

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 127**

**Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2021**

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

## **Welcome**

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

## **Scripture Passages**

*Genesis 2: 18-24*

Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.”

<sup>19</sup> So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

<sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner.

<sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

<sup>23</sup> Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.”

<sup>24</sup> Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

*Mark 10: 2-16*

Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”

<sup>3</sup> He answered them, “What did Moses command you?”

<sup>4</sup> They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.”

<sup>5</sup> But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. <sup>6</sup> But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ <sup>7</sup> ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, <sup>8</sup> and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. <sup>9</sup> Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

<sup>10</sup> Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. <sup>11</sup> He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; <sup>12</sup> and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

<sup>13</sup> People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. <sup>14</sup> But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

<sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” <sup>16</sup> And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

## Reflection

Perhaps it is fitting at this time of year when we celebrate Harvest that our readings this morning focus on how God is at work in the natural world and, in particular, the areas of marriage and family life.

For just as the maturity and gathering in of crops signify a completeness and satisfaction and a natural blessing for which we thank God so too can we see this dynamic at work within the institutions of marriage and family.

Genesis, the first book of the Bible, sets out God's good purposes for the whole of Creation. One of these is the need to provide human beings with a suitable form of companionship and help. We all know how damaging it can be to live apart and separate from other human beings in loneliness and isolation. Indeed our recent experience of lockdowns and the impact that these have had on us in family and social terms have served to underline this truth.

And so for the first human being, Adam, God needs to find a suitable partner and helper. Many of us will know and be grateful for the companionship which animals, such as dogs and cats, can provide. And yet we need more than this.

Adam does indeed have the privilege of naming all the animals which God brings to him. However, among all these animals *'there was not found a helper as his partner.'*

People need people. And so we learn that God in order to form a suitable partner for Adam needs to take a part of Adam's body, one of his ribs, and from this part to form a woman. And immediately Adam recognises that he has been given the companionship for which he has yearned. For *'it is not good that the man should be alone.'*

In our scientific age, what is the deep and powerful theological truth that this conveys? Surely the missing rib speaks to us of a missing wholeness and a need for completeness which every person, man or woman, has. We cannot be self-sufficient and entire within ourselves. Rather we have to look outwards for the wholeness which we need.

And so Adam recognises himself as being inextricably linked with Eve. He recognises that they belong to and complement one another. As he puts it, *'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh'*.

There then follows a concise explanation of the meaning and process of marriage, *'Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.'* It involves both leaving previous family relationships behind and cleaving (or clinging) to the new family created by the husband. And in this they are no longer two separate people but *'one flesh'*.

In our gospel reading Jesus, when He is challenged by the Pharisees concerning divorce and remarriage, chooses not to go into a detailed discussion of whether and why divorce might be possible. He tells us that the permission given by Moses was a concession to the hardness of human hearts. The perspective on marriage that He gives us draws from God's good purposes for marriage and human relationships which are demonstrated right at the beginning of Creation.

And so Jesus echoes the insight of Genesis concerning the complementary nature of men and women, *'from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female'* and reiterates the principle of leaving one's original family and cleaving to the new one created by husband and wife. For Jesus, too, husband and wife are *'one flesh'*. So it is wrong for human beings to separate what God has joined together just as it would be wrong to cut into and divide up a single, living organism.

Jesus' teaching about marriage is followed by the incident in which people bring little children for Him to bless. This is a well known passage which is often used at baptisms or christenings. This context serves to place marriage within the broader perspective of children and family life.

It also serves to provide another very powerful argument against cutting into the 'one flesh' relationship between husband and wife. It is important to preserve this organic unity not simply for the sake of husband and wife but also for the sake of the children of that marriage. Their lives, too, as we sadly know, can be torn apart by the divorce of their parents.

We have rightly focussed first on the overall truth and principles of marriages. God's purpose is to join together a man and a woman in marriage in an inseparable way so that each should be a true partner to the other.

However, often, our actual lives are not simple and straightforward as that. They can resist neat theological formulations. So do we need to take account of any other considerations to gain a fuller picture of this subject?

