

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 258**

**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2024**

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

## **Welcome**

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

## **Scripture Passages**

*Deuteronomy 5: 12-15*

Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. <sup>13</sup> Six days you shall labour and do all your work. <sup>14</sup> But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work-- you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. <sup>15</sup> Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

*Mark 2: 23-3:6*

One sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. <sup>24</sup> The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?”

<sup>25</sup> And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? <sup>26</sup> He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions.”

<sup>27</sup> Then he said to them, “The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; <sup>28</sup> so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.”

<sup>3:1</sup> Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. <sup>2</sup> They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. <sup>3</sup> And he said to the man who had the withered hand, “Come forward.”

<sup>4</sup> Then he said to them, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent.

<sup>5</sup> He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. <sup>6</sup> The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

## **Reflection**

The Sabbath was made for man - not man for the Sabbath. That needs to be borne in mind, because it hasn't always been seen that way. For too many people, and I mean Christian people, their attitude to the Sabbath, or the Lord's Day, is more Old Testament than Gospel. Jesus, as the gospels put it, “declared all food clean” so we don't keep kosher, and enjoy the odd pork sausage. And yet when it comes to the Sabbath, some people come over all Jewish.

Felix Mendelssohn was on holiday in Scotland, and took a boat trip to see Fingal's cave on the island of Staffa. The sea wasn't particularly rough, but he was a bad sailor, and by the time the boat got there, he was prostrate. His friend got off the boat and was really impressed - “You should come and see this, Felix! It's like being inside a church organ!” but all he could do was groan. When they were back at the boarding house, he had a tune going round his head, and sat down at the piano. The landlady closed the lid over the keys, saying “You cannot be playing the piano the night before the

Sabbath!” So the Hebrides Overture was written on a Monday.

More recently, a Jewish couple had a real problem with the Sabbath. They lived in a block of flats, and the landlords installed motion sensitive switches on the landing lights, to save energy. The lights only came on when they left their flat. Now one thing strict Jews can't do on the Sabbath is to kindle a fire, and this couple believed that the tiny spark in the switch, kindled by their opening their door, broke that rule, and so they couldn't go to the synagogue. I have no idea how that case resolved. We might laugh, but to them it was a real moral issue.

Jewish lawyers spent a lot of time and energy defining what was work, defining it down in minute detail. And today, they're still at it. Is sending an email work? Does it make a difference if it's to a friend and not a colleague? Why use your commonsense when you can have a lawyer?

I bet a lot of us have walked past a ripe wheat-field, and rubbed the grains out of an ear and chewed them. Harmless, yes. But if you think that counts as threshing grain, even on a tiny scale, then that's work, and I don't believe for a minute Jesus' enemies really thought that; they were just looking for an excuse to say he was breaking the law. They couldn't get him on the big stuff like murder or adultery, so they had to search the small print to catch him.

The original fourth commandment was to keep the Sabbath holy. Holy didn't originally mean religious, or morally perfect, it meant different, set aside. So in the creation story, God rested on the seventh day, and told us to do the same. A day off work. Rest. Play. Be different. In the early days after the Russian Revolution, the leaders tried to abolish the weekly day off. It didn't work. Everyone needs a day off. My Grannie, a Victorian child, wasn't allowed to play with her toys on Sunday, or read anything but Bible stories. And poor old Mendelssohn wasn't allowed to play the piano on the Sunday.

The Jews still keep the Sabbath as Saturday, Muslims keep Friday, and the early church, once it decided it wasn't Jewish any more, chose Sunday, the first day of the week, because that was the day Jesus rose from the dead. Every Sunday was a little celebration of Jesus' resurrection. And people today who can't take Sunday off, have another day off, because working a seven-day week isn't good for anybody, as even the Russians eventually conceded.

As long as we take a weekly day off, different from what we do the other six, we're in the spirit of that commandment. And of course, if you don't go to work, you're free to come to church. And it was never compulsory, even in Jesus' time, to go to synagogue. It was just that it was there if you wanted to go. And it was where you met people, socialised, and picked up the news and gossip.

So one Sabbath, Jesus went. He usually did. And there was a man with a paralysed arm. Jesus' enemies watched and wondered. What would Jesus do? Tell the man to make an appointment for the next morning? Or would he, they wondered, licking their lips in anticipation, *heal the man*, in contravention of article 3, part 6, subsection d of Commandment 4?

Jesus saw they were waiting to see how the situation unfolded, and he got angry. He once said, in a similar situation, if your donkey fell down a well on the Sabbath, you'd pull it out, wouldn't you? Even the lawyers had to agree that that was ok. Unlikely, but ok. But Jesus knew they were less concerned with the Law than with trapping him. But he said to the man, "Put your hand out", and healed him. At this point, quite early in his ministry, why did that make the Pharisees want to kill him? That's a bit of an overreaction, surely. As I said, it wasn't as if he'd killed anyone, rifled the till, or coveted his neighbour's ox. But they wanted something to pin on him. A stick they could beat him with. And now they had it. He'd healed someone, on the Sabbath. And in the process, he'd undermined them, and if they thought they had authority, some of it had fallen off and transferred

to him. What if other people saw this good, popular, charismatic man treating the law lightly? What sort of impression was that going to make?

We hear a lot today about people who are role models. Footballers, in particular, are expected to be on their best behaviour on and off the field, at all times, in case young boys see their misbehaviour and copy it. Jesus' enemies were in the same position. Under Roman occupation, all they had left of their national identity was their faith, summed up in the Law. If somebody came along saying any part of the Law doesn't matter, and other people believed him, that was an attack on their whole concept of nationality. Without the Law, who were they? Which is why they decided Jesus had to die.

There is still a Lord's Day Observance Society. It calls itself Day One Christian Ministries, and would have shops shut, and sporting events not happen on Sundays. Because today, a lot of people sit very lightly to the Sabbath. Not like in my Grannie's day, shops are open, and places of entertainment are geared up for extra custom - the Newt, Stourhead - both have Sunday as their busiest day. And I don't disapprove of that. Relaxation, doing something different, was all part of God's plan for us. Going to church was, before there was radio and TV, the way you heard the news, met your neighbours, and of course, strengthened your faith by prayer, singing, and listening to the scriptures being read. Not to mention hearing uplifting and entertaining sermons. But I can only find one verse in the whole Bible about attending worship. Hebrews 10: 25 - "Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer."

So God made it a commandment. As if he was saying, Have a day off - that's an order! But what you do with it should be a matter of discretion and commonsense.

*Ron*

## Points for Prayers

- Taking regular periods of rest and using them wisely
- The General Election
- 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 'Christ whose glory fills the skies.'

## Services for this week and next

Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> June	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington
Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> June	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> June	11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Communion, Galhampton
Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Communion, North Cheriton
Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Matins, Blackford
Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup> June	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Holton

## Excalibur online

The June edition of Excalibur has now been published online at [camelotparishes.co.uk](http://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](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)