simple message of peace to the sea. And amazingly this is all that is needed for the wind to cease and for the sea to become dead calm.

This, of course, is not something that anyone could have done. These miraculous powers belong only to God. No wonder that the disciples' response is to be filled with great awe and to ask, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'

As we reflect on these themes of God's power to set limits on the forces of evil, our attention will inevitably be drawn to times in our own lives or in the lives of those who are close to us where we have gone through great suffering and darkness. Have we been able to speak of God's presence and protection with us in those times? And have we found Jesus responding to us when, as with the disciples caught in the storm in a small boat, we have cried out to Him for help?

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Finding God's presence and protection amidst the storms of life
- General Election
- For continuing and new conflicts including those in the Ukraine, Israel, Gaza and Iran
- 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 appropriate hymn set for this Sunday is 'Eternal Father, strong to save.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 23 rd June	8 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 23 rd June	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 23 rd June	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 23 rd June	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 23 rd June	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 23 rd June	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 23 rd June	6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton
Sunday 30 th June	9.30 am Family Service, North Cheriton
Sunday 30 th June	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 30 th June	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Bratton Seymour
Sunday 30 th June	6.30 pm Evensong, Galhampton

Excalibur online

The June 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)