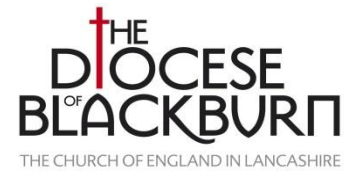


WEEKLY SERMON

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Beware of the Righteous Self

Sometimes I like to think that I've got it just about right.

A feeling of self-righteous confidence comes over me. You are wrong, I am right. No question, no doubt. Debate over ...

Now let's be clear, as Christians we are called to live righteous lives. Proverbs 21 tells us: 'Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honour.'

However, remember that God doesn't want us to mix being righteous with being *self*-righteous.

There's a world of difference between the two. Being righteous means honouring God. Being self-righteous means dishonouring your neighbour.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 10 God tells us through Paul: 'So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

Quite a reminder this warning of Paul's. The argument goes like this: you are confident that you've got it right, convinced of the strength of your argument/position, or the undeniable evidence; clear that everyone else is talking tosh.

You could well be lurching about with that plank sticking out of your eye as in Matthew chapter 7: 'Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?'

And of course, the whole edifice can come crashing down about your head, leaving you embarrassed and egg-spattered!

A good way of considering this is to picture yourself moving alongside the person or persons you disagree or debate with, rather than facing them down. Have that argument or exchange of opinions sat side by side on a sofa or a park bench, rather than at opposite sides of a desk.

Lent is our time of discipline, of reflection, of anticipating the all-encompassing sacrifice that puts us right with God. It should make us think long and hard too about avoiding the lapse into self-righteousness, to remember that God belongs to us all and we to him, like it or not!

In Proverbs 16 we read: 'All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit.' God's steady, unflinching gaze sees through all our posturing. We do well to remember that.

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