

WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



God's beautiful promise to us all

I love meeting new people. It's a wonderful perk of being a bishop. Sometimes they tell you the most surprising things.

I was on my way out of a church and an old gent came over. With a twinkle in his eye ... he whispered ...

"Can I just say ... You - are - the - most - beautiful - bishop I have ever seen!". I burst into laughter ... He had caught me off guard. No stranger has ever called me beautiful before. The compliment began to seep into my heart ... which started to swell ... for a few microseconds. Then he finished his sentence ... "but I guess there isn't much competition ... !"

How to dash a girl's hopes in one swift sentence!

Beautiful. It's not a word I use about myself. It would not be a word many middle-aged women would use about themselves.

In fact, I think most of us – men and women - are used to giving ourselves a low rating on the good looks score.

It starts early. I remember in the school playground, the teachers telling us it doesn't matter what other kids say about you. Just tell them: "Sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me". That's a complete lie. Broken bones mend without trace. Words spoken over us can stay with us for a very long time.

Kenny Blue was five when he was first put on a horse in his grandfather's paddock. His grandfather whispered in his ear: "Kenny you're a natural". Ever after that, every time he got on a horse, he heard his grandfather's voice in his ear. "Kenny you're a natural". Kenny Blue went on to win the Olympic Gold medal for horse-riding for the United States.

Here's the most beautiful thing. The Bible tells us we can be sons and daughters of the king of the universe. That he rejoices over us with songs of love. That his banner over us is love. That he whispers in our ear: "You are my own dear son – my own dear daughter – with you I am well pleased". I am listening out for that whisper today.

Rt Rev Dr Jill Duff
Bishop of Lancaster

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