

Time for God – Take 2

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

Week beginning Sunday 17 June 2018 Stepping Up

Pray that God would open us to the possibilities of service and allow us see that he will provide us with the means to do all that he requires of us. Society expects most people to remain in the background - ask God for the grace to “step up to the mark” – to show us what our role for him might be among the huge range of opportunities for service and with his help to go for it!

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). 1 Samuel 17: 32-49.

Background Israel not for the first time (nor the last) found itself under threat from superior military forces – this time from the Philistines. Disputes then were largely determined by military force (and have we progressed that far?) I think in an attempt to save the lives of many (on both sides) the idea of a battle between champions was construed. We all know the story but it doesn't do any harm to rehearse it – and to learn the lessons – not least about the significance of God's equipping and David's readiness to serve. What significance has this for us today? What does it mean for us to step up – to be equipped to share in God's work?

Possible questions/points to consider

1. This was a turning point in the history of God's people. There was a real risk that their army might be wiped out and their fledgling state annihilated. Forget about the gladiatorial context for the moment and ask yourself : If you had been Saul what concerns might have been on your mind? How willing would you have been to entrust your country's fortunes to a young shepherd boy? Do you think that Saul had some inkling that David was to be used of God?
2. As we face great challenges in the Church/world today what parallel thinking might be needed? Are we willing to try new and apparently untested strategies? How open are we to God doing a “new thing”? There is talk about new expressions of Church, hubs, pioneer and collaborative ministry. Are we too entrenched in traditional models? How do we determine what is right to hold on to and when and how we need to explore and attempt new things?
3. There are gruesome stories in the Old Testament, but it doesn't really do to read back modern day ethics into past centuries. Some things done in the name of humanity (and even Christianity) in our own times would horrify. Without ignoring these issues focus on the unexpected choice of David to be Israel's champion. Was Saul just going through the motions? Was it a last throw of the dice? Why David? Once picked it was assumed the methods would be heavy armour and brute strength. David's methodology was startlingly different. Where was God in it? What does it say about God plus one being a majority?
4. Not by might but by my strength says the Lord. Try as we might to emphasise the need for faith and dependence on the grace and mercy of God we still place a huge emphasis on qualifications and experience – even when determining who should serve in church appointments. How do we pay heed to these key factors without losing sight of the clamant need to see faith, trust in God, awareness of God's guidance and openness to his leading?
5. We don't like to put ourselves forward. Yet, Jesus calls us to follow him. His love for us, prompting us to want to serve him. How do we reconcile this? What does it mean to step up – in mission? Why should it be left to others, to the odd few? Should it not be the norm? How can we see more clearly God's generous equipping? How do we encourage one another to play our part? How can we go forward together instead taking a pace back?
6. How do we turn around the view that stepping up is a bad thing, or at least a bad thing for us? How do we regain a sense of passion for serving the Lord and being blessed and a blessing?
7. Anything else arising from the passage or the service?

Prayer Lord thank you that Jesus calls each of us to step up to the mark, to share in the wonderful enterprise of mission. Help us to see his equipping and to be open to receive it and share with others in your mission today. Amen.