

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 203**

**Easter Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

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

## **Welcome**

Happy Easter! The Lord is risen.

## **Scripture Passages**

*Acts 10: 34-43*

Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup> You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ - he is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

<sup>39</sup> “We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; <sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

### *Matthew 28: 1-10*

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

<sup>2</sup> And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.

<sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup> For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men.

<sup>5</sup> But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you."

<sup>8</sup> So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

## **Reflection**

How we long for peace. But I wonder what peace means to each one of us?

If I look for a visual image of peace I must confess that what first comes to my mind is probably an amalgam of different advertisements. There is a couple on a hotel balcony drinking some exotic cocktail. They are in the shade but around them is beautiful sunshine with a golden beach stretching away in the background.

It is an image that seems to suggest that life can go on like this for ever. No effort, no worries, you simply pass your time smugly commenting on the fate

of lesser mortals who are still compelled to go about their daily lives with all the anxieties and hard work that this entails.

It is probably an advertisement to try and get you to buy some financial services or a dream holiday or even to purchase a particular brand of drink.

But into this idyllic scene the inconvenient fact of death never intrudes. What is portrayed is a timeless existence which will never be disturbed.

On the other hand, when we read the account of Jesus' Passion on Good Friday there is a temptation to find a kind of peace in the grave. Right through this account, the crowds, the disciples, Judas and Pilate, the soldiers have been in a tumult of excitement, suspense and conflicting emotions. Do the disciples try to resist Jesus' arrest or do they simply make a run for it? Will Pilate be able to find a clever way to avoid putting Jesus to death? And all this is accompanied by a relentless chorus of taunts, insults and blows from those who witness Jesus' arrest, trial and execution.

But then Jesus dies. All is over. And all is quiet. There is nothing more to be done. Those who have been threatened by Jesus and His ministry, the civil and religious authorities, have disposed of their threat. Those who wish to defend Jesus but are frightened to do so openly suddenly find that there is nothing for them to defend. What they feared has come about. Jesus has died.

The upheaval and the uncertainty are over. And maybe for the disciples there is, despite the grief and the sorrow, even a certain element of relief, a kind of peace that they find in all of this. The two Marys come to the tomb. They know exactly what they are doing. They have come to look after and pay their respects to Jesus' dead body as countless bereaved people have done before and after them.

And yet the peace which is to be found in the grave is a cold and cheerless one. The final words in our readings on Good Friday were the words that Joseph of Arimathea rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Jesus' body is buried in a cold and dark place which is cut off from the outside and living world by a great stone.

So, we wonder whether this image of darkness and lack of life is really what we want. There may be times when we are tempted by the thought that we could escape from all the difficulties, pain and challenges that life can throw at us by dying. But surely this is not what we really want.

And with Jesus we ask ourselves is this really the end of the story? Can this be the end of all that He has promised His followers? Surely not. This absence of life and movement cannot be what the peace of God is about.

Where can we find peace? This question is raised in our reading from Acts. This is an extract from one of Peter's sermons. This one was delivered to some potential Gentile converts headed by a Roman centurion called Cornelius.

In it, Peter boldly proclaims that the message which God brings is one of peace by Jesus Christ. Peace is central to the Christian gospel.

And yet when we look at Jesus' resurrection, it seems at first to be disturbance not peace that Jesus brings into people's lives.

This disturbance is symbolised most graphically by the earthquake which rolls the stone away. The earthquake has two results. First it overturns the finality of death, light is now let into the dark and cold place of the tomb. The angel is able to roll the stone away and the body of Jesus is nowhere to be found within the tomb. And secondly it also turns our lives upside down destroying the neat order that we so often try so hard to create.

And the immediate emotion caused by the earthquake and the appearance of the angel is not peace but fear. Perhaps this is not so surprising. The guards are so afraid that they shake and become like dead men.

And for the women who have come to Jesus' tomb to look after what they thought was Jesus' dead body, fear is also part of their response. The angel has to tell them not to be afraid as does the risen Jesus when they encounter Him.

