

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 189**

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

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

## **Welcome**

This Sunday we recall the occasion of Jesus’ baptism.

## **Scripture Passages**

*Isaiah 42: 1-9*

Here is my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my spirit upon him;  
he will bring forth justice to the nations.

<sup>2</sup> He will not cry or lift up his voice,  
or make it heard in the street;

<sup>3</sup> a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;  
he will faithfully bring forth justice.

<sup>4</sup> He will not grow faint or be crushed  
until he has established justice in the earth;  
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

<sup>5</sup> Thus says God, the LORD,  
who created the heavens and stretched them out,  
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,  
who gives breath to the people upon it  
and spirit to those who walk in it:

<sup>6</sup> I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness,  
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;

I have given you as a covenant to the people,  
a light to the nations,  
<sup>7</sup> to open the eyes that are blind,  
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
from the prison those who sit in darkness.  
<sup>8</sup> I am the LORD, that is my name;  
my glory I give to no other,  
nor my praise to idols.  
<sup>9</sup> See, the former things have come to pass,  
and new things I now declare;  
before they spring forth,  
I tell you of them.

### *Matthew 3: 13-17*

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.  
<sup>14</sup> John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" <sup>15</sup> But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness." Then he consented.  
  
<sup>16</sup> And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

## **Reflection**

The famous eighteenth century evangelist and founder of Methodism John Wesley had a moment of spiritual awakening which changed the whole course of his life. Reflecting on this, he tells us that it was not as if he had no faith before this happened. Rather it was that the quality of his faith had radically changed. Wesley says that his faith had changed from that of a servant to that of a son.

The theme for this week is the baptism of Jesus and the readings concern themselves with these two types of relationship with God, servant and son (or daughter). The readings suggest that we need to be both a child and a servant of God if our faith is to be a healthy one. But how is this so and how do these two aspects of our faith fit together?

The baptism of Jesus encourages us, first of all, to see Jesus as God's Son. For as He is baptised and comes out of the water suddenly the heavens open and the Spirit of God comes down like a dove and rests upon Him.

In response to Jesus' baptism, God unequivocally affirms His love for Jesus and His identity as God's Son. A voice from heaven comes and says "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

This affirmation is based not on anything Jesus has done, for His public ministry has yet to begin. Rather, God's pleasure in and love for Jesus is purely based on who He is, God's Son. This is an unconditional form of love and acceptance not one which has to be earned through good behaviour and hard work.

These words are echoed in our passage from Isaiah.

Isaiah speaks of a servant. Although this servant can be interpreted on a number of different levels, Christians commonly see the servant as looking forward to Jesus and being fulfilled in Christ. So, the servant, just like Jesus, is the chosen one of God and the one in whom God delights.

And yet the title of servant also suggests that there is work for the servant to do. What is this work and how can we see Jesus as fulfilling this ministry?

First of all the servant's ministry is, just like the ministry of Jesus, empowered by God's Spirit. At the heart of it there is a concern for the establishment of justice. In the context of the Bible as a whole we can see

this as having a special emphasis on protecting the interests of the needy and vulnerable, those who like widows and orphans have no-one else to protect them.

And again, just as we find in Jesus' ministry and as this is continued by the early church, the ministry of the servant is meant to be universal and all-embracing in its extent. It is not confined by narrow national or religious boundaries. It is a ministry to the nations, Gentles as well as Jews.

The servant's ministry, again like that of Jesus, is one of tenderness and gentleness. The servant will not break a bruised reed or lift up his voice. And yet for all that it is as strong as well as a gentle ministry. For the concern to establish justice remains central to all that the servant does. And so, the servant will remain patient and persistent, 'He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth'.

The servant's ministry is an outward looking one, he is called to be a light to the nations (the Gentiles). And once again we can see this ministry clearly fulfilled in Christ who tells us that He is the light of the world.

And perhaps even clearer are the words that the servant is to open the eyes of the blind and to release the prisoners from their captivity. At the very outset of His ministry, at the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth, Jesus read out very similar words this time from Isaiah chapter 61 and said that they had been fulfilled in Him. They were like a signature tune of His ministry. And His subsequent ministry was to be rich in healings. These took place on both a physical and a spiritual level and involved release from both physical and spiritual blindness and the breaking of spiritual captivity and chains.

So Jesus is both a Son and a servant. And indeed, our relationship with God also needs to be one that is both childlike and serving. God calls us to a relationship of love with Him in which we, through being adopted as His

children, can like Jesus call Him our dear Father. And yet we are also called to a lifetime and lifestyle of active service for God.

God calls Jesus and us both to be someone and to do something. Indeed, the one flows out of the other. For how can we call ourselves a Christian without there being some evidence of this in our lives and in what we do?

The question, however, is which comes first. Being or doing?

Surely the message which we receive from Jesus' baptism is that it is our relationship of unconditional love with God which needs to come first. For Jesus is affirmed as God's beloved Son before He has ever done anything in His public ministry. And the immensely fruitful public ministry which was to follow all had its secure foundation in His Father's unconditional love.

So it is with us. It is only when we are secure in God's love that fruitful ministry will follow. Our identity as children of God is the hidden source from which all our outward ministry flows.

Another famous evangelist, this time from the twentieth century, David Watson was nearing death. His ministry had been an extraordinarily effective one. And yet he recounts how God showed him that all this ministry mattered nothing in comparison to the relationship of love that God wanted to build with him. All God wanted was David's heart.

And that is a message which all of us would do well to remember as we continue our Christian lives and in whatever sphere of Christian service we find ourselves drawn into. It may be as a churchwarden or a musician or as a member of a prayer group.

And yet for all of us it is so easy to become so caught up in what we are doing for God that we forget that in the end all God wants is for us to be able to call him our Father and to receive His words that we are loved by

Him. And if we do forget this truth then our service can become a resentful and even possessive one where we start talking and thinking about ‘my ministry’ or ‘my church’. That is often where problems in our Christian lives begin.

“This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” Let us receive these words, spoken to Jesus on the occasion of His baptism, as if God was also speaking them to us. How would that change our lives?

*Tristram*

## **Points for Prayers**

- Receiving God’s unconditional love as a foundation for a fruitful ministry
- 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
- Resolution to various industrial disputes, especially those involving the NHS
- Conflict between Russia and the Ukraine and those who are refugees from this conflict
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton and its residents
- For teachers, children and parents of North Cadbury church school on the return to school

## Hymn

We are now in the church season of Epiphany. One uplifting hymn sung in this season is 'Brightest and best are the sons of the morning'.

## Services for this week and next

Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> January	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> January	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> January	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> January	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> January	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> January	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> January	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> January	4.00 pm Evensong, Yarlinton

## 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)