Taken on its own, Jesus' statement made to His disciples, *'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery'* is very clear cut and black and white.

But how do we read this within the context of other scriptures? For instance, the equivalent saying in Matthew's gospel includes the clear exception 'for any reason except sexual immorality'. How do we place these two sayings together and make sense of them?

One way in which we can do this is to look at the background to the Pharisees' question to Jesus, *'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?'* What exactly did that question mean and why did they ask it?

There was at that time a school of rabbinic thought which allowed for husbands (but not wives) to divorce their wives 'for any matter'. And 'for any matter' could be given a very wide interpretation, if a wife did not prepare her husband's food properly, for instance, this could be grounds for a divorce. Hopefully this is not something with which we would agree! It is clear from Jesus' answer that He did not.

On the other hand, it was generally agreed at the time that adultery was grounds for a divorce.

If we follow this through it could be that the Pharisees were testing Jesus to see what He would say about an 'any matter' divorce. Clearly, Jesus did not think that divorce was permissible for 'any matter' for this would entirely undermine the principle of 'one flesh'. However, adultery also undermines this principle. It could be, then, that in Matthew's account the exception of 'sexual immorality' was spelt out explicitly whereas in Mark's account it was simply implied as a subject on which everyone was in agreement.

And then elsewhere in scripture we have Paul's words that a Christian is not bound in circumstances where he or she is deserted by an unbelieving spouse. We may also wish to consider what the position is in cases of marital abuse and neglect.

And in addition we might consider the relevance of the insights from the book of Genesis for those who are unmarried. We may be unmarried for a variety of reasons including widow(er)hood. Perhaps we may sense God's call to singleness. Here we need to remember that Jesus and indeed the New Testament as a whole strongly affirms the value of the single life. Marriage is not for everyone.

However, what is universally true is that it is not good that man should be alone. This is the foundation for God's provision of a suitable companion and helper for Adam. And this truth has a broader impact on our lives than

simply the discovery of a suitable partner to marry. Indeed the Marriage Service of the Church of England reminds us that the love of a husband for a wife cannot be separated either from the spiritual call to respond to Christ's love or from the encouragement and support of friends and family. And so for all of us, married or unmarried, the need we have to find wholeness within human companionship and relationships remains inescapable. For many (but not all) of us marriage will provide much (but not all) in the way of the provision which we need. And yet for all of us there will be a need to let our love flow outwards in other ways. Friendship can be undervalued and yet it is extraordinarily important as the Bible reminds us through examples such as David and Jonathan, Naomi and Ruth, Paul and Barnabas. And more widely we need the companionship both that our church family can provide and also our wider community.

It is not good for man to be alone.

*Tristram*

## **Points for Prayers**

- To look outwards to find the companionship which we need
- Thanksgiving for Harvest
- COVID plans for winter and our own planning for the Christmas period
- Continued thanksgiving for the care, skill and courage of NHS workers and all others who work to contain the spread of the pandemic and to be agents of healing
- Response to fuel shortages
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- Bishop Ruth and the rest of the Diocesan staff as they take on additional responsibility in this vacancy in See

- For the choice of a new Bishop, someone who shares God's heart for this Diocese
- North Cadbury Church School and other local schools
- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton as it prepares for reopening in the near future
- 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 harvest hymn which celebrates God at work within the processes of nature and human activity is 'Come ye thankful people come.'

## Services in October

Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> October	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> October	11.00 am Harvest Service, North Cadbury
Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> October	11.00 am Harvest Service, South Cadbury
Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> October	11.00 am Harvest Service, North Cheriton
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> October	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> October	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> October	11.00 am Harvest Service, Galhampton
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> October	11.00 am Harvest Service, Holton
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> October	4.00 pm Harvest Service, Bratton Seymour
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> October	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> October	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> October	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury



Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> October	6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> October	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> October	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> October	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> October	9.30 am Sunday Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> October	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> October	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> October	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> October	6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton
Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> October	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> October	9.30 am Family Service, North Cheriton
Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> October	11.00 am Family Service, Maperton
Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> October	4.00 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 October 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)