

Time for God – Take 2

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

Week beginning Sunday 15 July 2018 All that glitters

Pray that we would all be far more concerned at doing what God requires of us than looking good, more interested in substance than image and more ready to get alongside and listen to people that we disagree with than simply dismiss them or shout at

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). 2 Samuel 6 :1-5, 12-19.

Background In many ways this is an odd passage – perhaps not the clearest to gauge what lessons we are to gain from it. However, the context is David’s entry into the new capital of the newly united nation of Israel (the northern kingdom Judah where he’d been king for 7+ years now joined with the 10 southern tribes of Israel under him). He enters in a procession with the ark of the covenant of the Lord which had been transported through the people’s wilderness wanderings as being the tangible symbol of the presence of God among his people. It had for some time been neglected, people fearing it as almost the curse of death. David lets his hair down and is seen dancing (cavorting?) in public. I have taken two main lines from this – a need to listen and seek to understand those who adopt a different position from us and God’s preference for substance rather than image - but I fully recognise that there may other lessons.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. David engages in a very public and informal celebration. Some might have criticised it as being beneath the dignity of the king. His wife was less than impressed – perhaps jealous. To what extent was this truly a celebration of Gods’ return among the people? To what extent was this a personal statement by David? How do our personal interests, God’s interests, public perception play out nowadays? In the way we make our choices privately? In public life? In the Church?
2. Substance and Image. How important is image for people these days? What factors contribute to the importance of image? If people regard Christians as being irrelevant they are not going to pay much attention to us however what dangers are there for Christians in trying to create a good impression? How can we remain true to God’s purposes and still have an impact on our society? God looks at and knows our hearts. How should that affect the way we live? Affect the way that we treat one another? How difficult is it to be true when arguably so much of life is superficial?
3. Playing to the audience. Think back over David’s life – beginnings positive – an awareness of the glory of God and the need to stand up for God and his people. Later – serious moral lapses, weakness with women, political intrigue, victory sought perhaps more for personal gain. Where did he go wrong? How might he have avoided some of the major pitfalls? What lessons can we learn to avoid such errors?
4. It was Burns who made a plea to see ourselves as others see us yet it is something of which God would approve. How do we take a realistic view of ourselves? What lenses might help give us a truer picture? How do we take time to get to know others? esp those who differ significantly from us? Why is it difficult to put ourselves in the shoes of others? Dare we ask ourselves “What does Jesus think of us? of our attitudes? Our actions?” What difference might it make if we did?
5. There may well be other things that arise from the passage. Can you share any other insights? Any lessons? Any difficulties you might have?

Prayer Lord thank you that you know us as we really are with our faults and failings. Thank you that we don’t need to pretend with you for you love us as we are and are prepared to take us and shape us and fit us for your service. Help us to be more concerned about substance than image and to take time to listen properly both to you and others that together we might become a more loving community of your people. Amen.