

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 186**

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

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

## **Welcome**

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

## **Scripture Passages**

*Luke 1: 26-38, the Annunciation*

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.”

<sup>29</sup> But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. <sup>31</sup> And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup> He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

<sup>34</sup> Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

<sup>35</sup> The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup> And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God.”

<sup>38</sup> Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

*Luke 1: 46-56, the Magnificat*

And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

<sup>48</sup> for he has looked with favour

on the lowliness of his servant.

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

<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup> His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm;

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

<sup>52</sup> He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

<sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

<sup>55</sup> according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

<sup>56</sup> And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

## **Reflection**

We were thinking last week about John the Baptist and about what he might have expected Jesus the Messiah to be like.

This Sunday in Advent we traditionally remember Mary, the mother of our Lord. The first reading recounts how angel Gabriel announced to Mary that

she was to be the mother of Christ. A moment before the angel Gabriel came to her I wonder what her expectations of life might have been?

Mary was a young woman who was engaged to be married. So it would be fair to assume that she would have had all the normal expectations of someone in those circumstances. Probably she hoped for a secure home and the gift of children who would, over time, make their own way in life and bring her pride and joy. These were not unreasonable expectations nor was she asking for the moon.

And indeed because Mary's social status was a humble one, no doubt she had grown up knowing that it was no use asking for the moon. Her expectations of life were in other words very limited. There was no reason to expect that she was destined to live a life that would be of any lasting or public significance. In a generation or so after her death she would no longer be remembered except perhaps as a name on a family tree.

And then there comes the moment of the visitation by the angel Gabriel. A moment which is to change her life for ever.

The Biblical account of this moment is stark and spare and yet resonant with spiritual significance. The angel greets her with the profound, simple and life giving words. 'The Lord is with you.' Not unnaturally, Mary does not know what to make of the angel's sudden appearance or what this greeting might mean. And again Gabriel's response is a simple and powerful one which addresses her fear and uncertainty, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.'

Often in art, this has been depicted as a moment of profound stillness and peace. Certainly this is how the poet Edwin Muir imagines it in his poem, 'The Angel and the Girl are Met,

'Outside the window footsteps fall  
Into the ordinary day...

But through the endless afternoon  
These neither speak nor movement make.  
But stare into their deepening trance  
As if their grace would never break.'

But this moment and the angelic prophecy which follows about our Saviour's birth completely overthrows Mary's expectations of life, at least as far as we can assume these to have been.

Yes, the promise of a child will be fulfilled. But this is not any child but a unique one with a unique destiny. A child of whose kingdom there will be no end.

And that might sound very grand and important but bound up with this promise is the destiny and necessity of a Saviour who dies for our sins. Which mother would choose for her son to be cruelly executed at the age of thirty three? This was not a comfortable destiny nor the promise of a normal family life.

And we get just hints from the gospel accounts that Jesus' destiny was not one which Mary as his mother always found easy to accept. Perhaps the most overt of these occasions comes in Mark's gospel when Mary and the rest of the family come to restrain Him from continuing His ministry. No doubt they knew very well the dangers that Jesus was running and what was probably in store for Him and they wanted to save Him from that. And yet Jesus responds with the uncompromising words that those who obey God are His mother, brothers and sisters. Again, not easy words for them to hear.

And yet on the other hand there was the promise of the kingdom. A kingdom that is not of this world but one which will last for ever. No longer could Mary be tempted to think that her life would be of little importance

and quickly and quietly forgotten. No, what was promised to her was a position of unique and lasting honour, to be the mother of the Son of God. So contrary to any expectations she might have had, Mary's life was to be one of lasting and eternal significance, to be remembered and celebrated publicly in all generations to come.

It needs to be a special kind of person who is willing to accept this level of change and disruption to their expectations of life. And Mary was that special kind of person.

For even though it was not always easy for her and even though there were the inevitable moments of hesitation, questioning and fear, nevertheless Mary's attitude at heart was one of openness and acceptance. She was willing to accept change and disruption if that is what God required of her. She sums this up in her beautiful and simple words in response to the angel Gabriel, 'Let it be with me according to your word.'

Mary was not someone who insisted on her dreams being fulfilled in the way she expected them to be. She was prepared to accept suffering if that was God's destiny for her. And she was also prepared to accept that the destiny of her son, Jesus, was to be a great one and that she herself would also share in God's great purposes.

Sometimes, those whose horizons in life are very limited can find it difficult to accept that it could ever be otherwise. It can be tempting to believe that opportunities in life will always come to other people and never to oneself. And so self-pity and even resentment can themselves become barriers to any possibility of our lives being used in a wider or deeper way.

How different Mary was. Even though she accepted her lowly status in life her horizons were not bound by this. Rather because of the depth and openness of her faith, her horizons were limitless ones which were given meaning and definition by God's purposes.

She expresses this in her famous song, known as the Magnificat. It is God and God's actions that are right at the heart of this song which begins with the words 'My soul magnifies the Lord'. It is God who has looked with favour on His servant's lowliness. It is God who has done great things for her.

In all of this Mary shows herself willing to accept God's estimation of herself. And as a result she can accept that her name too will be honoured and celebrated, that all generations will call her blessed. But she knows that the significance of her own life is simply a reflection of the infinitely greater power of God's eternal and lasting glory.

There is so much to learn from Mary. But what of ourselves?

Are we willing to accept disruption and change if this is what God chooses to bring to us? Are we willing to do this even if this involves some unexpected form of suffering?

And are we hampered by the belief, rightly or wrongly, that life has not given us what we expected? Do we sometimes cling on to a view of ourselves as 'poor me' and believe that our lives could never truly matter?

For it is true that none of us may be remembered in the same way as Mary is by future generations. Nevertheless, by sharing in her heart attitude of acceptance and openness towards God our lives too can be ones of lasting significance which are greatly used by God.

*Tristram*

## **Points for Prayers**

- Like Mary, being open to and willing to accept God's purposes for our lives even when these involve change and disruption

- All those facing hardship this winter, needing to choose between food and heating
- Those seeking to help those facing hardship through projects such as the Lord's Larder and other foodbanks, community fridges and the provision of warm spaces
- Cold weather, its dangers and disruptions
- Resolution to various industrial disputes
- Conflict between Russia and the Ukraine
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- For the Deanery in considering Pastoral Reorganisation
- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton and its residents as they celebrate Christmas
- For teachers, children and parents of North Cadbury church school in the Christmas holiday period

## **Carol**

A modern hymn which is based on the Magnificat is 'Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord.'

## **Carol and Christmas Services**

Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> December	4.30 pm Carol and Crib Service, Holton
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> December	6.00 pm Carol Service, Galhampton
Monday 19 <sup>th</sup> December	6.30 pm Carol Service, Blackford
Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup> December	6.00 pm Carol Service, Compton Pauncefoot
Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup> December	6.00 pm Carol Service, Yarlinton
Saturday 24 <sup>th</sup> December	4.00 pm Christmas Tree Service,

	North Cadbury
Saturday 24 <sup>th</sup> December	5.30 pm Carol Service, North Cheriton
Saturday 24 <sup>th</sup> December	11.30 pm Midnight Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> December	9.30 am Christmas Communion, Yarlinton
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> December	9.30 am Christmas Communion, Blackford
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> December	9.30 am Christmas Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> December	9.30 am Carols and Readings, South Cadbury
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> December	11.00 am Christmas Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> December	11.00 am Christmas Communion, Holton
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> December	11.00 am Carols and Readings, North Cheriton
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> December	11.00 am Carols and Readings, Maperton

## **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](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)