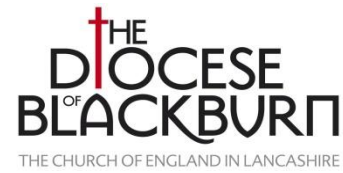


# WEEKLY SERMON

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## Seeking to follow Jesus each day is a life saver

Just imagine if you can for a moment (it's not easy) you heard Jesus telling you to get behind him and calling you Satan!

See what I mean, it's not straightforward is it?

Yet the remarkable thing is the one known as the rock of faith had this experience and denied Jesus three times. If you think you sometimes don't live up to expectations as a follower of Jesus, then imagine how Peter felt.

Soon after Jesus is saying to the crowd, with Peter listening and still reeling from those words, you need to lose your life to save it. I can well understand why Peter might not have been finding this easy listening. How can you lose your life (therefore die) and save it? There was a lot to learn and for Peter and other disciples it was a steep learning curve.

It's probably fair to say that whatever Lenten discipline you have are not quite as challenging as we hear in today's gospel. We have the benefit of knowing these words very well. Living through the experience of them for the first time would have been very different.

In fairness to Peter all he is promising to do is stop Jesus being killed - a laudable ambition you would think for someone you love. For this, he is denounced as Satan. Not for the first time, Jesus' disciples learn they must see things in a very different way than they have before.

If Jesus' words seem harsh, it is well to remind ourselves that Satan is the ultimate deceiver. Peter was deceived because he hadn't yet realised that Jesus had to die so he could come back to life to free us for eternity.

So, however you are trying to get closer to God this Lent, spare a thought for Peter. Remind yourself also that there may be things that you always thought you knew and God may have a surprise in store to show you new ways.

In the end, for every one of us, the most important thing we do is to decide to embrace the cross; that symbol of death, yet also of life.

That, plus do all we can to place ourselves into the grace of God and seek to follow Jesus each day.

Believe me, do that and it will be a life saver!

**Archdeacon David Picken, Archdeacon of Lancaster**

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES