

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 11

Easter Sunday, 12th April 2020

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

Scripture Passage

John 20: 11-18

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet.

They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?”

She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary!”

She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher).

Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to

the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Reflection

When I think of Easter, I think first of all of the quality of light, bright, clear and full of promise. Usually Easter comes just after the changing of clocks, a transition which signals that finally the winter months are over and once again we can enjoy long, light evenings.

So Easter is a time of fulfilment but also of hope - there is yet more light and warmth to look forward to in the summer. Easter is indeed a season of hope.

And Easter is of course a season of hope in the spiritual as well as the natural sense. Easter is the season of the resurrection. What does this mean to me? The short answer is everything. The resurrection is essential to my faith. Yes, even without the resurrection, Christ can and indeed does give us a sense of value and purpose in this life. But we need more. The coronavirus pandemic confronts all of us starkly with our own mortality and the apparent finality of death. Is death really the end or is there anything more? With the hope of the resurrection in our lives we can say with the poet John Donne,

One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

But we do not know the exact shape of the resurrection life that is to come. The apostle Paul speaks of a seed which is sown into the ground and which in time rises again as a crop. However, from the seed which was sown one cannot imagine the shape of this future crop.

So if we are to enjoy the future that God has for us we cannot cling on to the bare seed of this present life. We need to let go of this, to let it fall into the ground and die.

We have just listened to the story of Mary Magdalene meeting with the risen Jesus. This again speaks to us of the need to let go. Jesus tells Mary, do not hold on to me or we might say do not cling to me.

What was Mary clinging to? Perhaps the way in which she had known Jesus up to this point in her life. She had been looking for Jesus' body. It was the comforting presence of the earthly, physical Jesus that she wanted. She was convinced that the empty tomb which she and the others had seen simply meant that someone had taken Jesus' body elsewhere. Could it be that this strange but oddly familiar person beside her whom she thought was the gardener was the one who had taken away the body?

And then the moment of recognition comes. The voice of the stranger says the simple word 'Mary', her name and this pierces her soul. She recognises that this is Jesus speaking to her. She had found Him. He wasn't dead after all and now she had to keep Him safe from any future threat or danger.

But Jesus says to her don't hold on to me. In other words, the way in which you and others will know me in the future won't be the same as in the past. You need to let go of the old way in which you have known me in order to move into the future which I have for you.

So why did Mary need to let go? She needed to let go of this physical Jesus whom she could touch in order to allow herself and others to know Jesus in a new and different way through the Holy Spirit. She needed to let go of Jesus so that He could ascend to His Father and her Father, to His God and her God. And then God would send the gift of the Holy Spirit on all who believed in Jesus. So in future Jesus would no longer be confined by the limits of time

and space but would be able to be with people all across the world all at the same time.

And Mary also needed to let go because Jesus had given her a job to do. He told her to go and tell the other disciples that she had seen the risen Lord.

And Mary was not afraid to do this. She was willing to let go of the past way in which she had known Jesus and to trust in a future way of knowing Him which she had not as yet experienced. She was willing, once she had found Jesus, to leave Him and to be the first witness of the Resurrection with the very simple yet profound words 'I have seen the Lord'.

Perhaps in these extraordinary times in which we live we may feel tempted to cling on to what little we seem to have left of the past. We think perhaps that when all this is over we must return to what we did in the past, the way in which we were sustained and nourished in our faith.

And yet at the moment we simply don't know what the future shape of our church will be or when and how restrictions will be lifted. Will the old shape of our worship be given back to us unchanged or will there be changes? We don't know. But God's word does not change. The word which Jesus spoke to Mary, don't hold on to me, God now speaks to us today. So, like Mary, let us allow God to lead us into the future even though we cannot imagine its exact shape. And as we do so let us trust in the hope and the truth of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Thanksgiving for Jesus' resurrection and for the courage of Mary Magdalene in being willing to respond to Jesus' words not to hold on to Him

- Thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers and prayers for personal protective equipment to be given to all who need them
- Thanksgiving for volunteers in our community and elsewhere willing to help others in this emergency
- Need for further largescale testing
- Prime Minister's health and for wisdom in government decisions
- For those who have lost loved ones as a result of coronavirus
- Funerals needing to take place under new restrictions with only family mourners.

Why not try?

- Asking yourself how you have seen God at work in your spiritual life since the emergency eg perhaps greater trust in God?
- If you live nearby including the Easter flowers and gardens near the churches in North Cadbury and North Cheriton in your daily walk
- The invitation by Churches Together to sing outside 'Thine be the glory' and 'Jesus Christ is risen today' at 10.00am today
- Joining in Bishop Peter's live Facebook service also at 10.00am today.

Updates

- Churches now closed. No weddings and only emergency baptisms (child's life in danger) at home or in hospital. Funerals restricted to immediate family at graveside or crematoria (subject to local crematoria rules). Further details on Church of England website.
- Current Excalibur gives details of network of community volunteers now in action across the parishes.

- Parish Office now closed. Please contact Rob via email (office@camelotparishes.org.uk) or on 01749 850934.

An inclusive Communion celebrated on behalf of the benefice

Ron and Pam will be celebrating Communion in their home this Sunday at 10.00am. Please be aware of this because even though no-one can join them they are praying for us all and hope that you will feel included in this act of Communion.

Some streamed resources available online

Here are a selection of some streamed resources available online which you may find helpful:-

- The Royal School of Church Music website provides a Hymn of the Day and Sunday Self-Service with music, readings and prayers.
- The Prayer Book Society has details of online streaming of BCP services.
- Spring Harvest is not being held live this year. However, there is full online coverage of this Christian festival available from 13th to 17th April. Simply go to Youtube and enter in 'Spring Harvest Home'.

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)