

Time for God – Take 2

Purpose: To assist the congregation with further reflection on the theme of the Sunday service and in particular with the Congregational Bible passage.

Week beginning Sunday 9 April **Who is this?**

Pray Pray that we would be ready to listen to Jesus and go his way and to take care not to try to impose our preconceived ideas on him.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Matthew 21:1-11. You may wish to look at Zechariah 9 as well.

Background Jesus makes a dramatic entry into Jerusalem. His supporters probably saw this as a public declaration of his claim to be the Messiah (and almost certainly the religious leaders saw it this way) but he technically he didn't actually voice that claim. What he did was ensure that he fulfilled the prophecy in Zechariah riding in peace on a donkey – a claim to kingship, to being the Messiah but signalling peaceful intentions. It is important to recognise that this was almost certainly at odds with the expectations of both his supporters and opponents

Possible questions/points to consider

1. Jesus had signalled several times to his disciples that he was heading for Jerusalem and to his death. Some of them were aware of the impending crisis and Peter among them had attempted to persuade him to avoid the capital city and the danger that lay there. But Jesus knew that there was no avoiding it. How can we encourage one another to be faithful to doing what God requires of us, even when it is tough? How do we remain positive and avoid fatalism? How do we ensure that we aren't getting into trouble of our own making?
2. Up until this point Jesus had had a largely regional ministry, mostly confined to the Galilee. Now he was "going national". What had changed? How was he likely to be viewed? Curiosity? Interested? With suspicion? As a country bumpkin? Jesus was not naïve and paid careful attention to his "audience" made up as it was of various constituencies from the high and mighty to ordinary people, some religious, some not but he also held on very firmly to the message he wanted to get across and would not compromise even if standing firm risked arrest or worse. How do we see our "audience"? How can we take seriously the people around us, the context without compromising on Jesus' message?
3. Jesus was coming as king – but a very different kind of king. Share as many ways in which Jesus' ideas of kingship, leadership, "power" would have differed from people's expectations. On Sunday, we did consider things that Jesus WASN'T about (and it is OK to talk about some of those) but try to ensure that you mention the positives – what Jesus WAS about.
4. We still have a message to proclaim and live out and somehow we have to get that message across to our neighbours (in word and example). How do we ensure that we focus on the positives? What key positive elements of Jesus' approach might be most significant today? To what extent are these evident in what we do and say?
5. People today are still easily swayed by strength of will, power, influence and force of numbers. How might a "servant approach" work? How might people react? What obstacles stand in our way? How might we deal with them?
6. It is important to make the point that doing the "right thing," implementing Jesus' plans, putting his kingdom values into practice as much as we can does not necessarily lead to things going well for us. How do we cope with that? What lessons can we take from the way Jesus held to his mission? How do we support one another in holding true to Jesus in our day?

Prayer Lord, help us to hold firm to Jesus ways, to seek the values of his kingdom rather than earthly power and influence and to ensure that love and grace characterise our lives. Amen.