

### In the Light of Eternity – Halling View Summer 2019

I have very kindly been given a collection of Halling Parish magazines from the early twentieth century. I've written a bit more about them in the May issue of our parish church magazine. Something that made me sit up and take notice was that, on Ascension Day 1<sup>st</sup> June 1905 (a Thursday of course), they celebrated Holy Communion at 4.45 am, 7.00 am & 10.30 am. There was a Women's Service at 3.00 pm and Choral Evensong at 7.30 pm. I think that's amazing. We shall of course keep Ascension Day this year as always. It falls on 30<sup>th</sup> May (It's always 40 days after Easter.) and we shall hold celebrations of Holy Communion at 9.30 am at Halling and 7.30 pm at Cuxton. I shall also say Morning and Evening Prayer at 7.15 and 5.00 at Cuxton as I generally do on weekdays. Why so many services on that day at Halling in 1905? The short answer is that the Vicar, the Rev'd Ernest Crawford, wanted to make sure that everybody had the opportunity to attend on what for most people would have been a working day. But why? Why did it matter?

The first point is that worship is a duty which we owe to God. God is the focus of our worship. If we believe in Him, God is the focus of our lives. We live for Him. Primarily, we worship, not to please ourselves, but to please Him.

My dog, Tommy, is happiest when he is running around in the woods and fields, sniffing things out, making friends with people we meet and with other dogs, joyfully bounding up into the air just for the sheer joy of it. He is happy too when he is being made a fuss of and showing his love by enjoying being cuddled. In other words, Tommy is at his most content when he is doing what he was made to do, when he is fulfilling himself by using his talents to the full. Likewise, human beings are fully fulfilled only when doing what they were made to do. We were made to the glory of God and it is in worshipping Him that we find our fulfilment. Worship is what we shall do eternally in heaven. It is when we are worshipping God here on earth in spirit and in truth that we experience something of what heaven is like. So Mr Crawford had his parishioners' best interests at heart in trying to make it possible for them to go to church on Ascension Day and throughout the year. Of course we can and should worship God wherever we are and whatever we are doing. We can and should worship Him when we are on our own. But it is special and in accordance with His Will that we meet together with other Christian people to worship Him in the service which He gave us.

The stained glass window behind the altar at St John's depicts the Christmas story. *He came down to earth from heaven, Who is God and Lord of all.* The corresponding window at St Michael's Cuxton shows Jesus 33 years later, after His Death on the Cross and His Resurrection, ascending into Heaven. He shares our humanity in order that we might share His divinity. He comes to earth so that we might have access to Heaven. He dies so that we might have eternal life. On Ascension Day, we celebrate that the risen human body of the crucified Christ enters into Heaven and opens the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Our prayers ascend to God through Jesus. At God's Right Hand, He sends His Holy Spirit into the world. When our life on earth is over, He has prepared a place for us there with Him in Heaven if we only put our faith in Him.

So why might it be worth going to Church at 4.45 am on Ascension Day before starting a hard day's work in the fields or the cement works or whatever people in Halling did in 1905? Because the light Jesus sheds on us from Heaven comforts and guides us on earth and because Heaven is our eternal home if we believe in Him. What was true in 1905 is true now. It was always true and it always will be true.

They had much the same provision of services on our Patronal Festival that year – the Nativity of St John the Baptist, 24<sup>th</sup> June. It was a Saturday in 1905. This year it falls on a Monday and we shall mark it with Holy Communion at 9.30 am at St John's.

The other event of which you might like foreknowledge is on 11<sup>th</sup> July when we shall welcome the Cantium Singers to St John's at 7.30 pm for an evening of musical entertainment. Roger Knight, The Rectory, 6, Rochester Road, Cuxton, Rochester, Kent, ME2 1AF, 01634 717134, [roger@cuxtonandhalling.org.uk](mailto:roger@cuxtonandhalling.org.uk) <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk>