

+WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



Lord of the Dance

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." 2 Corinthians 13:14

Earlier this week the Bishop of Blackburn offered a fascinating Radio 4 Thought for the Day on political feuding and the biblical alternative. He suggested that in the gospels Jesus spent more time building relationships and growing community than laying out ideas or speaking pure theology. At the last supper he said, Jesus doesn't tell his disciples what to believe but how to belong to each other, how to be responsible for each other and how to love each other.

Whilst correct, the lived reality is so often very different. Feuding and division within the church has become normative and dualistic thinking has increasingly become the welcome rabble-rouser supporting our preferred, political, theological or leadership preference. Dualistic thinking seeks to simplify complex issues into two opposing, mutually exclusive categories of "either/or" or "good/evil". This mindset promotes a theology of scarcity, limiting our understanding and creating unnecessary division – it's certainly not reflective of the Jesus we read about in the gospels.

What a joy therefore to be thinking this Sunday about the Holy Trinity – God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity undercuts dualistic thinking or what might be referred to as the law of two, replacing it with the dynamic relationship of three. Once you give people the choice of two you will always have a problem. But God is three, and in this dynamic relationship of Father, Son and Spirit we observe diversity in unity working together in what some theologians refer to as perichoresis. The Greek word 'peri' meaning perimeter and 'choresis' meaning choreography or a circle dance.

The word describes the interrelationship of Father, Son and Spirit the persons of the Trinity - a divine dance. A celebration of relationship but a relationship requiring us to engage, to partake and to become vulnerable within the partnership of the dance.

Returning to Thought for the Day, how we belong to each other, how we become responsible for each other and how we learn love each other is demanding – it necessitates participation in the awkwardness and beauty of relationships. Someone once said that marriage would be so much easier if there wasn't another person involved, but then it would be meaningless too! It is in the messiness of relationships that our journey of life is formed. Relationships become the backdrop of our life experience and the dance in which we live and have our being.

As followers of Jesus, we have both the opportunity and choice to live differently. We can choose the dualistic way of the world with its simplistic "either/or" approaches to life, or we can choose the Trinitarian way, which invites us into the divine dance.

Of course, accepting an invitation to dance places us in a vulnerable position. Will we know the steps, can I trust my partner, what will others think. The answer is - you will never know until you accept the invitation, stand up and walk onto the dance floor.

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

God so loved the world that he sent his Son into the world to invite us to participate in his divine dance and he sends his Spirit to equip and enable us to participate in His dance each day of our lives. He is Lord of the Dance and He is inviting us today to dance with him in our families, workplace, schools and local communities.

The Very Rev Peter Howell-Jones Dean of Blackburn