

## **'May God Bless It'**

**The King's School, Chester; End of Term Service, Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March,  
2017, Chester Cathedral**

*Address by the Rev'd Dr Mike Kirby, Priest-Vicar (SSM), Chester Cathedral*

*Mark 8:27-38; Luke 23:26-43; Mark 16*

May I speak now in the name of God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
Amen

May God bless it; may God bless it. As you may know, that is taken from the second half of the school motto; 'benedicat deus'. One which echoes the origins and connections of the school with this cathedral church, and the origins of the motto itself. Connections which we maintain by holding services like this one for the school which was originally geographically not very far from here. But it is the focus on the question of blessing that made me use it as the title of my address this morning, and all it might mean to us. For it is a phrase which can look both ways in time; both to the achievements of the past, and to the aspirations of the future.

It could indicate a significant turning point or shift in perspective, as we look back on the term or indeed the year so far and also reflect upon our futures; for some this might be a significant shift through exams into the sixth form and a change from breadth of study to one more focussed in subject matter perhaps in readiness for university or a particular career. For those in the sixth form, it may be the final term at school, before a move onto university study, apprenticeships or other work. Or indeed a transition from one year to the next, new

classes, subjects and classmates – once we are through the rigour of exams. Reflecting back, we might think on our achievements in class, or indeed, given this schools amazing portfolio of activities, sporting excellence, or great music and drama. The achievements could be individual or corporate. But whichever way is our current reflection and perspective, we might indeed ask that God may bless it. These moments we have like today, are precious in allowing us to see in both directions, but look to continue or change are future directive.

Within my own professional subject of radiotherapy physics, there have always been a number of key turning points, or paradigm shifts – where one can reflect back on the successes achieved, but also look forwards to new developments; some of them, true paradigm shifts as the technology and the science itself develops. There have been some in my own career – in developing techniques for x-ray diffraction with biological tissues; or turning devices designed for taking images during the delivery of radiotherapy into ones which can actually verify the radiation dose delivered at the same time. The latter technique, developed when I was first at the Christie Hospital in Manchester, has been refined since then – but the original idea came from a turning point in the science; a time of looking back onto what something was originally designed for, but then looking forward as to what it could do in a different way. As physicists, it is something we continually strive to do – within radiotherapy always for the betterment of the treatment and the lives of our patients.

For me, my Physics, my science, especially my work in cancer therapy has always been a vocation – something I have felt called to do. So too in later life my priestly work – another turning point and paradigm shift which took me totally by surprise. And hence why, in some way, I am here right now with you this morning. Looking back

to scripture, what perhaps wasn't a surprise for Jesus was the ministry that he was called to do – but even that had a significant turning point, part of which we have heard in our first reading this morning. For within this short section of Mark's gospel, things begin to change....and the true significance and naked truth of where Jesus' ministry is going to lead, begins to come to light. Jesus sees that they are finally beginning to see who he is, the Messiah, the Son of Man. The turning point occurs and focus moves from looking back on Jesus' ministry throughout Galilee as teacher, prophet, healer; performing exceptional miracles, teaching in a way that those of us as teachers and lecturers might only ever aspire to.

But now, the focus turns, looking forward to Jerusalem and the place of his imminent death and resurrection, as we have heard in the other two portions of scripture. His teaching shifts to be predominantly focussed on that of the disciples and their formation, for what is going to happen, the significant point in Jesus' history and indeed in global history itself, the focus of his incarnation in the revelation of death and resurrection to new, eternal life....the Good News that Jesus has brought salvation freely for each and every one of us. A turning point indeed.

So for all of us, this end of term allows us to reflect back, and pray for God's blessing on what we have done, individually and collectively – for our development in knowledge and understanding, but also in what is such a mark of this school, the values of ambition, benevolence and cooperation. What we do directly for others in community is a real mark of King's, as is developing the gifts and skills that will go on to help society further in science, medicine, arts, business, finance etc. Like good scientists, creative artists or learned humanitarians, we must value the work of all in society – that, like science and faith, both are needed to understand and to develop the

world around us. In looking forwards to where we are going next, those of Christian and other faiths might view directions God might be calling us to. Equally so for those without faith, what we do to help others in society, with sensitivity and a real strive to serve humanity, are equally vital and honourable. As Christ gave the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of others, and as others in history have given their lives, how might we play our part in developing society around us, for the good of our fellow mankind?

So, may our service to others, our commands to love one another in that service, be our continual prayer in all the turning points that we encounter today and in the future – and may God bless them all.

Amen.