

WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



Where is your faith?

We have heard in the news recently how Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Muslims, people of a myriad of other beliefs and no belief had their lives and reputations destroyed.

Some were young as 19; some went to prison, all simply because they chose to serve others by running a sub-post office in their local community.

Lives of individuals and their families were destroyed by the failings of a global technology company and a British national treasure, the Post Office.

I thank God my parents-in-law had retired from their village store and post office before the Horizon computer system was installed.

The gospel for the second Sunday before Lent tells of the disciples becoming very frightened as a storm rages on the sea of Galilee.

They are so frightened that they wake the sleeping Jesus who calms the storm but then issues them with a severe rebuke, "Where is your faith?".

This week the greatest miscarriage of justice in the history of the English legal system finally began to be laid bare. The public inquiry began into why, between 2000 and 2014, more than 700 sub-postmasters were wrongly accused of theft, fraud and false accounting due to a flaw in a computer system.

There can be little worse than being accused and then severely punished for something you know you haven't done.

The faith of those sub-postmasters and their families must have been challenged beyond our imagination and for many of them it was stretched to breaking point - some even took their own lives.

Listening to their testimonies, it is hard to comprehend how desperate they must have been and the effects it had on their wider families.

Jesus' question "Where is your faith?" may seem a simple question with a relatively easy answer for many who hear it in the pews of our churches on Sunday.

Faced with the might of the commercial and legal system against you; or – as recently has happened in Ukraine - over a hundred thousand Russian troops at your back door, it becomes a very different question.

It is a question which has been asked of God's people down the centuries and the answer is always the same: God is with us, now and forever.

He says: "I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you, be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Rev Canon Peter Ballard
Chief Executive DBE Services
Vicar of Shireshead St James

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES