

Time for God – Take 2

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

Week beginning Sunday 15 December 2019 Hold on to vision

Pray Thank God that he doesn't leave us in the dark indefinitely and that he wants to reveal his purposes to us so that we might share in them. Pray that we might have vision – not just for what is immediate, what we should be doing right now, but also that we might see something of God's longer term strategy.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Isaiah 35:1-10.

Background We have yet another picture of future hope from Isaiah. This time he focusses on the return of his people from exile with a vision of streams of them making their way through the rough tracks across the wilderness, emerging to return to their own land and all the promise there. It includes a positive message from the vulnerable and is mirrored in Jesus' words to the synagogue in Nazareth.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. We all know that some people's eyesight is better than others. Some struggle to see at all, some are short sighted, some long sighted, some have tunnel vision and others have cataracts or other issues. However, we don't often talk about how good (or otherwise) is our "spiritual" vision. How might we discuss our ability to ascertain God's purposes a) near hand ie immediate future b) long term? What differences might there be in our approach? What steps might we take to develop these?
2. Without vision the people perish – a quotation from scripture. What sense of the future do you have? Do people in general have? Why is it so difficult to get our heads round the longer term? Why do we tend to want immediate results? What merit is there in laying down preparations for the long term? How do we do that without copping out of attending to urgent necessities now?
3. Christians are sometimes accused of being too heavenly minded to be of any earthly use or being interested only in "pie in the sky when you die". How might a proper appreciation of God's long term plans (a long term vision) inform and influence the way we engage with life in our community now?
4. Many of us wear glasses or contact lenses (esp as we get older) or get other help with our eyes but we rarely consider the help we might need to help with our "spiritual" vision. Try to think what helps (human, practical, "spiritual") are available to improve our vision for God and his purposes? How might we make better use of them and encourage others to do so too?
5. Thinking a little about the situation in which you find yourself right now or about a friend or family member going through uncertainty or difficulty. Where might you see God working? Where and how might you like him to work? Is there any hints as to how YOU might be able to be at least in part an answer to your/their prayer? If not, immediately might it be worth keeping on seeking a clearer vision?
6. Thinking about the longer term. How might God want things in your community or in the wider world to be different? (Try to be as specific as possible). What might you personally be able to begin to do to get behind his purposes of change? How might you be able to work with others to achieve movement in the right direction?
7. How would Jesus want us to cope with waiting or not seeing immediate results? What is to be said for laying down foundations and taking time to develop qualities and traits in ourselves and in others that may, in the future, be instrumental in advancing the cause of the kingdom?

Prayer: Lord, thank you that you have a long term plan for each of us, for every community and for the world as a whole. Forgive us for our fascination with the immediate. Without ignoring our responsibilities to work with you now help us also to be willing to grasp a long term vision of your plans and be prepared to work according to your time scale, including the patience to wait at times, but for your glory. Amen.