

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 160**

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

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

## **Welcome**

Welcome to this Sunday’s edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. This is the Sunday after we celebrate Jesus’s Ascension. Ron reflects on this below.

Please also see in this edition notice and details of a forthcoming Quiet Day on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July.

## **Scripture Passages**

*Acts 1: 1-11*

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning <sup>2</sup> until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. <sup>3</sup> After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup> While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. “This,” he said, “is what you have heard from me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

<sup>6</sup> So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?”

<sup>7</sup> He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy

Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

<sup>9</sup> When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

<sup>10</sup> While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. <sup>11</sup> They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

## Reflection

Ascension Day used to be more of a festival than it now is. There was a service on Thursday in Bruton church for the whole deanery, because we know that individual churches would struggle to find a congregation on a Thursday. But when I was at junior school, and it wasn't a church school, we had the morning off so we could go to church if we wanted to. And on holiday in France in the nineties, we found it hard to find anywhere open on Ascension Day to sell us some food. But Ascension is the culmination of Jesus' story, so we're celebrating it today.

Children have a way of taking things literally. If you tell them you'll do something in a minute, *they will time you*. So a child asked if God had pins and needles. “Why?” asked Mum. “Because in church the Vicar said Jesus is always sitting on God's right hand.”

The image we're trying to conjure up is of a king's throne room. Beside the throne for the king himself might be other seats, for the great counsellors and advisors, or for people the king might want to honour. And the place of honour, in the throne room, or at a feast, was on the king's right hand. In ancient Egypt, the Pharaoh's chief of staff, or vizier, was known as the Fan Bearer at the King's Right Hand. I know I'm labouring the point a bit, but we know what we mean by saying someone is our right-hand man.

Symbolically, we're saying Jesus is raised to the position of honour - he is God's right-hand man.

We've always used the language of high and low, high-class people and the lower classes, and it's been going on thousands of years - gods have always been described as being "high" and their dwelling places have always been on mountains, if not actually in the sky itself. And when the time came for Jesus to physically leave the earth, to be with his Father, God staged it so his followers would understand that this was it - this was Jesus really moving on. A cloud was a symbol of God's presence in the Old Testament. Moses disappeared into a cloud when he met God on Mount Sinai, and a cloud settled over the tabernacle as a sign of God's presence there. So to give his disciples a grasp of the situation, Jesus disappeared into a cloud.

He didn't really have to go "up" to get there, but for people like us, the symbol of him being raised up works pretty well.

Why this matters to us, is that having friends in high places has always been seen as a good thing. A humble servant looking for some honour or recognition from the king, or even the chance to plead a just cause, would certainly think it a good thing to have a friend in court.

Nicky Gumbel, of Alpha Course fame, tells the story of an American civil war veteran begging outside the White House. A small boy asked him what was the problem. He said nobody was listening to the veterans. They weren't getting the help they needed, or even the recognition that they needed any help. The little boy said, "Come with me," and the soldier followed him through the gates, past the sentries, into the house, past more sentries, right up to the Oval Office itself. There was President Lincoln. The president asked, "What is it, Bradley?" and the boy said, "Father, this man would like you to listen to him."

Now we know that God is always more ready to listen than we are to pray, and we don't have to twist God's arm to make him hear our prayers, and give us what he knows we need. But it ought to give us confidence to know that Jesus is at his Father's right hand, and that when we pray, our prayers do go to the highest authority.

A lady once confided in me that she had difficulty saying the Lord's Prayer. Her own father had been a drunken bully, and she had a problem with God's Fatherhood as a result. But Jesus was fine. A person she could relate to. And that was really what the whole business of God becoming human in Jesus was all about. The sheer enormousness of God is really beyond our imagining. Whatever we try to say about God is bound to be inadequate to the point of being crass. But Jesus? We can understand him. He's one of us. He understands what it's like to be us, and he can translate our individual needs and wishes right to God the Father.

Another thing about the Ascension. It means there is nobody more important than Jesus. We say this, but we don't often act as though we believe it. We pay more attention to what others say than we do to the words of Jesus. We'll put more effort into the programme of some politician than we do for Jesus' programme for the world. God has raised Jesus to the position of highest authority in the universe, and even the greatest human beings on earth, even the angels, don't come up to his knee-high.

And again, the Ascension means that our human nature is raised to glory. We usually behave as though human beings are the most important creatures in the universe. Never mind the orang-utans. We cut down their forests because we need wood, or palm oil, or something. No species has the capacity to screw up the earth like *homo sapiens* has. No other creature has disobeyed the creator like we have. We're a disaster on two legs.

Yet Jesus was incarnate in a human body. God the Son became a human being, and remains a human being, even exalted into heaven. So human

nature, with all its failings, was raised to God's right hand on high. Weak, fallible, stupid and wicked human beings like me are capable of occupying the spiritual realm. Jesus became what we are, so we could become what he is. We were made in the image of God, but because of our sin, that image became blurred out of all recognition. In Jesus, the image is made clear and sharp again - the image of God stamped clearly on human nature again. He has gone before us as the pioneer and representative of the human race, to sit on the throne beside God. Jesus has shown what we could become. If we worship him, and follow him, he'll see us fit to live in the presence of God ourselves, in eternity.

*Ron*

## **Points for Prayers**

- Paying more attention to the words of Jesus than to what others say
- 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
- All those affected by the cost of living crisis
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- For our new Bishop, Rt Revd Michael Beasley
- 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 speaks of the importance to be given in our lives to Jesus is 'Crown him with many crowns'.

## Services for this week and next

Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> May	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> May	9.30 am Family Service, North Cheriton
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> May	11.00 am Morning Service, Maperton
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> May	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Bratton Seymour
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> May	6.30 pm Evensong, Galhampton
Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup> June	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Platinum Jubilee Service, North Cheriton
Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup> June	11.00 am Platinum Jubilee Service, North Cadbury

## Quiet Day

There will be a Quiet Day on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July from 10.00am to 4.00pm at Woolston Manor Farmhouse Barn, Woolston, North Cadbury, BA22 7BL (Nigel and Ursula's barn). The purpose of this day is to provide some time and space for reflection and prayer concerning the future of the Camelot benefice. Drinks will be provided, but bring a sandwich, a notebook a pen and a Bible. It will be led by Jan-Rebecca Brown, a licensed lay Minister in Salisbury Diocese.

## **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 June 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)