

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 13

Sunday 19th April 2020

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot on this Sunday after Easter often known as Low Sunday. Here we look at doubting Thomas and his response to the Resurrection. But is it fair to call him doubting Thomas? And is doubt the opposite of faith or could it be a stage on the way to faith? Ron explores these questions in his reflection on this scripture passage.

Scripture Passage

John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord."

But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.”

Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Reflection

If you were to tell me that an alien spacecraft had landed just outside the village, to be frank, I wouldn't believe you. The chances of it really happening are vanishingly small. Are you playing a practical joke, or are you mistaken? Unless I see it for myself, I won't believe aliens frightening the **** out of Montgomery's cows. So I'm on Thomas's side. When the others all said “We've seen the Lord!” he was bound to think it was a wind-up. Or a mistake. And calling him doubting Thomas as if that was a bad thing strikes me as unreasonable, because who wouldn't have doubted the resurrection unless they'd met Jesus themselves?

“You believe because you've seen me,” said Jesus. “Blessed are those who haven't seen me, but believe.” That's me! I'm blessed!

A while ago, somebody asked Archbishop Rowan (the one with the beard). “How do you know God exists?” And the Archbishop replied, “I don't *know*, but I *believe!*” Thomas saw Jesus alive and believed, and lots of people afterwards saw Jesus and believed, but six weeks later, Jesus (spoiler alert!) ascended to heaven, and since then, the faith of Christians has been based on the testimonies of these early Christians, passed down the generations. Or has it?

There are a few people who have had a real, actual encounter with the living Jesus. But for most of us, our meeting with Jesus is either through the symbol, the sacrament of Holy Communion, when we remember his presence with us in bread and wine; or through the encounters we have with other Christians - the Body of Christ. Jesus is healing, loving, teaching and caring, because his people (that's us!) are doing it in his name, if we have faith to see that and believe it.

Whoops! Faith again. It seems we're never going to have *proof* that Jesus is alive, we just have to believe it, or not. But does any of this detract from the physical reality of Jesus' resurrection? I can stand up and say that I believe Jesus stopped being dead, and is alive now, in some state I don't understand now, but trust I will someday. And I perfectly understand that there are many people who can't accept that because it isn't scientific, or plausible. And I don't blame them, or pity them.

When Jesus told his friends he was going to Jerusalem, and they all knew that his enemies there were out to get him, they tried to stop him. But not Thomas. Thomas was the one who said, "Let's go too, and die with him." This is Thomas trusting Jesus, and showing he believed that dying with Jesus was better than living without him.

And when he met Jesus alive after his crucifixion, he knelt at his feet, saying "My Lord, and my God!" Thomas was the first one to acknowledge that Jesus is who I believe him to be. That's why I'm on Thomas's side.

Some people have a problem with the Creed we say in church, which begins "I believe..." because there are things in it, stated as facts, which they find hard to accept. But the newer versions tend to start "We believe..." which makes it a bit easier - I am part of a church which holds these things to be true. We may have doubts, but we're part of a community of faith, which might help.

Being the Body of Christ isn't as easy in April as it was in February, but stay in touch, stuff the phone bill, give someone a call, and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Ron

Points for Prayers

- Thanksgiving for and celebration of Jesus' resurrection
- Thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers
- Need for further largescale testing
- Prayers for wisdom in government decisions particularly regarding the future of the lockdown
- Funerals needing to take place under new restrictions with only family mourners. Tristram is taking a funeral on Monday.
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

An inclusive Communion celebrated on behalf of the benefice

Ron and Pam will be celebrating Communion regularly in their home each 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.

Excalibur and the Parish Office

Because of concerns relating to the hand delivery of parish magazines and also the relative lack of available content an electronic rather than a printed version of Excalibur will be produced during the period of the restrictions. This will be available on the website, www.camelotparishes.co.uk, and will include Camelot People giving details of occasional offices in the benefice (this

for the moment is confined to funerals during the suspension of both weddings and baptisms).

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

Diocesan weekly livestreamed services and reflections

Bishop Peter and Bishop Ruth will be livestreaming a mid-week Eucharist each week and offering recorded reflections each Sunday.

For further details please see the Diocesan website.

Some other streamed resources

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.

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)