

So, what do you reckon you are? When you look in the mirror what do you think, all considered? Here's my tip: take your glasses off first: it always looks better after that.

What do you think, all considered? Swipe right I'm sure, but what about in old money? Three or four, you're running yourself down. Nine or ten, well I admire your self confidence. Perhaps like most people you're at sixes and sevens: in life almost certainly but then we're heading the same direction for our self-evaluation. Six or 7: not too full of yourself but hey, you know never going to be the last one left on the shelf.

BMI? IQ? LDL cholesterol? Sitting pretty or could do better, chances are, after a certain age whether you stay awake at night worrying about it or not, you'll still know the score. And whatever the score, you're likely to make the best of it: either it's a good tally, in which case... or it's somewhere in the middle so you don't need to think about it one way or the other, or it's not great, in which case you'll convince yourself that, you know, there are other things in life to worry about and whatever it is that's you've got the bad score for isn't that important anyway. That's part of what makes us what we are, it's that little trick that means we can get up in the morning and usually have a day that isn't all spent curled up on the sofa mired in crippling melancholy. Chins up, smile it might never happen, it's the entirely unfounded belief that things can only get better and that whatever it is you're measuring our score is going to be better than average and if it isn't, it ain't worth measuring.

It is of course a very human delusion: on the whole things don't get better, they almost always end in tears and mathematically we can't possibly be all above average. But we carry on regardless, push it to the back of our minds, whistle a happy tune, drown our sorrows, switch on the TV and pull our socks up. Keep calm. Carry on.

Usually it works. We pull it off, we cloak and dissemble and nobody notices: everybody is so good at looking happy even if they're not that everybody always looks happy even if they're not. Everybody's Facebook lives are perfect: no blemishes on Instagram faces, lives lived perfectly, 10 out of 10.

It's a double lie of course: that life is perfect, and that our lives are perfect too.

Behind the manically happy facade, the honest truth is that so many of us are burdened with the feeling that we're not really good enough. So many go through life

feeling that we have been measured in the balance and found wanting. Six or 7 is the best we can be and even that's probably out of our league.

When it comes down to it, we're just not good enough.

You too may sometimes feel that you are not good enough.

And you know what?

You're not.

And...

here's the really important part.

Nobody else is either.

Pretty much every way we evaluate ourselves and decide whether we're good enough or not is by comparing ourselves to other people. And when it comes down to it, when we get down to the nitty gritty, the brass tacks and the bottom line, we're all as bad as each other.

*"All... have fallen short of the glory of God"* St Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans and two thousand years later we *still* haven't got the message: either we're beating ourselves up because we're not good enough, or beating someone else up because *they're* not good enough and beating them up helps to distract us from our own sense of inadequacy.

We're all as bad as each other.

That's Paul's opening gambit in Romans and it's the first lesson of the gospel we have just heard.

Jesus challenges the woman's accusers. You think this woman's worse than you are do you? Have you looked at yourselves lately? Do you know how vile a lynch mob looks?

At that point, starting with those who really should know better and ending with the whole damned crew, they admit to themselves “We’re all as bad as each other.” And off they slink.

Jesus’ final word on the matter is addressed to all of the crowd, the victimisers as much as the victim : go away and sin no more. Not just her. All of them.

OK. Here’s the happy ending. You didn’t think I’d let you go without a happy ending did you? That’s why you should always keep listening to the sermon: otherwise you’ll miss the happy ending.

We’re all as bad as each other.

And we’re all as good as each other.

There is nothing we can do to make ourselves good enough. We’re going to go through life soaring to the heights and plunging to the depths; up and down, down and up; bouncing around the middle a while before off we go again. And despite never quite coming up to speed, never quite hitting the mark, never, never getting the full 100 per cent, despite all that, we *are* good enough for God.

That’s the second, happy lesson from tonight’s gospel. We’re all as bad as each other. And still God loves us. WE’ve scored 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. And still God loves us. Scroll forward six weeks and two days to Good Friday and Jesus is dying on the cross. There is no clearer sign he can give us, no clearer sign than that, that we are good enough.

Yep, we can always do better. We must always try to do better. And we give ourselves the best crack at it if we don’t beat ourselves- or anyone else- up while we’re trying.