

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 154

Easter Sunday 17th April 2022

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

Welcome

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

Scripture Passages

Acts 10: 34-43

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ - he is Lord of all. ³⁷ That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

³⁹ "We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Luke 24: 1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body.

⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵ The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.”

⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Reflection

What happens when we experience an event which changes the course of our lives?

Such an event may be expected and joyful such as the birth of a child. Or it may be unexpected and cause great suffering. In the last two years we can think both of the pandemic and of the war in the Ukraine. Were we ready for either of those?

But joyful or sad, expected or unexpected, such events mark a watershed in our lives. There is before and after and life is never the same again.

And yet how do we process these kinds of events?

Even if what has happened is precisely what we have been expecting it is still never really possible to be prepared. So very often our first reactions contain an element both of shock and of confusion.

And as an attempt to maintain some form of order and control in our lives we may concentrate our efforts on determining precisely what has taken place in factual terms. What time of day was it? What day of the week? Who was there? And who was absent?

That is the beginning of the process of making sense of what has happened. And only when all of this is securely established do we begin to have the space and scope to ask ourselves what it all means.

And then there are the changes to our lives that this event brings in its wake. Even though what has happened is life changing such changes do not usually appear overnight. Rather they work themselves out over the course of many years.

So it is with the Resurrection which we celebrate on this Easter Sunday. We might think that this was surely not an unexpected event so far as the disciples were concerned. And it is true that in His lifetime Jesus had predicted His Resurrection to His disciples a number of times. And yet it seemed that these predictions had simply bounced off them and had not been remembered. The disciples would have no doubt believed in a general resurrection to take place at the end of time. But the resurrection of an individual human being taking place in the course of history? Well, however remarkable that person might have been, that was simply unheard of.

And so for this reason when the disciples listen to the women's account of the empty tomb it just seems like an idle tale and to start off they do not believe them.

At this point indeed all the facts have not yet been established. The women have come to the tomb carrying their spices to look after Jesus' dead body. This, after all, shows very well their expectations. Jesus has died and will continue to be dead. All they can do for Him is to look after the dead body.

And then the unexpected. There is no body. The women find the stone rolled away from the tomb but when they went in they did not find the body.

So it is this fact, that of the empty tomb which first needs to be established and verified. The other disciples simply do not believe the women's account of the empty tomb. They will not accept second hand accounts but need to check out the facts for themselves. So Peter runs to the tomb and looks in. Then he too sees just the linen grave clothes by themselves with no body inside. He accepts that the tomb is indeed empty and goes home amazed at what has happened.

So now he is sure that the tomb is empty because he has checked this out for himself. And yet what he has seen is not the whole picture. There is something which he has not seen. The empty tomb by itself proves nothing. The body is not there. But where is it? It might have been stolen or simply taken to another place.

The Resurrection appearances are still to follow. These will show not simply that the tomb is empty but that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. In the next chapter of Luke's gospel Resurrection appearances occur first of all to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and then to the disciples as a whole group on the occasion when Jesus eats a piece of broiled fish to show that He is not just a ghost.

But that is still to come. For the time being, the disciples, both women and men, have to take Jesus' resurrection on trust even if they can verify and make sense of the empty tomb. For the angels have told the women that Jesus is not in the tomb but that He is risen. And they remind them of

Jesus' words that after He has been crucified He will rise again on the third day.

So the knowledge of what has happened is not pieced together all at once. It is built up in stages. Sometimes we too need to digest and make sense of life changing events bit by bit, stage by stage.

So what happened? That's the most immediate task for the disciples to establish as they work through their initial shock and confusion.

But knowing what happened is, of course, only part of what we need to do as we process and make sense of an event that has changed and will continue to change our lives. What happened, yes. But more importantly why did it happen? We can start focussing on that question when we begin to be sure of what has happened.

In our passage from Acts we learn in very concise and compelling terms why Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection happened and what it means for our lives. This passage relates to an incident in the early church where Peter is explaining the gospel in the home of a Roman centurion called Cornelius. This man is a Gentile and he has called together his Gentile friends and family in order to hear what Peter has to say. It is a crucial moment in the missionary activity of the early church.

