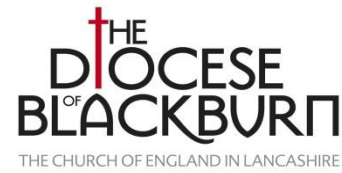


WEEKLY SERMON

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Passive acceptance of Poverty is never an option

Last week it was announced that 3.8 million children in our country are living in poverty.

That is a record high and comes at a time of near record lows in unemployment.

Whilst the wheels of government grind to a halt over Brexit, millions of children, most of whose parents are working hard, are being brought up in families that cannot make ends meet.

And it's easy to see the result. Growing queues at foodbanks. Increasing levels of consumer debt. Ever more people suffering anxiety and depression.

But what do we do? Some people would say, 'Do nothing. People should sort out their own lives and solve their own problems.' And often those people justify their position by drawing on something that Jesus says in the Gospel passage set for Sunday.

After Judas criticises the wastefulness of a woman who has poured costly ointment over his feet, Jesus says ... 'You always have the poor with you.'

Some have understood this to mean that Jesus affirms the inevitability of poverty, so it's something we too just have to accept passively.

But read on. 'You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'

Jesus is not making a statement about wealth inequality or economics and we are wrong to read it in that way. Instead he is using the woman's generosity to point Judas to the cross. She is right to spend so much in anointing him for his death because of what that death will achieve.

By his dying Jesus will destroy the sin that leads to injustice. He will bring in a whole new world in which all have enough. He will open a path to salvation so that all might know the gift of a new and eternal life. Poverty will be ended by the power of the cross.

So the ubiquity of poverty must never lead us to be passively accepting of it. Instead it should give us ever greater energy in fighting to end it.

Jesus has opened the path to a world in which all have plenty. It's up to us to take practical action to build that world here, now, today.

Bishop Philip

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

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