

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 207**

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

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

## **Welcome**

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected in different ways by the floods in these and neighbouring parishes. Below I reflect on my personal experience.

## **Scripture Passages**

*Acts 17: 22-31*

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. <sup>23</sup> For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

<sup>24</sup> “The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, <sup>25</sup> nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. <sup>26</sup> From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, <sup>27</sup> so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him-- though indeed he is not far from each one of us. <sup>28</sup> For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’

<sup>29</sup> “Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. <sup>30</sup> While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now

he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup> because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

*John 14: 15-21*

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. <sup>17</sup> This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. <sup>18</sup> “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. <sup>19</sup> In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup> They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

## **Reflection**

Between Tuesday morning when I first began talking and reflecting on this morning’s gospel passage and now a great gulf has been fixed.

Do I mention it or not? I am afraid I can see no way round it. So what about the flood?

There was mud and debris left on the street when the flood waters had subsided. The ground floors of some properties were ruined. People had to be evacuated by boat by the Fire Brigade and stay with neighbours. Some may not be able to return to their properties for months.

And what happened to me? I was in a small car, nominally 'in charge' of two young children, trying to get them and myself safely home to North Cadbury. We tried both main routes in, one had already been coned off and the other was shortly to follow. When a larger car ahead of us decided to back off when confronted by the waters on this other route it showed us that this too was impassable.

But what were we to do? The first thought that I had was 'Who do I know?'

We were just about opposite our local farm shop and we did know its owners. So, I parked the car and children outside. It was just before closing time and so although the customers had gone a member of staff was still there. I presented our credentials and very kindly and generously was told that the three of us could stay there as long as we needed and that I could phone home to say where we were.

So, we were all incredibly grateful for this safe haven. But how were we going to get home? Outside tractors were offering lifts and I am sure that all of us would have been 'up' for this. But before our turn for this came we were told that we could follow a truck going back to North Cadbury on yet a third route in through the lanes round Yarlington and Woolston.

So, we duly did this. But this road although passable was still very waterlogged and who knows what flood debris it contained. So, when about a mile from home my car monitor told me first that I was losing tyre pressure and shortly afterwards that there was a puncture I have to say I was not surprised. Who knows what debris the floodwater was hiding?

The tyre pressure just about lasted to get us home but by that time the car was screeching violently in protest. Clearly it could go no further and fortunately the next morning I was able to contact a mobile tyre service to come to our home and replace the tyre.

At first, I was just glad that we were all home. But as I tried to process what had happened, I found myself thinking again and again about the puncture. By itself, when compared to everything else that was happening this might have seemed a minor detail to keep thinking about.

And yet I asked myself what would have happened if the puncture had occurred at an earlier point on those isolated country lanes around Yarlington. What would I have done, in charge of two young and hungry people, if the car had simply been able to go no further?

But the puncture did not happen any earlier. We had enough tyre pressure to get back home. Enough and no more.

As Christians, we speak of God's providence. By this we mean God's care and loving provision for us. Although it does not provide an answer to all our questions about why people suffer God's providence is still important. So, when I thought about the timing of the puncture it caused me to recognise God's providence and to give thanks for this.

And then of course there was the importance of community which has been demonstrated for us in so many different ways through what has happened. As I said, my first thought on realising that the roads into North Cadbury were blocked was 'Who do I know?' And that thought probably came to many other people's minds as they faced their own challenges.

The tractors taking people home, people getting together to clear up the mud and debris, those who gave us and many others shelter when it was needed are all an expression of the care of our community. We are grateful to live in such a supportive community and we value this.

With these themes in mind, my reflections on these two passages on which I was preparing to speak this Sunday felt of immediate sharpness and relevance.

I will not leave you orphaned, Jesus tells His disciples. This comes from John's account of the Last Supper when He is preparing them for His death and the subsequent gift of the Holy Spirit.

In the farm shop and looking out over a view of fields stretching out in front of us with no people and just our solitary car to be seen it did truly feel as if we were stranded. And yet for all that we were not abandoned. God was with us, He had not left us orphaned.

Rather, we could find the closeness and comfort of His Holy Spirit. This is what Jesus promises His disciples through all the chaos and desolation of His forthcoming crucifixion. They were not to lose hope because Jesus would ask His Father who would give them the Holy Spirit whom Jesus describes as another Advocate, to be with them for ever.

And so with the Holy Spirit and the knowledge of God's love and fatherly care for them, they were not abandoned or to be left orphaned. Jesus was coming to them in the form of the Holy Spirit.

When we turn from this, however, to our passage from Acts what a contrast we find! In the place of the warmth, comfort and security of Jesus' words we are given a portrayal of a people who lack this kind of security or knowledge of God.

The Athenians to whom Paul spoke were not unaware of their need for divine help. They were 'extremely religious' and clearly searching for God. However, sadly, the identity of that God was as yet unknown to them. They had even put up an altar dedicated to an unknown god.

The whole atmosphere is one of an uncertain searching and groping in the dark after God who seems so far away.

And yet into such an uncertain context which lacked the security of knowing where divine comfort is to be found, Paul seizes the opportunity to proclaim the gospel.

Instead of being far away and unknown, needing to be searched for by all kinds of diligent methods, Paul tells the Athenians that God is in fact very close to each one of them. He quoted their own poets in support of this, who speak of us as being God's offspring. God is indeed so close to us that it is possible for us to live and move and have our being in God through Christ. In other words, our whole lives can be enveloped in the warmth of God's love.

Paul's invitation to the Athenians can be an invitation to all of us. However far away and remote from us we may feel God to be (and surely we all feel that way at times), God in Christ is in fact very close to us. Indeed, God is ready to take His place in our hearts as we open them to the promise of His presence through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

God will not leave us orphaned or abandoned. It is a heart-warming message for us to respond to in these difficult and indeed dramatic times.

*Tristram*

## **Points for Prayers**

- For all those affected by the floods in these and neighbouring parishes
- Prayers for King Charles for wisdom and compassion in the way he reigns and for the support of the rest of the Royal Family
- Resolution to industrial disputes especially in the healthcare sector
- 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 Sunday is 'Immortal, invisible, God only wise.'

## **Services for this week and next**

Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> May	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> May	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> May	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> May	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> May	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> May	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> May	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> May	6.30 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 May 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)