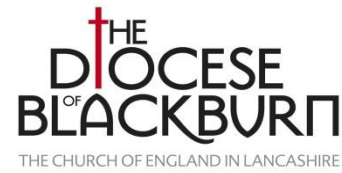


WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



Being Blessed

As a priest I have the privilege of praying God's blessing for people on many occasions. So, it was an occasion when somebody prayed a blessing for me that struck me as I considered today's readings.

I was visiting Christians in the Mangla Dam area of Pakistani Kashmir. As is the case in Pakistan I was given very good hospitality from people who had very little. Their request of me was that I prayed for them as they were excited at the thought that a 'proper' ordained pastor had come to see them.

Just before I left, an older woman stopped me. 'Thank you for coming', she said through an interpreter. 'You have blessed us. I am older than you so it's now for me to bless you.' She laid her hand upon my forehead and prayed God's blessing for me. It was a very powerful moment.

Today we hear Jesus' teaching about the blessed. It is one of the most beautiful passages in human history. We often call it the Beatitudes (the blessings).

The blessed are not the ones that you might think. It is not a matter of blessed are the rich and powerful those with state and authority. Through the list is one clear and obvious category - we are blessed when we know our need of God and that often comes through vulnerability more than strength.

It may well be that one of the barriers to evangelism is that too often in recent years in the western world people have not known their need of God because so many of them have felt they have life sorted. That is why in so many ways it is the dispossessed in society and the poor in spirit who are more easily reached.

Do you know you need God this day? I'm sure you do because that's a call of discipleship. However, let us commit ourselves as we consider another Lent on the horizon to make it a time when we rest on God's grace knowing our own vulnerability even if we feel in a position of some strength.

From that basis knowing that we are in so many ways in need of God, may we reach out to our parishes of villages, towns and cities with the gospel of Christ – good news of blessing the world so needs to hear.

Archdeacon David Picken, Lancaster Archdeaconry

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES