

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 18 March 2018 Forgiveness and Frailty

Pray that we would be responsive to Jesus' call to vulnerability – to be willing to take up our crosses, to follow Jesus (with all that means) in our day and age and that we would recognise that Jesus' invitation is not limited to folks like us.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). John 12: -33.

Background Time is wearing on. It is clear that Jesus is attracting interest from many quarters. Here we have an indication that that interest was from beyond the immediate Jewish community. Several "Greeks" made an approach to the disciples – perhaps not unheard of, but still a significant development. While Jesus' response might appear lukewarm at best it is probably better to see this in the context of his approaching suffering and death. Even "opening the door" would probably be seen as a radical step compared to common expectations.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. Some "Greeks" approached the disciples asking to see Jesus. Leaving aside exactly where they came from, how significant was an approach from outside the mainline Jewish community? What thoughts might have been going through the minds of the disciples? What was the extent of Jesus' welcome? How significant was that given the prevailing culture?
2. We sometimes imagine that people are just not interested in Christianity/faith/Jesus – what more can we do to make as easy as possible for people to make an approach? How open are we to approaches from people without any real background of faith? What changes might we need to make?
3. Jesus did not appear to make a fuss of the newcomers. Indeed, you might argue that he was too upfront about the cost of following him. How do we ensure that we welcome people without downgrading the message of the gospel? To what extent do we fall into the trap of "making things too comfortable"? Where do the challenges of following Jesus fit in?
4. Jesus "put his money where his mouth was" in the sense that he was willing himself to suffer and die. How important is Jesus' readiness to suffer? What is the link between forgiveness and frailty?
5. In our consumerist society that encourages people to shop around and look for the best deals how do we get across the importance of "truth" and "cost of commitment"? Christians should not be looking for a comfortable life but a life of service and commitment – how do you react to this? How do we "sell" this? To what extent do we still hanker after a comfortable life?
6. It has been said that essentially being a Christian involves allowing God to work in us so that we live for Jesus rather than ourselves. How far would you go along with this? What else might need to be said/done?
7. In many churches the balance between the time and attention given to looking after the interests of the existing membership and reaching out to those who are not (yet) members is out of kilter. What does the passage and for example Desmond Tutu's claim that Jesus' approach is to do away with any concept of "outsider" say about this? What might we need to do about it?

Prayer Thank you Lord, for your open invitation to come and follow Jesus. Help us to be more open to those who have yet to embrace the Christian faith. Help us to be honest about what it means to follow Jesus and ensure that we too are ready serve Jesus and others for his sake. Amen.