

Time for God – Take 2

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

Week beginning Sunday 1 July 2018 Future over past

Pray that God would help us to look more objectively at our past rather than be too rose tinted so that we can really learn lessons from it (positive – which we can use and take with us into the future, negative – which can help us to avoid similar pitfalls) so that we may be more able to engage in God's work in a very fast changing world and be effective in his mission going forward.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). 2 Samuel 5 :1-5, 9-10.

Background Again we have jumped a fair way from last week where David was mourning the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. The passage looks back on more than 40 years of David's reign as king. It is worth pointing out that David was initially King of Judah only – the northern tribes and smaller portion of the whole people. Saul's sons still controlled the southern tribes referred to collectively as Israel. These two were in conflict on and off for seven years and while the Bible writers are loathe to describe it as civil war – arguably that is what it was. At the end of the seven years after David's following had strengthened and Saul's sons' fortunes had waned David took control of the whole people. (Just to add to the confusion – the united nation took on the name of the southern kingdom and was also known as Israel!)

Possible questions/points to consider

1. The mind plays tricks and we can often adopt a rose tinted view of times past quite unwittingly. Obviously, it is sometimes in the interests of those in power to attempt to rewrite history (and there have been some notorious examples of that). Think of your own past – consider for a couple of minutes fond memories you have of earlier years – share them if you feel able. What about some of the hardships you or your parents endured? Where do they figure? Do we ignore the hardships or play them down? If so why?
2. Filtering memories can apply to our faith history too though of course without doubt more people in Scotland would have identified as Christian and been seen in church and active in church activities in the past. How do we affirm and learn from recent Church history? What were its strengths? But how also can we learn from past mistakes? What would you say were the two greatest lessons to learn from past mistakes in Church life in Scotland in your lifetime and how might we make sure we avoid them going forward?
3. All was not sweetness and light in Israel after the death of Saul. David and the people still had their difficulties. Why do we like to give the impression that all is well? What are the problems with pretending that all is well when it isn't? In life generally? When it comes to faith? How different would our outlook be if we were to use as our standard of "well" – what is pleasing to God?
4. Only Lot and his wife were banned from looking back. We are allowed to look back and take stock from the past. However, without ignoring the past the Christian is intended to focus on what God wants us to do for him here and now and to have an eye on the future, remembering that ultimately our home is in heaven, rather than on earth. Faith is a sign of things hoped for, not yet seen. How might this forward looking attitude be helpful to our Christian faith, the mission of the Church? How might we need to change? What practical differences might it make?
5. The hymn says "Past put behind us, for the future take us. Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone? What does this say to you personally, and what might it be saying to our congregation and the church generally?

Prayer Lord thank you for faithfulness to your people down the years and for those who have served you faithfully. Give us a true sense of our place in your salvation history but make us ready to look forward so that we may see and implement your will for today and tomorrow. Amen.