

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 236

Christmas Day 2023

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

Welcome

Happy Christmas!

Please find below the readings at today’s services at Compton Pauncefoot and North Cadbury together with my sermon.

There will be no Cutting Edge Camelot next Sunday (New Year’s Eve) so Cutting Edge Camelot will resume on Sunday 7th January 2024.

Scripture Passages

Isaiah 52: 7-10

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”

Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the LORD to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

John 1: 1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Reflection

In the beginning...

A week or so ago, in the Advent season leading up to Christmas, I spoke of our hope for the end of time when as Christians we wait faithfully and expectantly for the return of Jesus Christ and the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. This hope can help to give us clarity and direction as we attend to that vital human question that we all ask ourselves 'Where am I going?'

In this service, we have listened to this very familiar Christmas reading from the beginning of John's gospel. It may be a reading so familiar to us that we

know it off by heart or can detect the nuances in different English translations.

And yet John's gospel makes some extraordinary claims about who Jesus Christ is as it speaks about the beginning of time. In the beginning, there is God who creates everything. We know this from the first words of the first book in the Bible, the book of Genesis.

But John develops this message by telling us more about who God is. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God'.

The Word is another way of speaking about Jesus Christ. The Word is not simply with God but is also God. That's a complex but very important truth about both God and Jesus Christ.

Complex, we might say, but does it matter? Well, just as our Christian hope for the end gives us direction in life and helps to answer that deep question which we all have, 'Where am I going?', so our Christian faith about the beginning helps us to answer that equally important human question 'Who am I?'

A few years ago, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, discovered through a DNA test that his biological father was different from the man he had known as his father all his life. We cannot, of course, know the emotional impact that this discovery had on his life. However, publicly he declared that he found his identity not in any DNA test but in Jesus Christ. And if we are to search deeply for answers about our own beginning it is to Jesus Christ that we also need to come.

So Jesus Christ is there In the beginning. And Jesus Christ is there at the end. As we accept these truths so we find answers to the questions 'Who am I?' and 'Where am I going?'

That is all very well. The only difficulty is that we do not live our lives either at the beginning or at the end. We live our lives somewhere in the middle although we may not be sure exactly where in the middle we are. And sometimes we may be both in the middle and in a muddle.

At last week's service I spoke about all the jobs I had to do before Christmas. Let's see how well I am doing on them. Here is my list.

First on the list. Christmas Presents - I have delegated this one, should I check up? I will find the answer out very soon. It's always good to have some surprises.

Someone is cross - how many times do I have to say sorry? Wait a moment, didn't someone say once that love means that you never have to say you are sorry. I remember that vaguely from somewhere. Will that work?

Dogs need to be kept under control. Yes, they now seem to have learnt how to open the garden gate for themselves. At any rate, I found them sauntering around outside the Rectory on my return from a walk. They were behaving very responsibly I must say. Perhaps that's the answer, freedom and responsibility while I do the walking for them.

All the services and the sermons. Seventeen services in seventeen days. Didn't someone say it is not remarkable that they are all done well, it is remarkable that they are done at all. Have I got that right? Perhaps that's not a very appropriate quotation. Anyway, it's a good phrase and it will probably come in useful one day.

So I'm not really doing very well on my list. In fact, I am in a muddle, just hoping for the best. Is that the same with you? Or has everything been all beautifully ticked off on your Christmas planning list for days?

Not all of us are like that I am afraid. We may feel that we are just in a muddle. And if we do feel that way we might be forgiven for asking where is Christ in all this?

And the answer is that Christ is with us in the middle just as Christ has been at the beginning and will be at the end. At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Christ. The Word is not simply with God at the beginning of time but with the birth of Christ we can say in John's words that 'the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.'

So Christ, the Word made flesh, God Himself is with us in all the messiness and unpredictability of life. And Jesus's own life was full of uncertainty and surprises just as our lives are even though Jesus always knew who He was and where He was going. There were people who rejected Him and others who responded to Him and His message with faith, acceptance and love.

This is both exciting and unpredictable. On some occasions Jesus was amazed by people's faith. On others, He was amazed and deeply disappointed by people's lack of faith.

But that happens when we truly reach out in love. We cannot tell how it will end. We take a risk which may end in hurt and disappointment or in extraordinary joy.

So perhaps we do feel sometimes or even often in our lives that we are just muddling through. It all feels very uncertain and we find it difficult to find or retain any greater sense of purpose. If that is true for us then we can find hope and encouragement in this message.

Jesus Christ is there in the beginning. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. Jesus Christ will be there at the end when the Kingdom of

God is finally fulfilled. And Jesus Christ is also here right beside us in all the muddle of the middle. And the Word became flesh and lived among us.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Finding Christ in the beginning, end and in the middle of our lives
- The people we will meet over Christmas
- For continuing conflicts including those in Israel, Gaza and the Ukraine
- 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 and children of North Cadbury church school during the Christmas holidays

Hymn

On Christmas morning we are able to complete the carol 'O come all ye faithful' with the words of the final verse 'Yea, Lord, we greet thee, / Born this happy morning.'

Services for Christmas Day and the next two weeks

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| Christmas Day | 9.30 am Communion, Yarlinton |
| Christmas Day | 9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot |
| Christmas Day | 9.30 am Carols and Readings, South Cadbury |
| Christmas Day | 10.00 am Carols and Readings, North Cheriton |
| Christmas Day | 11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury |
| Christmas Day | 11.00 am Carols and Readings, Holton |

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| Christmas Day | 11.00 am Carols and Readings, Maperton |
| Sunday 31 st December | 10.00 am Communion and Carols, Galhampton |
| Sunday 7 th January | 9.00 am Communion, Yarlinton |
| Sunday 7 th January | 9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton |
| Sunday 7 th January | 11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury |

Excalibur online

The December and January edition of Excalibur has now been published online at camelotparishes.co.uk. It contains details of Camelot people, a record of baptisms, weddings and funerals undertaken through the church in the Camelot Parishes.

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)