

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 13 May 2018 What next?

Pray that we would be open to God's leading of us into his future – aware of the mix of looking back, waiting, planning but overall a real commitment to engaging in Jesus' mission, in his strength and to his glory and not to be afraid of the Spirit's work in our midst.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Acts 1:1-11.

Background Luke begins "Volume 2" of his collected works referring back to Jesus' life and teaching much of which he has shared in Volume 1 – his gospel. The ascension is a real turning point in the lives of the early disciples for it marks the point at which humanly speaking they were to engage in mission without the physical presence of their Lord and Master. Was this the point at which it was all going to go pear shaped? Would some of the more rash and impetuous among them attempt to drive things forward in their own strength? Would the more reticent among them bring the advance of the gospel to a premature end? What would happen? Luke points to Jesus' promise that they would receive power from above, from the Holy Spirit to enable them to continue his ministry – but they needed to wait for that.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. How good (or otherwise) are you at waiting? Why do we differ so greatly in our ability to wait? How do we know whether it is right to wait and for how long? Give examples in your life where it proved useful to wait? Any regrets about having waited too long? What lessons are there here about waiting in a faith context?
2. "This is taking forever" – What are the dangers of waiting too long? Why can waiting be so frustrating? What difference is there if we wait "purposefully" – if we fill our waiting time with useful activities? How do you think God expected the early disciples to spend their waiting time? There may be similarities and differences to how we might usefully spend our waiting time – any thoughts?
3. There comes the day when the time for waiting is no more and we need to move forward. What clues does the passage offer for deciding when that is? Where does "being prepared and ready" come into it? How do we assess being ready for mission? How much we learn "on the job"? How do we balance becoming ready ourselves with being equipped by God? How much difference is there between the two?
4. Jesus was in no doubt that the disciples needed to move forward – the issue was simply when. Nowadays, we seem to have added another layer – quite a few people would question whether they should be moving forward. How do we get over that hump? – no ifs, just when.
5. Once you determine that it is time to move – another question arises – how do we move forward. If you've been parked up for quite a while and you decide that you need to take the car out you then have another problem – which direction will you head? Some have said the Church these days has been too stationary for too long that we've lost momentum and we are ill equipped to navigate. What should we do about this? What does God want to do to help us?
6. The disciples eventually leant on God and with his help drove the gospel forward with some remarkable results. What is our vision for "going forward"? What initial steps can we or should we take? Are there any obvious easy wins? If so, what are they and how could we implement them?
7. Anything else arising from the passage or the service?

Prayer Lord thank you that want us to move forward with the gospel. Show us the right balance of waiting and preparation, faith and stepping out in your strength that together we may go forward to do great things for your kingdom. Amen.