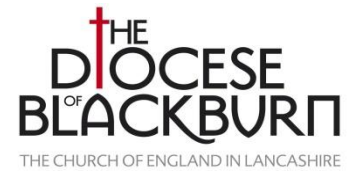


WEEKLY SERMON

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Give yourself a chance to grow in Jesus

I love to spend time in the garden and this time of year the garden is usually at its peak. The flowers are all at their fullest and every day things seems to change. Of course, with the current weather the garden is also growing at a tremendous rate and there are a constant number of 'jobs for the weekend' to quote Monty Don. Whilst there is great joy in the garden there are also a few challenges. A significant one is that just as the flowers grow well so do the weeds! Every time you look down there is another one just happily taking over. The gardeners would say there is no such thing as a weed, just a plant in the wrong place, but I am fairly certain that there are a number of plants that none of us would want in the garden because of their invasive nature. The gospel reading for this Sunday is taken from Matthew and tells the parable of the weeds. It is the lesser-known parable of weeds and sowing as it follows the parable of the sower which is by far the better-known one. In the parable a master sows seed and the enemy sows weeds within it. When considering what to do, the master says that the weeds should not be removed as there is a danger that these would unearth the main crop. Instead, he says that they will both need to be left to grow until full maturity and then separated at the harvest as only then will it be clear which is a weed and which is the wheat. This made me think, as I would normally try to remove weeds in the garden as soon as I see them rather than letting them get established. I then remembered the times that I have over-zealously pulled out plants thinking they were weeds. Jesus talks through this parable - of giving time for us to show our fruit - to show we are not weeds. We can do this by turning from the things that are evil; things not of God and people who would lead us from a deep relationship with God and turning to a deeper relationship with God through bible study, prayer and worship. So, how will you use the time you are given by the master?

Stephen Whittaker, Diocesan Secretary