And yet, of course, the women are also overjoyed by the news that Jesus is not in the tomb but has been raised from the dead. This is wonderful news. So, when the women have had the chance to inspect the tomb they leave with a mixture of emotions, both fear and great joy.

The news that Jesus has been raised from the dead is wonderful but it hardly leaves them in a comfortable place. Fear and joy are conflicting emotions and when people experience such conflicting emotions, we often associate this with stress or even in extreme cases a breakdown in mental health.

And when the immediate excitement of this news dies down life does not settle down to normal again. Indeed, for them life will never be normal again. They and the other disciples will face continuing upheavals and challenges.

The speech that Peter made in our passage from Acts to Cornelius and the others does indeed give a message of peace. But when we think of Peter himself, we realise that this speech caused him all kinds of trouble. His friends and fellow disciples criticised him saying that there was no way in which he, Peter, as a Jew should have gone to eat with Gentiles. The reality of the Resurrection turns our expectations upside down and exposes how narrow they are.

But if new life is to come through the Resurrection, then the seeming peace and silence of the grave has to be disturbed. We need to be equipped to face fresh challenges which we may not be sure that we can cope with.

This happened to the first disciples and it will also happen to us as we allow Jesus to enter our lives and to change them. For they are no longer our own to control and direct as we wish.

Walter Brueggemann, the Old Testament scholar, draws our attention to how often the simple phrase 'Who knows?' is used in the Old Testament as human beings enter into dialogue with God. For instance, the Book of Ecclesiastes asks 'Who knows what is good for someone in this life?' (Ecclesiastes 6:12).

Brueggemann comments that behind such questions lies the understanding that only God knows and that we as people have no means of knowing. And he says that this goes against all our quests for certainty. So often we would like to respond to the question 'Who knows?' with the words 'The doctor knows best' or 'The teacher knows best' or 'The banker knows best' or even 'We know best.'

And yet if we should respond to a question about the future with the words 'Who knows?' we are likely to be thought highly irresponsible. We should know. But when the reality of the Resurrection enters our lives all our old certainties are taken away just as the stone is rolled away from the tomb. We are left with a very simple and unadorned form of trust in God. God knows what the future will hold for us and we need simply to trust God. And is that such a bad thing?

For Jesus has indeed come to bring us real peace but it may not be the kind of peace that most immediately springs to mind when we first hear the word 'peace.'

The peace of Jesus is, first of all, connected in Peter's message with the forgiveness of sins. Everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through His name.

And that surely is real peace, to be able to go to sleep in the knowledge and assurance that our sins have been forgiven.

And the peace of Jesus also means coming to the end of our lives knowing both that the purposes of our lives have been fulfilled and also that the best is yet to be.

The peace of Jesus means being able to face seemingly impossible challenges with hope, perseverance and an inner calm.

The peace of Jesus is a daily peace in our lives which attracts other people as we go about our everyday, routine activities. It causes them to think or even to say 'I wish I had what you have got.'

The peace of Jesus does not mean that we avoid all challenges or conflicts. It may even bring them into our way. It may cause old forms of security to be stripped away leaving us feeling very vulnerable.

And yet the peace which Jesus brings will be our strength throughout our lives whatever the circumstances we find ourselves in. And is that peace not the one that we all search for and need?

*Tristram*

## **Points for Prayers**

- Celebrating the Resurrection and finding peace in Jesus
- For isolated and persecuted churches to find fresh strength in the good news of Easter

- For those facing shortages of the essentials of life such as food or heating and those seeking to help those facing such hardship
- 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 their break for the holidays

## Hymn

A traditional Easter hymn is 'Thine be the glory.'

## Services for Easter and the following 'Low Sunday'

Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	9.30 am Communion, Blackford
Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	11.00 am Communion by extension, North Cheriton
Easter Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April	6.30 pm Evening Service (with Communion), Yarlington
Low Sunday, 16 <sup>th</sup> April	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Low Sunday, 16 <sup>th</sup> April	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury



## **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 April 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)