

# CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 113

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021

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

## Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday's edition of Cutting Edge Camelot.

## Scripture Passages

*Ezekiel 17: 22-24*

Thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of a cedar; I will set it out. I will break off a tender one from the topmost of its young twigs; I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. <sup>23</sup> On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it, in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar. Under it every kind of bird will live; in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind. <sup>24</sup> All the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD. I bring low the high tree, I make high the low tree; I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I the LORD have spoken; I will accomplish it.

*Mark 4: 26-34*

He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, <sup>27</sup> and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. <sup>28</sup> The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. <sup>29</sup> But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

<sup>30</sup> He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? <sup>31</sup> It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; <sup>32</sup> yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

<sup>33</sup> With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; <sup>34</sup> he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

## **Reflection**

Sometimes it can be easy to feel powerless and insignificant, to think to ourselves that no-one is listening or paying any attention to me. What use is my life in the great scheme of things?

And maybe such feelings have been exacerbated by this time of the pandemic when we have all been ordered around so much and there is still so much uncertainty. We may well wonder to ourselves what good can I possibly do with my life, perhaps it is better and certainly easier simply to give up on believing that we could make a difference and sink into a state of indifference and apathy.

However, if we do feel like this or are tempted to do so, the comparison that Jesus makes between the kingdom of God and the mustard seed, the smallest of all the seeds, may strike us. We can feel that our lives are like that mustard seed, too small possibly to be of any significance.

We may also identify with the position of the people of God in the Old Testament when they were taken away from their own land into exile in the great empire of Babylon. In the politics of the day, Israel was a small and insignificant kingdom squeezed between the great empires around it, such

as Babylon to the east and Egypt to the south. And now in exile they had lost the land that God had promised and which was so precious to them.

This is the context of Ezekiel's prophecy in our Old Testament passage. In Ezekiel's time many people placed their trust and hopes in rebelling against the rule of Babylon by joining forces with another great power, Egypt.

This might make sense politically. But Ezekiel warns against it. He prophesies that this rebellion will not be successful. By contrast, rather than trusting in human power and strength, Ezekiel encourages his people to trust in God for their rescue from exile and the rule of Babylon. For it is God who will act to restore the fortunes of His people.

The image that Ezekiel uses to describe this is of a tiny, insignificant sprig which God takes from the top of a great cedar. This sprig God then plants on a high mountain. This high mountain is Mount Zion at Jerusalem, the spiritual centre of the home country from which they are currently in exile.

A tiny sprig planted on a mountain might not seem like a harbinger of great things to come. But it is a question of waiting and trusting in God while this sprig eventually grows into a great tree which will *'produce boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar'* and under it *'every kind of bird will live; in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind.'*

The growth is one that is entirely given by God. We simply need to wait while this happens. Those to whom Ezekiel originally prophesied did indeed witness a partial fulfilment of God's plans on their return from exile.

However, as Christians we see the complete fulfilment of this prophecy of the mighty tree in the ministry and mission of Christ.

Indeed there is a conscious echo of Ezekiel's image in the second of Jesus' parables which we read today. Jesus speaks of a mustard seed which is the smallest of all seeds. However, in time it grows into the greatest of all the

shrubs in the garden, providing shelter for all around it. And just as with Ezekiel's sprig planted on the mountain it *'puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'*

So as with Ezekiel's prophecy this parable presents us with a contrast between the present frailty and insignificance of the seed and the future usefulness and splendour of the tree. This is designed to give hope to all those who may feel that the activities which they presently undertake for the sake of God's kingdom are too small to make any real difference.

The other parable in today's gospel reading is also about the theme of seeds, sowing and growth.

The sower in this parable is responsible for the actual planting of the seed in the ground. For without this sowing, however small and insignificant it may seem, there can be no subsequent growth or harvest.

But then the sower's role shifts from an active to a passive one. While the sower needs to carry out the sowing of the seed, its subsequent growth in the soil is one that is both God given and also natural, *'The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.'*

And while all this is happening the sower simply gets on with normal life, going to bed and then getting up again every day. Meanwhile the growth of what has been sown continues with no need for further input.

But then the rhythm of the parable shifts again. Once more it becomes time to act and to harvest the grown and ripe crop.

So this parable emphasises for us the importance both of right timing and of understanding what God is doing. Yes, there are times for action. And yet there is also a time for doing nothing and simply letting God get on with the work and enabling what we have sown to grow.

Both Ezekiel and Jesus in different ways make this same contrast between placing our trust and hopes in what we can do by purely human means and placing our trust in God who alone can fulfil those great dreams and purposes that we long for. For if we hold our plans and hopes before God even if they seem very frail they can nevertheless be fulfilled in a much larger way than we could ever believe to be possible. However, our trust and hope needs to be in the right place and this is in God's power and strength.

As we reflect both on Jesus' parables and Ezekiel's prophecy we might think of what we are sowing through our lives. Perhaps these are acts of kindness and love which we wonder whether anyone else notices. Perhaps these are words of witness about what Christ means to us, often put in the terms of everyday language and conversations.

As we sow, so we might be tempted to get discouraged because we do not see instant results. All that we do and are feels so frail and insignificant. How could this possibly matter to God or to other people? But it does.

And as an antidote to discouragement we need hope. We need hope to continue with what we are doing, a hope based on the person in whom we trust, Jesus Christ. For, whatever power is held by great and important people or institutions such as the G7 leaders currently meeting in Cornwall, such power will in the end always have its limits. It is only God's power which is unlimited and knows no bounds. We need to remind ourselves that what we now see as tiny mustard seeds will, by God's strength and nurture, one day grow into great plants which give shade and sustenance to all those around.

*Tristram*

### **Points for Prayers**

- To be encouraged to keep on sowing seeds of God's love, faith and hope among those around us

- Continued thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers and those in care homes demonstrated throughout the course of this pandemic
- The meeting and decisions of the G7 on climate change and other issues
- Wisdom and clarity for the government announcement due on Monday in relation to the final step in the easing of lockdown restrictions
- For all those affected by this announcement particularly those who are planning weddings in the near future
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds, those who have recently been bereaved and those suffering as a result of social isolation and in other ways
- Bishop Ruth and the rest of the Diocesan staff as they take on additional responsibility following Bishop Peter's retirement
- For North Cadbury Church Primary School and other local schools as they continue the school year
- Prayers for those affected economically by the lockdown, for businesses and those who have become unemployed
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

## **Hymn**

A hymn which is often sung at harvest time but which nevertheless reflects the themes of spiritual sowing and harvest in today's readings is 'Come, ye thankful people, come'.

## **Congregational Singing**

Congregational singing is now permitted for those services which are taking place outdoors in the churchyard. However, the position remains unchanged for services inside the church. Here congregational singing is not permitted.

## **Services for the rest of June**

Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> June	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> June	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> June	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> June	6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> June	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> June	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> June	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> June	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. Previous editions of Excalibur can be found online at [camelotparishes.co.uk](http://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](mailto: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)*