

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 22 January Listening at the Lakeside

Pray Pray that we would hear the call of God to ongoing service – that we would understand what it means for us to be Jesus’ followers in our day and age and that we would be open to the Spirit’s leading to DO what is required.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Matthew 4:12-23.

Background Again the story moves on and those involved take further steps to get to know (and to follow) Jesus. The context is Lake Galilee – away from the centre of authority (both civil and religious) – a down to earth, practical even pragmatic feel – here Jesus begins his ministry among ordinary practical people (who were not without faith). There is an openness to hear what he had to say (and if truth be told even more of an interest in his healings) but come time Jesus calls for a response. Come, follow me. And the fishermen throw their lot in with Jesus and follow him.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. Usually, people home in on the sudden call of Jesus to the fishermen to leave everything: home, family, neighbourhood and livelihood. But was this call as “out of the blue” as it might first seem? What indications are there of time being given for teaching, reflection and careful consideration? That said, it was still a bold step for the fishermen to take. What factors do you think brought them to leave everything and follow Jesus? How do we ensure that we home in on similar factors rather than allowing excuses to detract from discipleship?
2. Focus on the whys not the why nots! At times Christians get the name of being spoil sports, and worse. We are people who don’t allow this, that and the next thing. While there are aspects of modern lifestyle that sits uncomfortably with Christian teaching Jesus is far more interested in giving people positives – love, new life, forgiveness, grace and so on. What positives from this passage should we be highlighting for Christian living nowadays? How would a more positive message impact on our neighbours?
3. Being a Christian is not a doddle – there is still a cost of discipleship, we should not devalue Jesus’ sacrifice or the importance of his call so that we skate over the tough teaching and hold out only cheap grace. What does it mean to be a disciple – a follower of Jesus today? Where might we have got it wrong? Why do many Christians imagine that real discipleship is only for special people, not for “ordinary” believers? What can we do to correct that view?
4. I am not able for that – I just don’t have it in me. While being honest about our own abilities we shouldn’t too readily rule ourselves out from God’s service. How would things be different if we focussed less on our own inadequacies and more on God’s ability to equip us for his service?
5. The world is desperately in need of the love of Jesus - in word and action. How might we go about things differently if we had a clearer vision of God’s plan to reach out to all kinds of people with Jesus’ love? From the outset the disciples were encouraged to reach out to others with the good news of Jesus and in practical loving action. What more do we need to do to bring back this focus?
6. Feel free to discuss anything else that arises from the passage or from the service on Sunday.

Prayer Lord, help us not to leave it for others, for “special” people to follow you. You call each and every one of us to follow you and share in telling and showing others your love. Help us to think less of what we are unable to do and more about how you can work your purposes out through us. Amen.