

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 250

Easter Sunday 31st March 2024

'Virtually Church but with some way to go...'

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot on this Easter Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Acts 10: 34-43

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ - he is Lord of all. ³⁷ That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸ 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.

³⁹ 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; ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹ 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. ⁴² 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. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Mark 16: 1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³ They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?”

⁴ When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

⁶ But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.”

⁸ So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Reflection

Good Friday is not the end of the Easter story. Jesus is buried in the tomb but we know that there is more to come. We wait for Easter Sunday until the story is brought to a final and triumphant conclusion.

Or is that exactly how the reading about the Resurrection from Mark’s gospel this morning ends? Is everything now settled, final and finished? Our reading ends with these words,

‘So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.’

These are the women who have come to Jesus' tomb for the purpose of looking after His dead body. They have been concerned as to who will help them roll the stone away from the tomb. But, instead they find that the stone has already been rolled away and that there is no sign of a body. They meet a young man, possibly an angel in human form, who tells them that Jesus is not in the tomb but has been raised from the dead. He is going ahead of them into Galilee where they will be able to meet Him. In the meantime, however, the women are to tell the other disciples what has happened.

And yet the women's response is completely different to what they have been told to do. They say nothing to anyone because terror has gripped them and all they want to do is to run away in fear. Is that the grand conclusion of the story of Jesus' death and resurrection? Fear which results in the failure to fulfil a calling. Surely not.

And indeed, in our Bibles, this is not the end of Mark's gospel. A further twelve verses about Jesus' Resurrection follow on. However, it seems that these verses may well have been added later as they are missing from many of the earliest manuscript copies of Mark's gospel. It is as if a page has been ripped out bringing the whole account of Jesus' life and ministry to a sudden and somewhat puzzling end.

If we are looking for a contrast, we need look no further than our first reading from the book of Acts. This is the beginning of a sermon by the apostle Peter. It is addressed to an audience of foreigners, Gentiles who were not familiar with God's ways. And yet they wanted to know about Jesus. So, Peter provides them with a very brief summary of who Jesus is, what He did and why He matters,

'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; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear ... All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

This is a message which Peter has had time to consider and ponder in his heart. It is a message which has been refined until the essential elements emerge with absolute clarity. In place of fear, we have confidence and courage. In place of confusion and amazement, we have a clear and settled understanding.

So what has happened in the meantime to transform the raw materials of fear and confusion into a mature and confident faith?

First of all, though the women have seen the empty tomb, they and the other disciples including Peter have not as yet seen the risen Lord Jesus for themselves.

Now, of course, the empty tomb matters. When we seek to persuade people that the Resurrection is indeed real, the empty tomb is at the centre of our arguments. Where was Jesus' body? If it could be readily found why not produce it so that the disciples' story could be discredited?

However, the empty tomb belongs to the world of external realities, of what must be either true or untrue. Nevertheless, even though we may come to believe that the accounts of the empty tomb are entirely accurate, this does not by itself lead us to faith.

We need something more. Our own experience of the risen Christ. And this is what Peter tells us happened when God allowed Jesus to appear, '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.'

So Jesus appeared not to everyone but to those who were chosen by God. The women who came to Jesus's tomb were chosen to be among this select number. They might at first sight seem to be rather unlikely candidates. For, their first response to the news of the resurrection is just to run away and tell no-one.

Nevertheless, they had a need and desire for Jesus which remained constant and unchanging. Without Jesus, there was something missing from their lives.

And this need and spiritual desire brought them to the tomb in the first place. Even though they might have come believing that Jesus was dead and buried, they still wanted to do what they could for Him. They wanted to remember and honour Him. Jesus had not vanished from their hearts and minds, they would remember Him.

So God built not on perfection but simply on this spiritual hunger and need. Yes, they still had much more to learn and understand. But this was the vital starting point.

And it is for us too. When we recognise our own spiritual hunger and need then God can begin to work with us. Very often, we discover that our faith has grown the most when life has been the most difficult for us. In the beginning of our spiritual search, we may not have understood very much about what we were looking for. However, God takes what we have and as we continue to search so our understanding and our faith grows.

Faced with such an abrupt ending to this passage in Mark, of course we wonder what happened next. If a page had been ripped out of the earliest manuscripts of Mark's gospel, what might have followed?

Fortunately, we have not simply one gospel's account of the resurrection but four. And Matthew's account runs very parallel to that of Mark.

In Matthew, there is the same commission given to the women to tell the other disciples about the resurrection, the same quick departure from tomb, the same fear but then...

'So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. (Matthew 28: 8)'

But there's something else that is puzzling. In Matthew's account there is the same fear but at the same time there is also great joy. Can fear and joy exist side by side? Surely one of these emotions will gain the upper hand and, in the end, throw the other out?

Well, not necessarily. Indeed, as I look back of at my own journey of faith up to this point in my life it makes sense to me that positive and negative emotions can exist side by side.

The hour I first believed was one of pure and unparalleled joy. I had found the One for whom I was searching even though I had not known at all times that I was looking for Him, Jesus.

On the other hand, when I think of the resurrection now and the difference it makes to my life what is uppermost to me is the sustaining power of hope. There is an unseen heartbeat in my life which even in the presence of pain and loss still enables me to have hope. The pain and loss do not disappear. But at the same time through faith in the resurrection there is a deep joy which wells up within me.

Psalm 139 speaks of how light and darkness work together in God's purposes,

'If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.' (Psalm 139: 11-12)

Or again, to borrow a note from Christmas and John's gospel,

'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it
(John. 1: 5)

We cannot go back to where we were before and we cannot measure what we are now by what we were before. They are different realities. Peter speaking

of the resurrection to the Gentiles is bold and confident, he could not go back to the rough unfinished version of Mark's gospel. Each of them is important and we simply need to start from where we truly are.

So where is that? Perhaps it is simply an awareness that there is something missing in our lives. Perhaps it is a spiritual hunger and yearning. Perhaps, yes, it is indeed unalloyed joy, knowing that the Resurrection really is true. Or perhaps it is a mixture of joy and pain, the knowledge of a hope that sustains us through all seasons of life.

Wherever we are, each of us has more to learn. We are not the finished product. The sudden and unfinished nature of Mark's ending reminds us of that. We need to allow God to take us further, not knowing exactly where this will lead us but knowing that our risen Lord will be with us on our journey.

So, this Easter, I Invite us to join the Easter cry of 'Alleluia, Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia.'

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- The joy and sustaining hope of the Resurrection
- For the services taking place on Easter Day
- For the health of the King and Princess of Wales
- For continuing and new conflicts including those in the Ukraine and the Middle East
- 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 their Easter holidays

Hymn

A well known Easter hymn is ‘Jesus Christ is risen today.’

Services for Easter Sunday

Easter Sunday 31 st March	9.30 am	Communion, Bratton Seymour
Easter Sunday 31 st March	9.30 am	Communion, South Cadbury
Easter Sunday 31 st March	9.30 am	Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Easter Sunday 31 st March	9.30 am	Communion by Extension, Blackford
Easter Sunday 31 st March	11.00 am	Communion, North Cadbury
Easter Sunday 31 st March	11.00 am	Communion, Maperton
Easter Sunday 31 st March	11.00 am	Communion, Holton
Easter Sunday 31 st March	11.00 am	Communion by Extension, North Cheriton
Easter Sunday 31 st March	6.30 pm	Communion with Evensong, Yarlington

Excalibur online

The April 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)