

## 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 29 January Listening on the Mount

Pray Jesus calls us to change – to see things from a different perspective. Pray that we would be willing to listen and to act on what we hear so that the values of his kingdom may become more evident in our world.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Matthew 5:1-12.

Background The Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount are well known but while they may resonate with those who are weighed down with injustice and poverty they sit rather uncomfortably alongside the relatively positive experiences of life that many of us in this country enjoy. Somehow we need to come to terms with a fairly radical counter cultural message that ought to challenge us to change. In and of ourselves we are largely unable to do this but God is willing to help us.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. Taking Jesus' comments at face value you would be tempted to say that he had got it wrong. Most poor people are not happy, do not feel blessed. The majority of those who have just lost a loved one are more than likely to be sad and some may feel that God has deserted them and so on. Jesus is trying to get us to look at life differently, to open us up to a heavenly perspective. Why do we tend to look at things from an earthly view? When you hear the word "poor" – what are your immediate thoughts? How can we make room for spiritual values? You can't pay peace, contentment, blessedness into a bank but how important are these?
2. There are more examples of what I have called God's topsy turvy thinking. Give examples of how God's view on many things in life can differ greatly from modern thinking. (Eg Rich, poor, happy, sad, success). How can we encourage one another as Christians to align ourselves with God's values rather than being sucked in to accept society's values?
3. It is tempting to water things down in order not to put people off. On the other hand, people can be put off if they sense that there is little or no substance to our position. How do we ensure that we remain true to Jesus and his kingdom values without distancing ourselves entirely from the very people we wish to reach? How do we avoid being wishy washy and yet not give people the impression that we are asking the impossible?
4. "How are you?" We ask and are asked questions like that all the time and usually we make a reply based on how we feel at the time, how we are being impacted by circumstances be it weather, health, work, etc. How important is how we FEEL? We need to understand the importance of feeling before we can begin to take on board that well being in Jesus' "book" goes beyond that. Note that Jesus is still concerned with feelings and so should we but what indications are there in the passage that Jesus goes beyond feelings, beyond the immediate here and now? How do we take a longer term view? How does Jesus talk of being blessed apply to things that count in the long run? How do we get this across to people whose lives revolve round immediate pleasure or results?
5. Jesus is interested in what we sometimes call the "real" world but he takes a heavenly perspective too. How can we keep our eyes on heaven and his long term plans for us and for the world while at the same time beginning to make inroads into changing things (at least partially) now as signs of what is to come?
6. Feel free to discuss anything else that arises from the passage or from the service on Sunday.

Prayer Lord, change us thinking and help us to change our ways so that we are more aligned to your plans and purposes and that we can be beacons of hope in a needy world. Amen.