

WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



When Jesus died, he paid what he thought you are worth

Yesterday was Hallowe'en. The Eve of All Hallows. Not the Deathly Hallows of Harry Potter but 'hallows' from the Old English: meaning saints.

Today is All Saints Day. A day for remembering heroes and heroines who have inspired us. The Bible goes a step further to portray 'the great cloud of witnesses' cheering us on in the race of life (Hebrews 12.1).

I wonder ... who has cheered you on or inspired you in life?

We're just back from half term holidays in Venice, where they do things in style. A complete island dedicated to the San Michele cemetery.

The only snag is that things have become a little crowded since 1826. Unless you're a famous resident like Igor Stravinsky, your bones are dug up after ten years and placed in an urn to make room for someone else. Now this is the stuff of Disney's Hallowe'en!

But in reality we don't make room for someone else. Each of us is unique in the history of the universe. Saints or sinners. You can't put a price on what we mean to the people in our lives. What we bring to our relationships is unique.

We are all irreplaceable. We don't just move over for someone else. Maybe today, as the nights draw in, you wonder how much you matter?

I was so pleased to see the Lancaster walk against suicide taking place last Sunday on the day the clocks go back. When training to be a vicar I did a placement at Belmarsh high security prison. It's a holding prison for men due to serve serious custodial sentences. More sinners than saints. Suicide watch was part of the daily roster.

It was in that atmosphere, I was struck by a haunting song. Sung by Graham Kendrick in chapel 'How much do you think you are worth boy?'

A line brought tears to my eyes; afterwards I realised I was not alone ...

"If you heard that your life had been valued and the price had been paid on the nail..."

You might be more sinner than saint. You might not ever be celebrated in the pantheon of saints on All Hallows Day.

But the point is this: when Jesus died, he paid what he thought you are worth.

Rt Rev Dr Jill Duff
Bishop of Lancaster

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES