

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 10 December Preparers of Light – Peace

Pray Praise God that there is a message of peace – not only absence of fighting but deep seated peace with God and our neighbour. Ask God to enable us to play our part in preparing the way for Jesus – the Light of the world. May we be given all that we need to share the message – both in word and deed.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Mark 1:1-8.

Background Mark is renowned for being short, sharp and to the point. There is brevity and a sense of immediacy throughout the gospel. Notice there is no account of the nativity in Mark – he gets straight on with it – This is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Straight out with it – no messing. He has an urgent and vitally important message and he gives us a heads up right at the start that we should pay heed. Enter John the Baptist – not the star of the show, his role is to prepare things for the star, for the Christ, the Messiah. He has a message that people need to hear, a message from God. The Saviour is coming and folk need to repent and be ready for him. We too have a share in being preparers of the Light.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. John the Baptist (Baptiser) may have been viewed as an eccentric by some, dangerous by the authorities but he grabbed the “headlines” and attracted significant crowds. To what extent might have adopted Paul dictum “By all means win some”? There are those Christians who deliberately adopt unusual methods so as to reach people with the gospel. How far is that legitimate? What does it say to those who might be uncomfortable at being too “stand out”?
2. Give John his due – he seemed to know his audience, he was able to get his message across in a way that rang bells with significant numbers of people. How might we improve our understanding of our “audience”? How could we work to improve our approachability, relevance to our communities without compromising on the message?
3. John was not “in it” to make a name for himself. Sometimes we human beings fall into that trap. How do we ensure that we are preparers of the light rather than those who seek to BE the light? (He must increase, I must decrease).
4. God has made us unique individuals with our varied characteristics, personalities and traits. How are we to use our different talents? How can we “be ourselves” and still be faithful to the vital message of Jesus? What should be the balance between words and action?
5. “Getting the message across” can be a slow business. Sometimes we are not patient enough. Preparing for the Light isn’t just a quick dash out with an invitation or blurting out a sentence or two about Jesus – often it is a longer term project – working away to befriend, to foster trust, to build a relationship which makes it possible for questions to be asked, for interest to be garnered. How do we see this? How willing are we to work at these? How may we help one another in this direction?
6. While we have an important part to play it is worth remembering that there are limits to our responsibility. It’s God’s message we didn’t make it up! We aren’t responsible if people reject the message. As long as we’ve been true and tried not to offend. We may not describe ourselves as God’s posties or even ambassadors but while we should “own” the message the ultimate responsibility is God’s. How might that help us?
7. We need to appreciate that at some point we need to stand back and allow individuals to see Jesus rather than us. We can still be their friend but we want them to have Jesus as friend too. How do we help that to happen?

Prayer Lord, help us to be ourselves but to play OUR part in being preparers of the Light – to make space for others to encounter Jesus in a positive way. Amen.