

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 255

Sunday 12th May 2024

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

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Acts 1: 15-17, 21-26

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, ¹⁶ “Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus - ¹⁷ for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.”

²¹ “So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us - one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.”

²³ So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” ²⁶ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

John 17: 6-19

“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.

⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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.

¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them.

¹¹ 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.

¹² While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵ I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Reflection

I think I have now reached the stage where I can truthfully say that I am nearing the end of the set of nine Annual Parochial Church meetings for the Camelot Parishes this year. With this in mind, I can look back on a whole range of church issues which we have discussed at or around those meetings.

At the smallest and most microscopic level, they have involved my returning all the Christmas carol sheets in my possession so that I do not walk off with them when I leave!

And then we have studied the provisions of nineteenth century charitable trusts for the benefit of the poor of a village, remembering the generosity of past benefactors and pondering on how we can ensure that that generosity is best used today.

There have, of course, been all the proposals for Deanery Reorganisation to look at. But we have also had much more wide-ranging discussions about the future of the church in this country and what are the most fruitful paths to walk in.

All these discussions remind me that every decision, no matter how large or small, matters to someone. And we need to give any decision we need to make the best of our time and attention.

We may have a rather romantic view of the church in past ages where we did not need to have to spend so much time on such matters leaving the church free to concentrate on the 'really important' issues. And yet was there ever truly such a time? Our passage from the Acts of the Apostles gives us a picture of the very earliest church and suggests that there has always been a need to spend time diligently pondering the details of decisions which have had to be made.

At the end of my sermon on Ascension Day, I spoke about the dividing lines between what is God's responsibility and what is ours. When is it up to us to take action and when do we need simply to ask God to do what we cannot do for ourselves?

And the church described in the Acts of the Apostles was certainly one which was fully aware of the awesome nature of God's power. However, this

did not mean that they neglected those down to earth tasks and decisions which they needed to take.

We see this in Peter's address to the whole church just before the day of Pentecost. As the church only numbered about one hundred and twenty they could readily be gathered together. And we find that just as in our church meetings today they had an important question which they needed to discuss and to decide upon.

This question was the choice of a successor to Judas Iscariot. He had betrayed Jesus and had subsequently committed suicide, finding the pangs of conscience impossible to live with.

We might wonder why it was so important that Judas should be replaced. Probably this has to do with the fact that Jesus originally chose twelve apostles in order to mirror the twelve tribes of Israel who led God's people in the Old Testament. Now, following Judas' death, there were only eleven and this number had to be made up again into twelve.

So, this was an important question for Peter and the rest of the church and it was appropriate that care should be taken over it. First, of all, they needed to consider what qualifications were needed for the job. The essential qualification was that this person should have been part of the band of disciples from the beginning, during Jesus' entire earthly ministry.

We are not told how many people met this qualification. But no doubt it was more than the two who emerged as the final candidates for this position. For instance, we know that at one point Jesus sent out seventy disciples on a mission to preach the gospel and heal the sick (see Luke 10: 1-9) so any of these might also have been chosen.

This means that some form of internal selection must have gone on before reaching the final choice of Joseph and Matthias. Perhaps they were

generally thought to be the outstanding candidates for the position and perhaps there was really nothing of substance to choose between them.

The church had taken its share of responsibility but now they had reached a limit on what they could do and they had to ask God to take responsibility for the final choice.

Maybe, if this had happened after the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the believers on the day of Pentecost, they might have asked for God's will to be shown in the form of a specific word of prophecy. But, at this stage, they simply did what they could to demonstrate their trust in God.

First of all, they prayed and then they cast lots. And rather than seeing this as an expression of chance, they saw this as a means by which they would be shown which of the two God had chosen. In other words, they left room for God to move in making their decision and they trusted that this would lead to the best outcome.

I am not suggesting that in the long and often tortuous process of making church appointments today we should end up by casting lots! Nevertheless, the general principle of taking as much care as we possibly can while at the same time allowing God to work in ways that might be unexpected and even go against our initial thoughts and plans does seem to be one that is worth reflecting on.

In this instance, the church was very aware of its need to ask God for help and did so by casting lots in the belief that God would in this way show them who the right person was. But can we ever get to a point where our knowledge of God has become so interwoven into the depths of our lives that we just know what God wants without our even being conscious that it is God who is guiding us?

Our gospel passage this morning suggests that we can. It shows us first of all how treasured and precious the church is to God, 'All mine are yours, and yours are mine'.

More than that, there is an underlying purpose which motivates the church. We are sent into the world as representatives of God and of Jesus, 'As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.'

So, we have tasks to perform and decisions to make as we are sent out into the world. But we do not act and decide on our own. Rather it is God who works through us and in us so that even in the minute details of our lives and decisions God will be present.

Jesus asks His Father concerning His disciples, 'Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth ... And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.'

This is a prayer for a change in character, for sanctification or to put it in terms that may be more familiar to us for holiness. As anyone who has tried to be more holy will know this is not something that we can make progress in on our own. Rather, it is God's work which begins with Jesus' relationship to God. Jesus dedicates and sanctifies Himself to God so that we in our turn may share in His relationship with God. In other words, to become holy is to become more and more like Jesus.

And when this happens, then increasingly we do know what God wants of us in any specific decision even if we have not consciously set aside a formal time of prayer for this purpose. And again, if God has been at work at such a deep level in transforming our characters, when we encounter circumstances which call for instant and important decisions we can trust that the thoughts and guidance that enter our minds are indeed from God.

This is, of course, a long and arduous journey. However, even though we may not get every decision right we need to trust that God will be at work within us to show us the right way forward. And yes, that doesn't act as a shortcut for all the time we might spend in meetings, debates and discussions about what this might be. But it does encourage and reassure us that, just as with the choice of the right person to succeed Judas, we too can come to an outcome that we can trust is God's way forward for us.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Knowing God's will in all the decisions we need to make
- For continuing and new conflicts including those in the Ukraine, Israel, Gaza and Iran
- 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

Hymn

One hymn set for this Sunday is 'Alleluia, sing to Jesus'.

Services for this week and next

Sunday 12 th May	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 12 th May	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 12 th May	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 12 th May	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton
Sunday 19 th May	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot

Sunday 19 th May	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 19 th May	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 19 th May	6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlington

Excalibur online

The May 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)