

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 208**

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2023**

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

## **Welcome**

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

## **Scripture Passages**

*Acts 1: 6-14*

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?”

<sup>7</sup> He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

<sup>9</sup> When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

<sup>10</sup> While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. <sup>11</sup> They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

<sup>12</sup> Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away. <sup>13</sup> When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. <sup>14</sup> All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together

with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

### *John 17: 1-11*

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said,

“Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, <sup>2</sup> since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup> I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

<sup>6</sup> “I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; <sup>8</sup> for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup> I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours.

<sup>10</sup> All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them.

<sup>11</sup> And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

## **Reflection**

What’s so special about being a Christian? If someone asked us that question and expected us to reply with a single, simple sentence would we know what to say?

We might reply by saying something like, it's all about loving God and loving our neighbour as ourselves. Or as Jesus put it in the Sermon on the Mount 'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you' (Matthew 7:12).

These are summaries of Old Testament teaching and though immensely valuable as guides to life they are not unique to the teaching of Jesus. Indeed, this so called Golden Rule of treating others as we ourselves would like to be treated appears in the teachings of many different creeds. Some would argue that it does not even need any faith in God at all to make it possible.

But there are other sentences that we could come up if we continued to think about what makes Jesus special. One powerful candidate for this kind of sentence can be found in our reading this morning from John's gospel.

'And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.'

This sentence comes from the prayer for His disciples which Jesus spoke at the Last Supper. It is a prayer which is framed within the immediate context of mortality. Jesus knows that He is going to die and that, on an earthly level, He will no longer be able to be present with His disciples. So, He is praying for their continuing life after He has gone, both as individuals and as a community. His prayer is like a spiritual will.

In these words, Jesus confronts directly the question that we all have about mortality. Is death simply the end or is there a life which is more powerful than death and which, in some way, can continue through death? Such a life is not just an endless continuation of this life. Rather it is about an entirely different quality and dimension of life. Central to this is a living

relationship with God. This is one which is not simply stronger than death but is one which, in part, we can experience here and now.

It is this quality of life, eternal life, which Jesus claims to bring us. The key to eternal life, Jesus says, is very simple. It does not consist of an endless piling up of good achievements hoping that in the end we might do enough to merit the reward of eternal life.

Rather, at its centre is a relationship of trust with Jesus Himself. Eternal life is about knowing God and knowing Jesus Christ. And this knowledge is not a factual one or based on agreeing on the truth of some abstract proposition.

On the contrary, this is the knowledge which we mean when we talk of 'knowing a person'. Of course, we can know a person on a number of different levels. Someone may be a mere passing acquaintance even if we do see them regularly, say in the course of their job. And yet we all know that there is a difference between such superficial and transient relationships and those deep, life giving relationships that we all crave.

There is no limit to the depth at which we can know Jesus. But surely the kind of knowledge that will change us at a deep level is not some 'nod to God' but a relationship in which we invest time, energy and desire and to which we give ourselves fully.

The offer of eternal life is, of course, a very important part of Jesus' prayer for His disciples at the Last Supper. And yet equally important and indeed flowing out of this relationship of eternal life is Jesus' prayer that those follow Him would be united among themselves. As He returns to God, Jesus prays to His Father about His disciples that 'they may be one, as we are one.'

We find this relational unity worked out in practice in the early church as they prayed for the coming of the Holy Spirit which Jesus had promised them. All the apostles and their closest companions met together in an upper room and were united in their devotion to prayer..

Unity with one another is intended to be a natural consequence of our unity with God through our relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus' prayer is for His disciples to be one just as He and His Father are already one.

So, it is clear what Jesus' desire for us is. To come to know Him and to be at one with our fellow believers.

And yet if we look around us at the way the church presents itself it does not take us very long to be struck by a very different reality.

In place of simplicity and unity so often we find complexity and disunity. Some of this may be close to home and we may not need to look very far to find examples of it.

On the other hand, sadly, this has also been true of the church throughout history. The Creeds, for instance, are immensely valuable in giving us short summaries of what the church as a whole from very early days has believed.

And yet, at the same time, they can seem so complex and difficult to interpret especially perhaps the Nicene Creed. This was formulated by a universal Church Council summoned in the fourth century after Christ. And at the time there was an immense argument about whether Jesus' relationship with God was to be described as homoousios or homoios. There was even an attempt at a compromise with the word homoiousios which like many compromises failed to satisfy anyone.

This debate led not simply to verbal but apparently also to physical violence in which the proponent of one view slapped his opponent in the face. And it

was followed by various depositions and banishments of bishops who held the 'wrong' views.

The debate was actually about something very important, as to whether Jesus was in essence God or simply 'like' God. And yet if we were an interested outsider observing this debate and the manner in which it was conducted, with all its factions and fine verbal distinctions, would we find that it helped to make Christianity attractive or relevant to us? Quite probably not.

And the same could be said of many quarrels and debates that go on in the church today. But we need to be careful here. It is so easy to point fingers at other people. We might find it more productive first of all to have a good look at ourselves in the mirror.

For we can be the people who get in the way of the church becoming the united and attractive body that Jesus desires it to be. Even unknowingly we can put our own interests and preferences before those of others and can be unwilling to make the sacrifices that are necessary for our unity with others to be a visible reality.

And if that is so what can we do about it? If at the heart of our Christian faith is a relationship with Christ then we could ask ourselves whether we are investing the time and resources in our relationship with Jesus for it to grow into a truly deep and life sustaining one. I know that for me this challenge of spending time with Jesus is a constant one as so often there seems to be many different pulls on my time and resources of energy. And I suspect that what is true for myself may be true for you as well.

And another related challenge, particularly relevant as we approach Pentecost and remember the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church, is how open we are to the work of the Holy Spirit.

In our passage from Acts, the disciples have a number of detailed questions which they put to Jesus. And yet Jesus tells them that though there may be no answers to these questions it is more important to believe in the promise of the Holy Spirit which will be given to them. For with the Holy Spirit, they will receive the power to do all the work that God has for them to do.

And so, it is the Holy Spirit who brings us the knowledge of Jesus which we need and at the same time binds us together in unity. We can achieve neither of these objectives on our own. And unity does not mean either uniformity or that we will necessarily agree on all the contentious questions that are placed before us for consideration. But what the Holy Spirit will give us is that organic unity both with Jesus and with our fellow Christians and as we live in that reality our differences will not overcome our ability to love one another.

*Tristram*

## **Points for Prayers**

- To grow in our relationship with Jesus and our openness to the Holy Spirit
- For the work of cleaning up the aftermath of the recent floods in these and neighbouring parishes and for those who need to find temporary accommodation as a result of them
- 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 which celebrates the majesty of Jesus is ‘At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.’

## Services for this week and next

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, Yarlington
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	6.30 pm Evening Service, 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 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)