

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 138

Sunday 19th December 2021

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

Welcome

Welcome to this edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. As we move through Advent we look this Sunday at Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Scripture Passages

Micah 5: 2-5a

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
 who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
 one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
 from ancient days.

³ Therefore he shall give them up until the time
 when she who is in labour has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
 to the people of Israel.

⁴ And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
 in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
 to the ends of the earth;

⁵ and he shall be the one of peace.

Luke 1: 39-55

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and exclaimed with a loud cry,

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

⁴³ And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to

me? ⁴⁴ For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my

womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

⁴⁶ And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

⁴⁸ for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Reflection

What about the little person? This might seem a relevant question to ask these days. In the times in which we live we seem to be ordered about or perhaps we might say advised so much that there seems very little room for people to make their own free choices. We can feel that it is the big people, whether that be government or other institutions, who own our lives.

And the result of this is often a feeling of anger and resentment on the part of those who perceive themselves to be a little person. In its turn this may fuel protest and be exploited by those who purport to be the voice of the little person.

Someone I knew expressed a grievance to his wife. And she said to him that will make you a very balanced person because with something else to feel aggrieved about you will now have a chip on both shoulders.

All of this is not very healthy. But is there a better way of acknowledging and accepting the reality that we are little people. For after all when we look at the vastness of the whole universe we are all of us, whatever our status or wealth, just little people.

This is both the last Sunday before Christmas and the last Sunday of Advent. And on this Sunday, we traditionally remember Mary, the mother of our Lord. Mary could indeed be called a little person. However she gives us a very different and wholly inspiring example of what it means to be a little person.

When we consider the prophecies about Jesus' birth perhaps it is not surprising that it is a little person like Mary, of no obvious worldly or social standing, who is chosen to be the mother of our Lord.

One of our well known carols is 'O little town of Bethlehem'. And Bethlehem is a little town as the prophet Micah underlines,

² But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

Bethlehem was not in worldly terms a significant place. However, God's kingdom will come about in a very different way from which we might expect. So for God, Bethlehem is of crucial importance. It is destined to be the birthplace of God's chosen ruler, the Messiah. The choice of a little, unimportant town underlines the truth that God's rule will take a very different form from that of earthly rulers who need to rely on status and coercive forms of power.

So the choice of Mary is entirely appropriate in the light of the choice of Bethlehem.

Our gospel reading begins with Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth. In this meeting the role of the little people, those who are powerless and insignificant in the world's sight, is also emphasised.

This happens through the focus on the unborn child, John the Baptist, who is still in his mother's womb. The unborn John the Baptist leaps in his mother Elizabeth's womb in recognition of the special child whom Mary is bearing. We are reminded of how we need to acknowledge and treasure the responses of those who seem to be the least important.

And so Elizabeth recognises Mary's new status and role in God's purposes. She exclaims, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?"

But how will this new found recognition and honour affect Mary? Will it go to her head? Clearly there were no Christmas cards in Mary's time but if there had been would she have chosen one of herself sitting imperiously in a regal pose? Or would she have chosen one which was entirely focussed on the good news of Jesus the coming King? I think the answer to this question is quite clear and we can find it out as we look at Mary's well known hymn of praise, the Magnificat.

It begins with Mary declaring "My soul magnifies the Lord". Right from the outset Mary is putting God in the centre stage of her life. This is the true key to humility. For humility is not about what we do or do not think about ourselves, it is not about either being puffed up with pride at our own importance or aggrieved and resentful because we think we are only a little person. No, humility means putting questions about ourselves aside entirely so that God can be magnified and take first place in our lives.

Mary goes on to celebrate the importance of joy and thanksgiving and the need to acknowledge God's help and salvation. Here again her humility is shown in her readiness to accept help from God. Sometimes our pride can block us from accepting and receiving help from others or from God. But not for Mary. Her spirit rejoices in God her Saviour.

And then Mary does indeed go on to acknowledge her own littleness. For God has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

And yet Mary does not find the clue to her identity in this. Her lowliness is straightforwardly acknowledged but it is not dwelt upon.

For immediately she returns to her central focus on God when she says "Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed".

Mary is blessed not because of her own great attributes but because she is someone who has received God's favour and in whom God is at work. It is the Mighty One has done great things for her and his name is holy.

Mary's hymn concludes with the same emphasis that has run right the way through it. She emphasises God's mercy and how this is received by those who fear God.

She celebrates God's strength which scatters the proud, brings down the powerful and yet lifts up lowly people like herself. For Mary greatness is not to be achieved through anger, resentment and protest at her insignificant status in the world's sight. No, rather, it will come entirely through God's actions and by God's strength. It is in this strength that she quietly trusts.

Mary offers us an example of humility. But what does humility really mean?

Many of us might think that humility involves running yourself down, belittling yourself and believing that you don't really matter.

But not for Mary. Literally, humility means being of the earth or as we might put it being grounded. So being grounded involves having a right perspective on life, seeing the greatness of God. And when like Mary we truly see the greatness of God then we are also able to see our own true importance and value.

So Mary's humility, her faith and trust in God is an example to others. She is indeed blessed by God and as we learn from her we too will find the way to God's blessing.

Tristram

Masks are back

Just a reminder to everyone that under the government's Plan B covid restrictions masks are once more mandatory in churches.

Points for Prayers

- Learning from Mary's example of humility
- The impact of the Omicron variant and our own need to 'budget' our risk
- Continued thanksgiving for the care, skill and courage of NHS workers and that they will not be overwhelmed by the demands on them in the winter period
- 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
- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton now reopened and for its first residents
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Hymn

A hymn which sets the words of the Magnificat to music is 'Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!'

Services for the Christmas period

Sunday 19 th December	9.30 am, Communion and Carols, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 19 th December	4.30 pm, Carol Service, Holton
Sunday 19 th December	6.00 pm, Camelot Carol Service, North Cadbury
Monday 20 th December	6.30 pm, Carol Service, Blackford
Wednesday 22 nd December	5.00 pm, Carol Service, Yarlington
Christmas Eve	11.00 am, Carol Service, Galhampton
Christmas Eve	4.00 pm, Children's Nativity Service, North Cadbury
Christmas Eve	11.30 pm, Midnight Communion, North Cadbury
Christmas Day	9.30 am Communion, Blackford
Christmas Day	9.30 am Communion, Yarlington
Christmas Day	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Christmas Day	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Christmas Day	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Christmas Day	11.00 am service, North Cheriton
Christmas Day	11.00 am service, Holton
Christmas Day	11.00 am service, Maperton
Boxing Day	11.00 am Communion, 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 December and January editions of Excalibur have now been published online at 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) or on 01749 850934. Rob will not be working from December 24th to January 5th.

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)