

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 7 January 2018 Light from above

Pray Ask God to give us the grace to be content to let Jesus have the highest honour, like John that we would be ready to decrease so that he may increase and that in the New Year we may be ready to reflect his light rather than hog the attention for ourselves.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Mark 1:4-11. (I realise that this overlaps with the passage we looked at during advent. However, we are taking a different tack. Perhaps read it in a different version too).

Background Moving quickly on we have an account of John and Jesus meeting in public, of John pointing Jesus out as the one he'd been speaking of, of John making clear that Jesus was much greater than he was, and at Jesus' instigation baptising him with the heavenly affirmation – this is my dear Son. I am pleased with him. Last time we thought primarily of John as the one who was preparing the way for the Messiah. Here the spotlight moves away from John onto Jesus.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. In the service we thought a bit about spotlights and people wanting to be in the public eye. Why do you think people want to be popular? In the public eye? Celebrities? How does society judge a person's worth? (Not just money!) How does this differ from what we are told in scripture?
2. John was, by the standards of his day, quite a popular public figure who attracted sizeable crowds. How much would it have taken for him to take a back seat and allow Jesus pre-eminence? Humility doesn't come easily to most of us – how can we be helped in seeing it as a gift from God? How would a fuller understanding of just who Jesus is help us set ourselves in context?
3. At New Year, whether people make resolutions or not, many folk try to make improvements to their lives – and to an extent that is a good thing however there are some things we simply can't achieve by our own efforts, by grit and determination. Why do so many people think we can make ourselves good? In thinking about "light from above" how could we improve things if we were more open to receive blessing from God, gifts from his Spirit, love from the Saviour rather than imagining that we could work improvements in ourselves?
4. We can still point to Jesus, people who can help others prepare for Jesus but we are to do that not by drawing attention to ourselves but by being conduits of love and grace. Can you think of practical ways we can reflect these traits? How do we avoid people latching on to us rather than Jesus? How important is it that we remember what our aim is – to build up our own status and reputation or to praise Jesus and help others to see him for who he really is.
5. What does it mean today for us to decrease? How can Jesus increase?
6. Think about anything else that arises from the passage or from the service.

Prayer Lord, help us to be the people you mean us to be, to use the gifts and talents and opportunities not to draw attention to ourselves but to bring others to see your Son as Lord and Saviour. Amen.