

Time for God – Take 2

Purpose: To assist the congregation with further reflection on the theme of the Sunday service/passage.

Week beginning Sunday 7 April 2019 Self giving love

Pray Thank God for his overwhelming generosity and love. Pray that as we consider our response that it would take full account of the breadth and depth of his love in Jesus and that it would be shown, not in narrow “I believe” terms but in broad and practical ways which flow from the relationship which God wants to give us in his Son.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). John 3:16-17.

Background In some ways we shouldn't need any introductory background to what is probably the most famous verse in the Bible but it is worth bearing in mind that John 3:16 has been the focus of many theological discussions and disputes and people often pin their whole view of God and Jesus and salvation on this one verse. It is vital that we understand that love and forgiveness is at the heart – and that these are relational. Sometimes v 17 is forgotten about – remember what is said there about God's prime purpose in sending Jesus – to be Saviour rather than judge.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. What is key to God initiating his plan of salvation? It is worth noting (here and elsewhere) that God's plan predates any effort, response, any qualification or contribution on our part! Why is it that we often find it hard to accept gifts (or are anxious to find an opportunity to give something back to those who have given)? H 694 Brother, sister let me serve you. Why do we find it hard to allow others to offer service to us? God takes the initiative in love. He loves us long before we make any attempt to respond to his love. Why is this significant?
2. What does it mean when we say that God gave us the gift of salvation freely, as grace, rather than as something which we earn or contribute to? “You only value something that you pay for” – why does this not apply here? Clearly, our salvation cost Jesus a lot – his life, his fellowship with the Father etc – how does our salvation freely given take on a different complexion when we begin to appreciate the nature of Jesus' self giving love?
3. We thought a lot about belief/trust/faith on Sunday. Why do we generally think of belief as our agreeing (in our mind) to something? ($2+2=4$, it is/isn't going to rain today, the world is round). Really believe/faith/trust are much more closely tied to each other. How can we alter our view so that believing/trusting/having faith are much more doing words than thinking?
4. Love is about relationship. How might our view of John 3:16 change if we saw our response (whether we describe it as believing, faith or trust) as the ongoing relationship of love for Jesus? How might that make it easier to make the link between our trust in Jesus and our love for (and practical service towards) others?
5. When we are in a club or society there are often rules about who and how people may join? Why is it not like that with Jesus? One of the things people like is to know that having done 1,2,3 & 4 they have satisfied all the requirements of membership. Why can't we ever say that we'd done it all? Why does that make salvation based on forgiveness and grace so wonderful?
6. Verse 17 says that the prime purpose in Jesus' coming was to be our saviour rather than judge. (not that that means that anything goes – remember the need for loving relationship!). However, how should that affect the way we treat those who don't (as yet) have any connection with Jesus? How might an emphasis on love and grace change our attitudes towards them? Theirs to us or indeed God?
7. There are other issues that could have been discussed - feel free to explore any topics from the passage or theme even if they weren't raised on Sunday.

Prayer Lord thank you that you love us so much, that Jesus is so ready to give of himself in love, in spite of our undeserving. Help us to get beyond any box ticking and see our response as one of self giving love towards you and to our neighbours. Amen.