

# CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 120

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021

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

## Welcome

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

## Scripture Passages

*Ephesians 4: 1-16*

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

<sup>7</sup> But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

<sup>8</sup> Therefore it is said, “When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.” <sup>9</sup> (When it says, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) <sup>11</sup> The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful

scheming. <sup>15</sup> But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

*John 6: 24-35*

So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal."

<sup>28</sup> Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?"

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

<sup>30</sup> So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? <sup>31</sup> Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

<sup>32</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

<sup>34</sup> They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

<sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

## Reflection

During the last few weeks we have seen the impact on Jesus' ministry of the crowd which followed Him. There was the crowd comprised of individuals with different needs such as Jairus and the woman suffering from haemorrhages who touched the edge of Jesus' cloak. These competing demands meant that Jesus had to have a very clear, yet flexible sense of priorities. There was the crowd which would not allow Jesus and the disciples even the shortest of breaks. And there was the crowd which was hungry and needed feeding.

The constant presence of these crowds has been exhausting and draining. Jesus is always being pursued in order to give out ministry. The crowd never seems to reach a position where it can give something back spiritually.

And as this week's gospel passage begins the same scenario presents itself. Jesus and His disciples have moved to Capernaum to get away from the crowd. However, the crowd follows them across the lake of Galilee because they are looking for Jesus. They cannot sustain themselves spiritually and are seemingly 'addicted' to the physical presence of Jesus and the powerful visible signs that Jesus is doing.

And when the crowd catch up with Jesus once again they want to know all about His movements. They give Him no privacy, clinging to Jesus like needy and dependent children.

They are, in other words, immature. Maturity can be but is not necessarily a product of age. Immaturity can show itself at any age in many different ways. One of those ways can be a focus on outward spectacle and show rather than recognising the importance of inner character and invisible spiritual reality. While the first may be eye catching, it is the second which endures.

So when the crowd catch up with Jesus, He is very direct in His discernment of their motives. They have been fed physically by the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the feeding of the five thousand, which was the focus of last week's passage. However, He tells them that even though this has satisfied their outward hunger they have not understood what it truly meant in spiritual terms. For the feeding of the five thousand was a sign intended to point them to a more enduring and invisible spiritual reality. So outwardly they may have eaten but inwardly they have not understood the true significance of what Jesus has done for them.

Jesus goes on to tell them that physical loaves will decay and perish. Their physical hunger may have been satisfied but this is temporary. However, if they were to feed spiritually on Jesus this would satisfy their spiritual hunger permanently and eternally. This is a message which requires a level of spiritual maturity to grasp.

As we reflect on this, we realise that we also can be too focussed in our spiritual lives on externals. We have all had to learn during the past year or so how to sustain ourselves spiritually when it has not been possible to meet as a church. This has undoubtedly been challenging and difficult. And yet perhaps we might look back at this period as a time of spiritual growth. Why so? We have been thrown back more directly into a dependence on God and the reality of our own faith. That does not mean of course that church services and meetings are not important. Of course they are. And yet what is it that lies at the heart of our faith?

It is this which underlies the crowd's next question to Jesus, "*What must we do to perform the works of God?*"

So what is essential to their faith if not outward show and miracles such as the feeding of the five thousand? It is interesting that they ask what they are to do. They believe that they need to do something in order to please

God. They have still not grasped the need for an inner relationship of the heart with Jesus.

So Jesus again responds to them in a straightforward and challenging way. God's work depends simply on putting our trust in Jesus whom God has sent. It is this alone which will give them the inner strength and resilience which they need.

However, at this point they do not have the spiritual maturity simply to accept and apply this message. They still ask '*What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you?*' They have already been given one spectacular sign in the form of the feeding of the five thousand but they think they need another one to convince them to come to faith in Jesus. And so rather than trusting God they keep testing Jesus by asking Him further questions and looking for further external signs and shows.

They go back to their spiritual roots in the Exodus and the giving of manna in the wilderness. However rather than understanding that the manna that came from heaven was just a sign of God's grace and power they attribute this to Moses' power. Once again they are looking at externals.

So at this point Jesus corrects their emphasis on externals by pointing out that the true bread from heaven was given not by Moses but by God the Father. In this respect Moses was simply a servant.

And then Jesus goes on to point them to the unique relationship which He has with God the Father. First in a roundabout way and then very directly He tells them that He Himself is the One who has come down from heaven and who gives life to the world. It is He who is the true bread of life. It is He who will satisfy people's spiritual hunger and thirst permanently.

And so we learn that our relationship of faith with Jesus needs to be central to our lives. External signs of God's love and power may indeed be important but they cannot form the centre of our vision.

Thinking about this passage I was reminded of what I look back on as a personal spiritual turning point. At the time I was trying to find spiritual direction through following different people whom I regarded as powerful and authoritative figures. But I was confused when these people offered me different paths to follow. Then I realised that I could never find true spiritual direction by relying on other people however wise and authoritative they might appear to be. Rather it was my own relationship and trust in God that I needed to focus on in order to find the spiritual stability that I was looking for.

As we turn to our passage from the Book of Ephesians we find a kind of recipe by which we may grow into this kind of spiritual maturity. It provides a way in which we can stand on our own two feet spiritually and do not need constant reassurance from others.

Paul begins by stressing the cardinal importance of Christian character rather than external achievement. We need to exhibit humility, gentleness and patience. In this love is foundational and essential. And out of love will spring the unity of the Christian church and relationships which are healthy and whole. Is this not what we long for?

And we learn that God's purpose and the aim of ministry is for us to come to maturity, to the fullness of our spiritual destiny, the measure of the full stature of Christ. As we become mature so too the unity of the Church's faith is promoted and increased.

And as we grow up we become spiritual adults not children. We will exhibit stability and inner strength rather than being tossed backwards and forwards by the latest opinion we hear. So we will be able to evaluate spiritually the different opinions and teaching which are presented to us.

We all need to grow up however old or young we may be. What point have we reached on our road to spiritual maturity? Are there any clues which can help us here?

One could be to ask ourselves how far our faith is still dependent on externals. Have we accepted Jesus' challenge that we need at the centre of our lives simply to place our trust in Him?

And how do we relate to other people? Do we always depend on other people for our spiritual sustenance and strength? Or have we grown into the kind of people who are able both to give and receive in terms of our faith and as we relate to other people in our churches and communities?

*Tristram*

### **Points for Prayers**

- That we might accept Jesus' challenge to grow up into spiritual maturity
- For our church life and unity as we move into this new phase of personal responsibility as opposed to legal restrictions
- Continued thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers and those in care homes demonstrated throughout the course of this pandemic
- 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 and plan for the future

- For North Cadbury Church School and other local schools as they enter the summer holiday that this might be a period of refreshment and peace
- 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

‘Father, hear the prayer we offer’ is a hymn which recognises that the spiritual life will not necessarily be easy. So we need to look to God to give us the strength to meet the challenges we face.

## Services for August

Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> August	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> August	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> August	11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> August	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> August	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> August	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> August	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> August	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> August	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> August	6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> August	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> August	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> August	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot



Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> August	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> August	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> August	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> August	11 am Sunday Worship, Yarlinton
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> August	6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> August	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> August	9.30 am Family Service, North Cheriton
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> August	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> August	6.30 pm Evensong, 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](http://camelotparishes.co.uk) and on each parish's A Church Near You webpage.

### **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)