

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 204

Sunday 23rd April 2023

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Acts 2: 14a, 36-41

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them,

³⁶ “Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

³⁸ Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.”

⁴⁰ And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

Luke 24: 13-35

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing,

Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?”

They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?”

¹⁹ He asked them, “What things?”

They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.

²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.”

²⁵ Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “Were not

our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Reflection

In the Camelot Parishes we have our Good Friday walk. But this season of Easter when the weather is beginning to get slightly warmer often brings to my mind memories of another walk.

This walk was an all-day one and was undertaken along with clergy and other colleagues visiting some of the ancient and very beautiful churches on Exmoor.

And up on the hills and then later on as we descended to the sea shore, we were unhurried in terms of time and free in terms of space to have some really significant conversations with one another. So, we could chew over decisions that faced us whether these were personal ones or were to do with the parishes in which we were serving. We knew that we could do so without the pressure of telephone calls or other sudden demands on our time.

And when I came to the end of this day and perhaps in the days immediately following, I would find some new insights coming to me. I may or may not have been aware of them in the course of the actual walk and they did not come in the form of a flash of sudden revelation. They could better be described as insights and fresh ideas which crystallised in my mind gradually over the period of the walk and indeed after it had ended.

One of today's readings concerns another walk, this time a biblical one. It is the walk to Emmaus. Reading the account of how the disciples on this walk come to a deeper understanding of their faith and of the meaning of Jesus' crucifixion reminds me of the process of my own growth in understanding on my own Easter walk.

It is important in terms of time that this walk of the disciples was a relatively long one. Emmaus is a village which is about seven miles from Jerusalem. So, the two disciples on this walk, Cleopas and his companion, had plenty of time and space to ruminate on the dramatic recent events which they had witnessed.

But perhaps at the beginning of this walk this is not what they wanted to do at all. They might, on the contrary, have felt a little stuck in terms of their lives as if there was no way forward and indeed no point in discussing what had happened to them.

It is, at this point, however, that they are joined by an unknown stranger. Perhaps one of the important dynamics of my Easter walk was that I did not know the other people on the walk beforehand. These meetings with strangers allow for genuinely new perspectives to emerge. We have to explain our circumstances and the challenges we face to an outsider and, in the process, we can be helped to move forward in ways that we did not anticipate.

But, first of all, what Cleopas and the other disciple need is simply to offload the burden of the pain and disappointment that they feel on to this stranger who is so prepared to listen to them. Unresolved and unacknowledged disappointment can present a formidable block to our making progress in our lives.

As Jesus joins the walk, He begins by asking the disciples a simple question 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' It is these

types of simple questions, easy to answer, which can prove to be a springboard to opening up a conversation in unexpected ways.

The reply of Cleopas and his fellow disciple is also straightforward. They tell this stranger about the events of Good Friday, how Jesus was put to death even though they had hoped that He would be the one to redeem their nation Israel.

And, oh yes, some story was going around that some of the women in their group had gone to the tomb and had had a vision of angels who told them that Jesus was alive. This story had been checked out by other disciples and yes, indeed Jesus' body was not in the tomb. But that did not help very much because they did not see Jesus at all, dead or alive. It was all very confusing and unsettling and they did not know what to make of it.

Listening to other people is an essential part of having a fruitful conversation. And yet sometimes listening involves an element of challenge. This is what Jesus offers as He responds to what they say. 'How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!' He says. And this challenge opens up an entirely different perspective for these disciples on the events which they have witnessed.

But once again there is nothing sudden or abrupt about this. The circumstances of the walk allow for space and opportunity for the disciples to listen to and explore what Jesus has to say. This space means that Jesus can offer them an extensive overview of the Bible.

The focus of this is the meaning of His own suffering. It is this which has proved a stumbling block for the disciples. They had believed Jesus to be the Messiah, the one that they had hoped would redeem Israel. But their view of a Messiah was very much one of a triumphant and victorious

conqueror. This did not leave any room for suffering or apparent failure and so they had been left confused and trapped in disappointment.

But Jesus invites them to have a fresh look at the Bible. Was this really the kind of Messiah which was prophesied in the Old Testament? Or, on the contrary, 'Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?'

Beginning with that question, Jesus gives them an overview of scripture, of Moses and all the other prophets which turns these assumptions on their head. We do not know the precise scriptures to which Jesus referred but there was time on that walk for a whole network of new connections and references to be made.

And then comes the final stage in this complete turnaround in the way these disciples approach their life and faith. This is indeed a sudden moment of piercing insight. And yet, although they have not been aware of this, their whole day has been building towards this moment.

They sit down to a meal with this unknown stranger at the end of the day and suddenly as the stranger breaks bread, blesses it and gives it to them they realise who they have really been talking to all along. Their eyes are opened and they recognise the risen Jesus. And yet the moment that this recognition comes, He vanishes from their sight.

Then they think again about the events of the day and realise that even though they had not been consciously aware of this at the time their hearts had been burning within them while Jesus had been talking and opening the scriptures to them on the road.

At the heart of this account of the journey of faith which takes place on the road to Emmaus is the need for the disciples to recognise the true nature of the Messiah. This involves accepting the need for a crucified and suffering

Messiah. In our other reading, from Peter's sermon in the Book of Acts on the day of Pentecost, Peter calls on the crowd to 'know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.' Likewise, Jesus, on the road to Emmaus, challenges the disciples to recognise that it was 'necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?'

And the pathway to growing in faith also involves repentance. This call comes explicitly in Peter's sermon. Those who listen ask Peter what they should do. And he tells them that they need to repent and then they will receive the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Repentance may seem highlighted less explicitly in the journey to Emmaus. And yet, literally repentance means a change of heart or of direction in our lives. Cleopas and his companion do indeed change direction when they encounter the risen Lord Jesus.

They start off by walking away from Jerusalem where Jesus has been crucified. Perhaps their journey away from Jerusalem is a sign that they think that their connection with Jesus has ended. However, when they recognise that it is indeed the risen Jesus who has been speaking with them on their journey, they turn back. They go back towards Jerusalem in order to re-join the other disciples and to share with them the joyful news of Jesus' resurrection.

The journey to Emmaus is a powerful account of the process of transformation and growth in the lives of individual disciples. Central to it is the need for sufficient time and space to enable God to work in this truly deep and life changing way.

So often we can find ourselves hemmed in by the various responsibilities and tasks that we are immediately facing. There may be times and seasons in our lives when we seem continually to live in a rush. But is this rush

inevitable or is it possible to find some way in which we can slow down, even if only for a brief interlude? For as we ponder the meaning of the journey to Emmaus we are encouraged to find those extended periods of quiet and peace where God can work deeply within us and can redirect our lives in lasting and fruitful ways.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Finding and making the time and space for God to work deeply in our lives
- Conflict in the Sudan and the evacuation efforts
- 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
- Preparations for the King's coronation
- 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

A modern hymn which speaks of the journey of discipleship is 'Will you come and follow me.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 23rd April

8.00 am, Communion, Blackford

Sunday 23 rd April	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 23 rd April	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 23 rd April	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 23 rd April	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 23 rd April	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlinton
Sunday 23 rd April	6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton
Sunday 30 th April	9.30 am Family Service, North Cheriton
Sunday 30 th April	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 30 th April	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Bratton Seymour
Sunday 30 th April	6.30 pm Evensong, Galhampton

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.

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)