

WEEKLY SERMON

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With God there is always a second chance

September always feels like the start of the New Year. Much more so than January. There's something about the back to school phase that taps into deep memories where years were marked by a new class, un-scuffed shoes, and more homework.

I wonder if you've been fortunate enough to go away this summer? This also adds to the sense of coming back to a new start, while keeping up those routines which remind you of holiday.

That said, I have to say that Greek ouzo never quite tastes the same in rainy Britain as it does in a balmy Greek tavern with a view of the setting sun.

This column is a new start for me. But it's not a new start for me in my role as the Anglican Bishop of Lancaster. I'm an expert of all of 14 months!

But do we ever get a totally new start? In the Bible we read Jesus was once asked: "How many times should I forgive my brother?" (Matthew 18.21). "Will seven times do?"

Jesus replied in no uncertain terms: "Seventy times seven."

You don't need to do the maths; he meant – in his heavenly economy – there really is the unlimited re-boot. With God, there is always a second chance, a seventh chance and 490th chance. With God there is always a new start, even when the shadow cast by our sins is unbearably long.

God is outside of time and Jesus died before we were even born for our sins. He will always forgive.

We might have appraisals and work reviews in our daily working lives but remember that your REAL position in life is not determined by your performance; how well you do or if you mess up – even if you do have an understanding boss who forgives your mistakes!

The Bible contains The Truth, and that truth is that we are forgiven; God will always give you a second chance.

So I am grateful for new starts. Forgiveness sets people free. The past doesn't have to have a hold over us forever.

What's the new start you would like to see in your life, your work, our city, our nation?

Rt Rev Dr Jill Duff, Bishop of Lancaster

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