

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 193

Sunday 5th February 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday’s Cutting Edge Camelot.

Scripture Passages

Luke 2: 22-40

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), ²⁴ and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.

²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.”

³³ And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed - and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹ When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

Reflection

I had to get passport photographs last month. My passport runs out in September and I want to go away in May with my family, so I got new photos done and they make me look about ninety. Is this a true likeness of Ron Wood? Unfortunately, yes. But it's worth it. Going on holiday is a sign that things are getting back to normal. I haven't had a holiday since 2019 - before Covid. Other things are getting back to normal, too. Remember getting shouted at in Morrisons because you were less than 2 metres away from someone? Remember Zoom meetings, and services filmed and streamed? We're getting back together properly now, although I wonder whether we'll ever get back to sharing a common cup at Communion.

Today's story is an interesting one. It isn't full of angel choirs and miraculous stars like the last part of the story was. Jesus' birth was surrounded by the marvellous. And it isn't full of miracles like the next part will be - and of course, there will be the resurrection, which turns nature on

its head. This is about a family trying to get back into the swing of everyday life after an upheaval. The Roman census, and the birth of a baby. Apart from one other significant event when he was twelve, it's the last thing we hear of Jesus as a child - in fact it's the last thing we hear of him for about thirty years. And in the meantime, things get back to normal. Or nearly normal, anyway.

Mary and Joseph do the legal Jewish thing, which is they have their son circumcised at eight days old, and then they set off for the Temple in Jerusalem to do the ritual every good Jew would do. This bit wasn't compulsory, but it was the custom to offer a sacrifice to the Lord for their firstborn. Every firstborn child belonged to God, and the parents would buy him back with a little sacrifice - a pair of pigeons, unless you were really well off and wanted to buy a whole lamb. Mary and Joseph weren't that rich, so they settled for the two pigeons.

This was the pattern of everyday life, normal Jewish worship. But then they're approached by Simeon. We know nothing about him except he lived in Jerusalem, and believed God had told him he wouldn't die before he'd seen the Messiah. South Cadbury church has a little window with his picture, looking even older than my passport photo. He might not have been very old, really - *let your servant depart in peace* could mean *let me get on with my life instead of hanging around the Temple all the time*. But it's easy to think of this devoted man as being, well, a bit odd. He takes the child - a bit nerve-racking for new parents, that - and praises God for letting him see his salvation, although not without offering some disturbing words, too.

Simeon had certainly read the scriptures, and he knew that when God came to his Temple, it was likely to be pretty scary. God came to the tabernacle in the desert with smoke and fire. Isaiah described seeing God in the Temple, and the whole place shook. But somehow, when he saw an ordinary looking woman carrying an ordinary looking baby come into the Temple, he knew that this was what he'd been waiting to see. The Holy Spirit gave him the

insight that this time, it wasn't earthquake or fire, or a pillar of smoke, it wasn't extraordinary, it was just a baby. In his mother's arms.

Be alert. God almost certainly won't part the clouds and give you a wave. But you'll meet him if you look for him in the ordinary and the everyday. Jesus meets us everyday in everyone we meet. I pray that I'll recognise him - anyone in need is Jesus, giving us the opportunity to serve him by serving them. And maybe, just maybe, other people will see Jesus in us - they might twig that whatever we have done for them is a gift from God. St Paul says that one of the gifts the Holy Spirit might give us is the gift of knowledge. Simeon was full of the Holy Spirit, so when he saw Mary with the baby Jesus, he *knew*.

Back in the Temple, as this is happening, as Simeon is meeting God in a baby, Anna the prophet comes and begins to tell all those around them that this baby is the one they've been waiting for - the redemption of Israel. We're very polite about Anna, and of course, hindsight proved her right, but this is a woman who had lived in the Temple for what could have been sixty years, doing nothing but praying and fasting. Anna is eccentric, putting it mildly.

It's easy to imagine that Mary and Joseph might have been a bit embarrassed by this interruption to their quiet ceremony. But it's in this interruption by two out-of-the-ordinary people that God speaks, and this human baby is once more named as the saviour of the world. Food for thought as Mary and Joseph return to their temporary home in Bethlehem, and begin the business of raising their child. And even then, it doesn't work. Because at the time this story happens, the Magi haven't been - it's convenience that we put them in the Christmas crib. Matthew tells us they came to *the house* - and then the family is on the move again, not North, back to Nazareth, but south, to Egypt, where they will live forgotten for a couple of years.

For most of us, it's not the drama of the angels and shepherds that best reflects our experience of the Christian life, but the more mundane interruption of the presentation of Jesus in the Temple as Mary and Joseph get on with the business of life and worship. The Spirit of God often moves in the interruptions and disturbances that take place as we try to just get on with things. The thing is, do we see him? Just like Covid, interruptions to normal life can be inconvenient, dangerous and frustrating. We do our best to avoid them most of the time. But they can be liberating, joyful, and the key to opening up new ways of being God's people. The interruption to everyday life can be a positive thing, a gift from God.

We tend to be wary of change, especially in our churches. What we think we want is continuity, security and comfort. But change will come, and it might mean new challenges, new opportunities, for growth.

Mary and Joseph were probably attuned by their recent experiences to observe and listen to God's intervention in their lives. But what would we have done? Hugged the child to ourselves and scuttled on our way? Laughed it off? Who knows? Let's pray that we'll be open to the interruptions that God sends and to the changes they might bring to our way of looking at things.

Ron

Points for Prayers

- Being open to the changes that God brings to our lives and to our churches
- For those facing shortages of the essentials of life such as food or the means of 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
- 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

Hymn

One hymn for this morning which is appropriate for Candlemas is 'Lord the light of your love is shining.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 5 th February	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 5 th February	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 5 th February	11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 12 th February	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 12 th February	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 12 th February	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 12 th February	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton

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 February 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)