

Friends

As we see further distress caused by the ever-rising cost of living, we may be struggling to make ends meet, or have friends or relatives who we suspect are so struggling. Meanwhile, almost every day, I seem to get an offer in my email box for a credit card or bank loan and encouragement to solve our immediate problems by taking on longer term ones sometime in the future is endemic in the way consumer countries create finance in our current systems.

Throughout history, there has been criticism levelled at the Church because of what is perceived as a “pie in the sky when you die” approach; an approach that says: “We don’t need to worry about now, however awful, because eternity will be lovely”. Somehow, the people preaching this always seemed to be doing okay. More recently, an alternative has been offered – that of the prosperity Gospel preachers who believe that financial blessing and physical wellbeing are always the will of God for us and that faith, positive speech and donations to religious causes will increase our own wealth – although it often seems that only the leaders get wealthy.

Neither of these theological positions is true. Instead, Jesus came that we might have life in all its fullness, and that life is intended to be lived not on a multi-million pound yacht, but in community with others. We look to those around us and when we spot a problem that we can help with, we make the offer and when we can do nothing, we give moral support and do what we can. Our faith entitles us to God’s love (which belongs to all of humanity anyway) and forgiveness of sin (which we all need) and a promise that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” It most certainly does not entitle us to wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. These next few months are not going to be easy. The government, going through rocky times itself, hopes to increase work opportunities and encourage employers to pay more for skilled workers. As is always the case, even if the plan works, there will be those who are left behind. As each of our churches questions its own calling in the face of reduced congregations and social apathy, we should perhaps listen carefully to those who are brave enough to share what is going on for them in these difficult times. It may be that we will find within these stories the next steps we need to take as church and as community.

God bless. Vicci