

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 15 January Beginning in the Spirit

Pray Pray that we would be prepared to accept the changes God wants to make in our lives and in the life of our congregation so that we may be better fitted to engage in his mission in 2017. Perhaps we need to be more alert to the fact that God's Spirit is still at work in our day and age!.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). John 1:29-42.

Background Here we have the follow up on Jesus' baptism by John. The scene appears to have been John with some of his disciples discussing what had happened and the impact it had had on him. He gives them (and us) greater insight into what he had seen and heard, and the confirmation of Jesus' person and forthcoming ministry – for himself and for Jesus. But in sharing it with his trusted friends John acts as a conduit for the spread of the good news (on Sunday I talked about rippling out). That continues in the second part of the passage as Andrew takes things further out and shares the news of finding the Messiah or Chosen One with Simon Peter his brother.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. In sharing more of what he had seen and heard at Jesus' baptism John opens things out and begins the process of the gospel being shared. While there can be some "close encounters" between God and us that might be very personal and private how far would you go along with the view that "The good news of Jesus is essentially an open secret that is for sharing far and wide"? How much more of an impact might we make if we were more prepared to "tell others what we have seen and heard" about Jesus? What more could we do to encourage one another with this? [Most people who show any interest in the Christian faith prefer to hear examples of what difference God/Jesus has made in the lives of people they know].
2. John trusted his disciples sufficiently to share what was almost certainly the most profound (and personal) moment of his life to date. They went on to trust others (albeit people who were well known to them) and then in time those others went on to share news of Jesus with all kinds of people wherever they went. How might we develop trust (perhaps initially among a small group) among others that would allow us to talk easily and openly about what we have experienced of Jesus and his love? (bearing mind that any such thing would be a precursor to sharing the gospel more widely). Is there perhaps two stages – 1) telling the facts, the experience – what happened 2) going on from there to give our view/feelings/belief of Jesus and his plans (inc for us) based on our encounters. Many of us stick at the first. Would you agree or not? How might we create an safe environment that would foster more open sharing along the lines of 2?
3. I don't know how long Andrew had been accompanying and learning from John but having heard John's account of his experience of Jesus at the baptism Andrew immediately sought out his brother to share the news. How could we learn from Andrew to be more open and direct (at least with some) in our talk of Jesus and his plans? "We Scots are Reserved" was the title of a Church of Scotland mission pamphlet a number of years ago. How might Christians in Scotland seek to emulate the openness and sharing attitude of Scotland's patron saint?
4. Not so many questions this week but feel free to explore other areas that arise.

Prayer Lord, help us to less reserved about our faith and more open to talk about Jesus and the impact he makes on our lives, more open to share news of him with others. Amen.