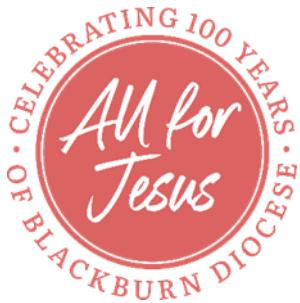


+WEEKLY SERMON

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Death is certain, but so is new life in Jesus

“I was young, now I am old, but I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.”

These are some words from Psalm 37 which meant a lot to me when I was starting out in early adulthood.

At a time when money felt uncertain and I was living on a shoestring as a student there was a beautiful resonance in that promise.

I often rediscover that resonance in middle age, when I’m unpacking the Friday ‘big shop’ thankful that I can pay for the food and I have never known what it is to go hungry. Nor have my kids. I have been very blessed as roughly 20% of UK children regularly experience food insecurity.

Last week the list of the UK’s 100 biggest taxpayers was published. Top of the pops were the North West billionaire brothers behind the gambling giant *BetFred* at a total of £400million; a 30% increase on last year. Gambling pays, so to speak.

But it’s just a short-lived distraction. A displacement activity. A disproportionate number of gambling shops are in our poorer neighbourhoods where children go hungry.

But there is one guaranteed bet. Death.

The author and clinical psychologist, Frank Tallis, addresses this with beautiful fluency in his new book on middle age *‘Wise: Finding purpose, meaning and wisdom beyond the midpoint of life’*.

In his book, Tallis says: “Things begin to change with the outward-facing striving of the first half of life begins to shift into a time when the goals are not quite so clear, when they have been achieved or clearly missed and when mortality, in the form of ageing bodies, dying parents, illness, becomes harder to ignore.

“Everyone needs their methods of ‘terror management’ – the problem arises when those methods are too flimsy too narrow or in some other way unfit for purpose. ...In western democracies, ageing and dying seem to have been reclassified as soluble problems The denial of death on an apocalyptic scale.”

An inspirational Baptist minister friend of mine, Allan Finnegan, has been given two months to live.

You can find more of his story on my Facebook page and he's just launched his fabulous memoir: '*I didn't ask for any of this*'. A laugh-out loud story of his life's tour from Bootle building sites to Baptist Minister to a bewildered semi-finalist on Britain's Got Talent.

A rare gem from a people's pastor. Honest, heart-warming and hopeful to the last laugh. Even as he faces his final curtain.

Our final curtain is the 100% statistic. Why deny it on an apocalyptic scale?

Christians believe that death is the gateway to when life really begins. When we encounter the joy of heaven, meeting Jesus face to face.

It's not a gamble but a 100% certainty, as Jesus came back from the dead as a real and living person.

'Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom' (Psalm 90.12)

Bishop Jill Duff, Bishop of Lancaster