

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 March 2020 The Woman at the well

Pray Praise God for his open acceptance and love, for his readiness to forgive and to use us in his service. Thank him that all this is founded, not on our efforts or worthiness, but rather on Jesus alone. Pray that we may more fully appreciate the significance of God's open acceptance and grace, allow it to change our attitudes and actions towards him and to others, so that we are ready to be accepting too without insisting that people have to "qualify".

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). John 4:5-30 and verses 41,42.

Background Many people will be aware that there was a deep rift between Jews and Samaritans. In the depth of history they came from the same peoples and in theory there ought to have been a lot in common. The reasons behind the rifts are complicated but suffice to say that positions were well entrenched and the estrangement and suspicion between the peoples were vast and it had long become an intrinsic fact of life – Jews and Samaritans just didn't trust one another. Jesus dealing with the Samaritan woman at the well stood out.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. Think of some of the deep seated views in modern times that divide people – a) worldwide b) in this country. Where did the division begin? Does that matter? What is the effect on relationship among people now? As well as thinking about big worldwide issues try to give a bit of thought to divisions locally.
2. What does this passage tell us about Jesus' attitudes to divisions? How might that affect the way we deal with traditional and social divisions today?
3. Jesus met with the woman at the well (at noon when most people would have been taking shade). It has been said that he broke conventions in at least three ways – 1) speaking to a woman, 2) a Samaritan woman at that and 3) one who had chequered history. What does this say about acceptance? How tied up are we with conventions and protocols rather than "doing what is right"?
4. Many people struggle to understand the heart of the Christian faith – that it has all do with God forgiving us freely in Jesus and NOT on our efforts to be good. There is something in human nature that resists being in other people's debts – if someone does us a kindness we want to try to "pay them back". But we can't "pay God back". How might our attitudes to others be helped by realising that we need to accept them on the same basis as God accepts us in Christ?
5. Jesus is ready to ask the woman for a drink of water (not unreasonable in the heat of the day, even if social convention would frown on the encounter). Without taking advantage of her or us of people we encounter – is there a lesson here that we need to be willing to ask for help outwith the bounds of the Church – perhaps show that we are not totally self sufficient and that we need help. How might we do that without putting people off?
6. The disciples were seriously worried about what people would think about Jesus talking to a woman and a Samaritan woman to boot. Maybe it was more that Public Relations concerns but Jesus wasn't worried. He was more concerned about the spiritual needs of the woman. How do we ensure that we place a high priority on the real needs of people who show an interest in the faith even if they don't tick all the boxes many might expect?
7. Jesus was convinced that people from all sorts of quarters could be open to spiritual things if approached in the right way. How might we be more confident about that? How might our approach need to change so as to help create openings? How do we avoid putting our foot in it?
8. Anything else that might have prompted a thought or question on the theme or passage?

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your open acceptance and readiness to meet us where we are. Help us to be open with you and to be much more open and accepting of others we meet, for Jesus' sake. Amen.