

# CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 158

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022

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

## Welcome

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

## Scripture Passages

*Acts 11: 1-18*

Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. <sup>2</sup> So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, <sup>3</sup> saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?"

<sup>4</sup> Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, <sup>5</sup> "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. <sup>6</sup> As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. <sup>7</sup> I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.'

<sup>8</sup> "But I replied, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'

<sup>9</sup> "But a second time the voice answered from heaven, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' <sup>10</sup> This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven.

<sup>11</sup> At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. <sup>12</sup> The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied

me, and we entered the man's house. <sup>13</sup> He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; <sup>14</sup> he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.'

<sup>15</sup> "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. <sup>16</sup> And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>17</sup> If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?"

<sup>18</sup> When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

### *John 13: 31-35*

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. <sup>32</sup> If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.

<sup>33</sup> "Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'

<sup>34</sup> "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

## **Reflection**

*'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'*

Jesus spoke these words to His disciples at the last Supper. Jesus gives a new commandment to His disciples.

But when we say something is new what do we really mean?

We could mean, of course, that it is entirely new and represents a complete break with the past. So in a revolution the new replaces the old. A republic replaces a monarchy. A dictatorship is overthrown and replaced by a democratic system of government.

On the other hand, the new may simply be an extension and development of the old. When I looked at the London Underground map for the new line, the Elizabeth line, which is to be launched in time for the Platinum Jubilee celebrations I have to say that though the name is indeed new the line looked suspiciously like existing lines with extensions and maybe new junctions added on. Perhaps I have just not looked carefully enough.

And then there are those projects where an old building continues in use but as an organisation grows there is a need for a new building nearby. And very often we find that this new building consciously echoes the style of the old.

So when Jesus speaks about a new commandment in what sense does He mean that it is new?

Not, I think, in the sense of being completely new and having no connection with what has gone before. For at the heart of Jesus' commandment is the need to love one another. And there is plenty about this in the Old Testament. At the beginning of the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus agrees with the lawyer to whom He speaks that we need to love God wholeheartedly and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Those commandments are to be found in the Old Testament books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

So Jesus's new commandment is one which is based on but extends and develops existing commandments of God.

But what is the aspect of this commandment which is indeed new? Surely it is that in loving one another we need to love in the same way that Jesus has loved us. So often in life we come to a point where we feel we cannot go on, where our reserves of love and strength are simply exhausted. It seems just impossible to love some person or group of people or perhaps, as happens with 'compassion fatigue', we just do not have the energy to do this in a realistic way.

It is in these circumstances that we need to call upon Jesus to give us His strength and ability to love. Jesus, after all, loved those who hated Him. He died for His enemies on the Cross in order to be able to bring them to a living knowledge of God. And elsewhere in the words spoken at the Last Supper Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Spirit and it is through this gift that we are able to love others as Jesus has loved us.

This seems particularly relevant when we encounter those who are different to us and whose ways and customs may be hard for us to understand.

This is the missionary context of our reading from Acts. Peter has gone to the house of a Gentile, a Roman centurion named Cornelius. He has accepted the hospitality offered by Cornelius and has preached the good news of repentance and the forgiveness of sins which Jesus offers along with the gift of the Holy Spirit. As he has preached so the Holy Spirit has fallen spontaneously and powerfully upon this group of Gentiles.

We might wonder what is controversial about all of us. Surely this would be a matter of rejoicing for all concerned. Could anyone object?

Well, as is often the case in these circumstances the answer is yes. For the reality of the disciples' love for others was tested as they encountered people who came from a different cultural and religious background.

So instead of excitement and support, Peter found that his actions attracted criticism. The centre of this criticism was the fact that Peter had chosen to eat with Gentiles, uncircumcised people. Traditionally, there was for Jews a very clear distinction to be made between themselves and Gentiles and one of the principal ways to mark this distinction was to refuse to eat with those who had different ideas as to which foods might be considered to be clean or unclean in God's sight.

But in doing so they had, in the words of the hymn, made God's love too narrow through false limits of their own. Their criticism represented a failure of love and understanding and also a lack of understanding of how the Holy Spirit works in making the love of Jesus real to other people.

So the point was not about whether Peter was eating with the wrong sort of people. Rather it was about what the Holy Spirit was saying and doing. First of all, the Holy Spirit in a vision and through a voice told Peter that the question of what was or was not clean and what could or could not be eaten was one for God to decide and not him.

And by radically redrawing the map of what is clean and unclean the Holy Spirit enabled the love of Jesus' disciples to be expressed more radically and fully. The old distinctions and dividing lines were no longer valid. And so the disciples found that in these circumstances Jesus' commandment to love one another as He has loved us is indeed both new and radical.

So when it is that we find that we need to call on Jesus' resources of love? When do we find that our own natural resources of love have run out and that we need to experience the 'newness' of Jesus commandment to love one another?

Having spoken about diversity and the challenges of loving those who are different to ourselves perhaps our immediate admission might be that we can find some of our greatest challenges to love in those who are closest to us, perhaps even those who are members of our immediate family. For all families seem to contain their own idiosyncrasies which can make the path of love a complex one.

But having said that, yes, we do need to take on board the challenge of this passage in Acts where the disciples needed to find God's way forward when relating to those of a very different cultural background to themselves. Perhaps the first step in addressing this is to recognise the place in our lives played by prejudice and our own assumptions when we meet such people.

And this is the first step but how do we move on from there? One way may be to grow in our capacity to listen to other people. For as we listen we learn about other people and we find that we need to adjust many of the assumptions we have brought to our encounter.

And yet we need more than this. The enormous transformation of attitude that brought about the full inclusion of the Gentiles into the early church was not one which could be brought about by any human system of learning and education however far reaching and deep this might be. Rather it needed the work of the Holy Spirit. It was a vision which came to Peter which resulted in his being able to eat with these Gentile converts. And it was the recognition of the Holy Spirit's work which changed his opponents' attitude from criticism to acceptance. And it is the Holy Spirit which we need if we are indeed to fulfil Jesus' new commandment of love.

*Tristram*

## **Anna's new curacy**

The details of Anna's new curacy have now been confirmed. She will serve the rest of her curacy in the Benefice of Budock at the church of St Budock

in the Diocese of Truro. The benefice incorporates Budock Water as well as some of Falmouth. Anna will be licensed on 17<sup>th</sup> May.

## **New Bishop of Bath and Wells**

It has been announced that our new Bishop of Bath and Wells will be the Rt Revd Michael Beasley. He is currently the Bishop of Hertford, a role which he has held since 2015. Prior to taking a fulltime role with the church, Bishop Michael was an epidemiologist, a background he was called on to use during the pandemic as a member of the Church of England's Covid task force.

Bishop Michael is already familiar with Somerset. His wife Lizzie is from a farming family from Somerset and prior to Bishop Michael being interviewed for the role of Bishop of Bath and Wells, they both undertook a 60 mile walk around the county.

Further details about Bishop Michael can be found on the Diocesan website, <https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/news/new-bishop-of-bath-and-wells-announced.php/>

## **Points for Prayers**

- Fulfilling Jesus' new commandment of love through the Holy Spirit
- 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
- Preparations for the Platinum Jubilee and special services to be held
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- For our new Bishop, Rt Revd Michael Beasley
- Anna's new curacy in Budock, Diocese of Truro

- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton now reopened and for its first residents
- For North Cadbury church school and our other local schools as they continue their school terms
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

## Hymn

A hymn which is a prayer for the Holy Spirit to come to us is ‘Come down O love divine.’

## Services for this week and next

Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> May	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> May	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> May	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> May	6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May	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 May edition of Excalibur has now been published 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)**