

WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



'Let love be genuine, hate what is evil.'

The language of love is a common place for human beings. Often it is portrayed as romantic love, be that through poetry, other forms of the written word, song, or film.

Yet all Christians know the reference to love, whilst including those things, must be a much richer and broader idea. Today we are given an opportunity to reflect upon that through passages from Romans and the Gospel of Matthew.

True love wants the best for the other - be that person, group or nation. It is the opposite of self and is that which desires the common good. Paul's words in Romans 12 do, of course, come in the context of someone who had known hate prior to his conversion and certainly now knew what it was to be hated and persecuted. The closing words of wisdom to us today in our lectionary passage are profound and challenging.

'Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.'

Wise words and extremely difficult for us to put into practice. Too often a response to having wrong done to us is to seek to respond in kind. This ought to continue to challenge all Christians as we reflect upon the way in which we're called to be countercultural.

The gospel passage for today amplifies this. Peter struggles to understand why Jesus might be saying he has to die at the hands of the religious authorities. Jesus must rebuke Peter's objection because it is wrong thinking and opposed to God's plan of salvation.

However, surely on a more human level, the reality is Jesus would love nothing more than to walk away from what he must face, even though he knows he cannot. To use a modern phrase, he would be left conflicted by the conversation. In other words, knowing what he must do whilst being tempted to do nothing more than look for the quiet life.

If we are tempted to think that this was just the act of a Saviour, Jesus goes on to confront that too. If anyone wants to follow Jesus, they must take up their cross and follow. That will mean taking the opposing view which may cost us; sometimes being at odds with those we love most or being prepared to take a stand against the mores of society.

Today then, the gospel challenges us to a higher standard. But ends with a note which reminds us that the rewards are eternal!

Archdeacon David Picken