

# WEEKLY SERMON

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## Do not believe that lie that Sunday doesn't matter

Trinity Sunday John 16.12-15

In a deliberate ironic distortion of the Beatitudes, the rapper Kendrick Lamar says 'blessed are the liars because the truth can be awkward'. He may be being deliberately provocative, but the truth can indeed be awkward. So awkward that some seek to distort and discredit it to avoid the discomfort of facing it.

We see this in society at large, where facts people don't like are rubbished as 'fake news' while lies are presented as 'facts'. In our own personal lives, many of us succumb to telling what we falsely think of as a 'white lie' to avoid telling someone the awkward truth. Sometimes we even lie to ourselves to justify doing what we know is wrong.

In the Church we can easily begin to believe lies, such as the heresy of declinism – the false teaching that the Church is in terminal decline and will one day disappear, as people of all ages choose other things in place of the hope that is ours in Jesus. A symptom of this is the number of local churches who give up on children and youth groups on Sunday mornings because they claim that everyone is busy doing something else.

In Sunday's reading from John's Gospel (John 16.12-15) Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit coming to guide us into all truth – specifically the truth about Jesus himself. Throughout the ages, the Holy Spirit has enabled all kinds of people in all kinds of places to hear and respond to the good news of Jesus.

Today, the truth is the good news of Jesus is transforming lives across the world. In fact there are more Christians now than at any time in history and whatever the world around us says, the Church of Jesus Christ will continue to flourish until He returns.

Of course, I'm not naive. I know some are discouraged by the recent history of their local churches but Jesus hasn't given up on his Church, so nor should we. The Holy Spirit hasn't stopped guiding people into the truth of the good news of Jesus – why would we? Just imagine what would happen in your local church if we took Jesus' words to heart? Imagine if all of us across Lancashire joined in with the Holy Spirit to bring the good news of Jesus to our communities?

And what of that symptom? The giving up on children and youth groups on Sunday mornings? It is true that many people have Sunday morning commitments outside of church ... but not all of them. That is laughable! In a typical parish, think of the thousands who would need to be accommodated in the sports clubs – there is no way they could cope. When we withdraw our Sunday morning youth and children provision we deprive those young people who are available of a spiritual home, of the opportunity to grow in faith and to take their place in their church families.

One local church has recently grown Sunday morning groups from under 5 to over 35 in a couple of years and they don't have to be the exception. Of course, young people need spaces to belong

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

and begin to believe at other times of the week, but do not believe that lie that Sunday doesn't matter, the awkward truth is that it does. Kendrick is right – the truth can be awkward. Uncomfortable even. But that doesn't stop the truth about Jesus and His Church being a glorious, energising and compelling reality.

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