

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 25 June 2017

Generous People

Pray Pray that we would recognise the wonderful generosity of God and be open, in the light of his great mercy, to being generous with all the gifts that he has given so that we become a generous people of a generous God.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Romans 12:1-13. .

Background Paul is addressing the need for believers to work out their faith in everyday life. However, he wants them to see this as an outworking of God's generous nature rather than sheer effort on our part. Alluding to what he has written earlier in his letter and presumably to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus he make a plea "because of God's great mercy to us" that believers allow God to transform their minds to a new way of thinking and that lives might reflect a new outlook that reflects the generosity and grace of God. He goes on to give some practical examples.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. Sometimes we need to understand a bit more about "why" before we will be persuaded to involve ourselves in something. Paul obviously feels it is important to give believers a reason for the changes he envisages. What does he mean by "because of God's great mercy to us"? How does who Jesus is and what he has done for us alter your attitude to life? What practical differences does it make?
2. Paul talks about a complete transformation of our mind and way of thinking. To what extent are we "up for" that? What factors get in the way? How might revisiting what Jesus has done/is doing for us change our attitudes? How much of this does Paul envisage coming from God? Coming from us?
3. Generally, church members think of worship as what we do in Church on a Sunday. I suppose when we say "Let us worship God" we are reinforcing the view that worship is something we do for God's benefit. How does Paul open up worship in this passage and broaden it far beyond what we do in Church? How does Romans 12 show us that worship is less about our efforts and more about our being aligned to and sharing in God's purposes? How does that change things?
4. "I'm already doing my bit for God" – perhaps we haven't all said that but many of us have thought it. How does talk of a complete change of mind sit with you? Can you offer examples of God's way of thinking is at odds with public view? Take for example attitudes to those who perpetrate indiscriminate violence? Or to those who come to this country from abroad? Or to the overseas aid budget? How do we ensure that God's attitudes shape the way we live?
5. Paul offers one list of qualities and attitudes that are in keeping with God's "mercy" though it is by no means the only list. To what extent do we see the actions listed here as a) our efforts? b) God's gifts? How much difference does it make?
6. Paul certainly sees God being extremely generous in his love towards us in Christ and in the provision of gifts and attributes that ought to enable us to respond. How far do we see "what we have" as being for our benefit and how far for being to further God's kingdom? How might this need to change to reflect God's generosity towards us?
7. Anything else that arises from the passage or the service?

Prayer Heavenly Father, thank you for your great mercy to us show especially in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the continuing presence of his Spirit. Help us to be willing to be changed to honour Jesus in all that we are and do – to be generous in living out our lives to your glory. Generous people of a generous God. Amen