

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 226

Sunday 15th October 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passage

Isaiah 25:1-9

O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.

² For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the palace of aliens is a city no more, it will never be rebuilt.

³ Therefore strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you.

⁴ For you have been a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm,

⁵ the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place, you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds; the song of the ruthless was stilled.

⁶ On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

⁷ And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations;

⁸ he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.

⁹ It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Matthew 22:1-14

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying:

² "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son.

³ He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come.

⁴ Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.'

⁵ But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business,

⁶ while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them.

⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

⁸ Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.'

⁹ Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.'

¹⁰ Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹ 'But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe,

¹² and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless.

¹³ Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen."

Reflection

All are welcome. We might add 'At any time'. Perhaps you might have seen this or a similar message outside a church. You may have thought that this would be an appropriate message to give to those who do not come to church regularly.

All are welcome at any time is certainly part of the message which our two readings give us this morning.

Both of them speak of a feast or a banquet. In the Bible, a feast is one of the key metaphors to describe the richness and joy of the coming of the Messiah and the Messianic age.

And being a guest at this feast is open to everyone. All are welcome.

In Isaiah, the feast of rich food filled with marrow and well-aged wines is for all peoples not just for some. The shroud of death which falls over everyone is to be destroyed for ever. God's power and grace to do this is to be effective for all peoples and all nations.

When we turn to the first part of Jesus' parable about the wedding banquet given by a king for his son, the same message comes through. Although those who were originally invited to the banquet scorned their invitation because they thought that they had better things on which to spend their time such as their farm or business, further invitations were issued to everyone. The king's servants went out into the streets. They were to invite everyone they found to the banquet, regardless of their rank or condition, good or bad. And so the wedding banquet became packed with guests.

All are welcome or are they ?

The guests who were originally invited to the wedding banquet for the king's son were indeed welcome. But their absence from the feast was a matter of their own deliberate choice.

Some were simply arrogant or disrespectful. They made light of their invitations and considered their everyday occupations to be more important than this unique opportunity of coming to the king's banquet. By scorning the invitation they showed disrespect to the king himself.

Others were more positively hostile and antagonistic towards the king and his messengers. They seized the king's servants, illtreated and even killed them.

Their absence from the feast was a matter of their own deliberate choice. They were welcome but they simply did not come.

But what about one of the replacement guests, one of the many indiscriminately summoned in from the streets by the king's messengers. This man had responded to the invitation so surely he should be welcome ?

But not at all. He had come without a wedding garment. And this provokes a most severe judgement on the part of the king. He is to be taken outside and thrown into the outer darkness where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. What has this man done to deserve this ? Is this really what we mean when we say that all are welcome in God's house ?

First, perhaps we need to ask ourselves why this man had come to the feast unprepared and without his wedding garment.

Since all the other guests who had come in from the streets were wearing the right clothes I think we can assume that, even though all of them were brought in from the streets, they had each had the opportunity to put on the right clothes.

This may have been because wedding clothes were offered to everyone at the door. Alternatively, there may have been time to go back home and change. Without such an opportunity to get ready the king's judgement would have been harsh indeed.

And it is unlikely that the guests were expected to turn up in morning dress or other formal and expensive clothing. They were expected simply to have everyday clothes which were nevertheless clean and presentable.

So, assuming that all the guests did have an opportunity for a change of clothing, this man had chosen not to take this opportunity. Instead, he had turned up in whatever he was wearing at the time the invitation was issued, however dirty and dishevelled these clothes might have been.

And in this way, this man treated his invitation just as lightly and disrespectfully as those original guests who had decided not to come at all. He had certainly not realised the magnitude of the occasion or who his host really was.

But what does this man's lack of a wedding garment symbolise spiritually ?

Elsewhere in the Bible special clothing is used as a metaphor to describe those who truly belong to God. In the book of Isaiah, for instance, the Messiah rejoices that he has been clothed with the garments of salvation just as a bride is adorned with jewels (see Isaiah 61:10).

And in Paul's letter to the Colossians, putting on fresh clothes is used as a metaphor for belonging to Christ and for displaying Christ's character in every aspect of our daily life. So, we are asked as God's chosen ones to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience (see Colossians 3:12).

What does all this mean for the church and indeed for ourselves ? One person with whom I discussed this parable said that we should surely not

judge someone on external grounds such as whether or not they wearing the right clothes. And that is true. We should not be thinking about the clothes that we see around us in church and whether or not they are good or appropriate enough.

However, parables have spiritual as well as literal meanings. So, the lack of an appropriate wedding garment tells us something about the state of this man's heart. And we can compare him with those who made light of and refused the invitation in the first place.

It is right that churches should be places of celebration and joy. The symbol of the feast reminds us of this. It is right also that they should not be places which demand a specific dress code. On the other hand, there is a danger that we slip into a casualness which fails to recognise the majesty and grandeur of God. What would we make, say, of a wedding where most of the congregation turned up drunk and behaved in a rowdy way before and even during the service ? Would we simply say 'Well, all are welcome' ?

And for ourselves, perhaps we too need a balance. We are welcome at God's feast whatever we may or may not have done in the past. God's grace and mercy covers a multitude of sins. And yet grace is not cheap. It cost Jesus infinite suffering and indeed His life. Jesus died for our sins.

If we truly respond to His sacrifice, we will, even as we take our place at His feast, never make light of the greatness of the invitation which we have received. And as we keep on responding to Christ with humility and gratitude, so we will indeed clothe ourselves in our daily lives with Christ's clothes, those of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Coming to God's feast and clothing ourselves with Christ's clothes
- Giving thanks for the harvest
- 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

Hymn

A hymn set for this Sunday is 'Jerusalem the golden.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 15 th October	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 15 th October	11 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 15 th October	11 am Morning Service (with baptism), Maperton
Sunday 15 th October	6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 22 nd October	8 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 22 nd October	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 22 nd October	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 22 nd October	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 22 nd October	11 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 22 nd October	11 am Communion (with baptism), Holton
Sunday 22 nd October	11 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington

Sunday 22nd October

6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton

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 August 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)