Peter speaks to them about Jesus and says that 'All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.' This then is the purpose and meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection. It is so that we might receive the forgiveness of our sins and enjoy a renewed and restored relationship with God.

What an immense difference to our lives it makes to know that our sins have been forgiven. We can spend hours and days going over the events of our past wishing that we could have done things differently. And yet the past

cannot be changed in this way, we cannot change what has happened. And yet when we know that our sins have been forgiven it does change the way we look at the past. We come to a place of peace and acceptance where we are no longer crippled by our memories but able to move on into the future with confidence.

The life changing event takes place. It may be expected or unexpected, sad or joyful. But either way it changes our lives for ever.

And we cannot process this all at once. We need time and space. At first our questions may focus on what has happened.

If we are exploring the Christian faith we need to make sense of the Resurrection. Did it happen? Is it true? Or is it just a wonderful fairy story? We need to take time and trouble as we ask these questions. And books and other people can help us with this.

But at a certain point we need to move on from this. Perhaps we have reached a reasonable degree of certainty over what happened rather like the first disciples. But there is a deeper question to be asked. Why did it happen? We move on to reflect on the forgiveness of sins and what this might mean for us. And the more we become familiar with what the Bible has to say about this the deeper this process of reflection and understanding will become.

And this leads to a further question perhaps an even more profound one. And that is what difference does it make to our lives? The lives of the first Christian disciples were turned upside down by the discovery of the empty tomb and the resurrection appearances of the risen Lord Jesus. From a group of frightened and sceptical people meeting behind locked doors they were transformed with extraordinary boldness into people who were willing to risk everything they had, even life itself, for the sake of proclaiming the Christian gospel.

For us the changes in our lives which belief in the Resurrection will make are ones that we are likely to notice happening by degrees and over time. This happens as we allow the Holy Spirit to work at a deeper and deeper level in our lives. So we or others may notice us becoming more loving, peaceful, joyful, kind and patient people, more concerned with other people and with a greater sense of purpose in our lives.

And indeed we may have been trusting in Christ and in the Resurrection and following Christ for many years. There may have been many deep changes that have already taken place.

And yet there is always something more for God to do in our lives. Perhaps God is challenging us to take a particular step of faith, one that we do not feel entirely comfortable with but which we know is right.

As we remember the first disciples of Jesus this morning on their discovery of the empty tomb and as we find them beginning to make sense of this, we find that we are also looking at ourselves. Where are we on this journey? Seeking to understand and gain assurance of what has happened at a factual level? Reflecting on what it all means? Taking it on board and allowing God to make deep and long lasting changes in our lives? Being challenged to take a specific next step of faith?

Wherever we are we need to remember and trust the words of the angels to the women at the tomb concerning Jesus, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.'

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Making sense of the Resurrection and the difference which it makes to our lives

- Our Easter services
- Peace and justice to prevail in the conflict between Russia and the Ukraine and for humanitarian efforts to help all those harmed by the conflict
- Continuing prevalence of covid cases and continued thanksgiving for the care, skill and courage of all healthcare workers
- 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
- For schoolchildren, teachers and parents during the school holiday period
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Hymn

A traditional Easter hymn is 'Thine be the glory.'

Services for Easter and next week

Easter Sunday 17 th April	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Easter Sunday 17 th April	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Easter Sunday 17 th April	9.30 am Communion, Blackford
Easter Sunday 17 th April	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury

Easter Sunday 17 th April	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Easter Sunday 17 th April	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Easter Sunday 17 th April	11.00 am Communion (extended, North Cheriton)
Easter Sunday 17 th April	6.30 pm Evensong (with Comm), Yarlington
Sunday 24 th April	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 24 th April	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 24 th April	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 24 th April	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 24 th April	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 24 th April	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 24 th April	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 24 th April	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. The April edition of Excalibur has now been published online at 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) 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)