

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 20 May 2018 Fired up

Pray that the Holy Spirit would open us to God's power and equipping so that we might engage in mission to our community and beyond and that we would be responsive to God's leading, not fearful of change but with faith and enthusiasm that is in keeping with God's provision for us.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Acts 2:1-21.

Background Jesus had told the disciples to wait in the city until the Holy Spirit came upon them. That promise was linked to his return to be with his Heavenly Father. In a sense it would be "proof" that had happened. But it was also linked to his promise to be with the believers as they engaged in mission – in taking forward his mission to share the reign of God of love, grace and forgiveness. It is seen as the turning point – sometimes described as the birthday of the Church, the globalisation of mission. It was a big deal – but we need to understand that it wasn't just something for then, it has implications for now. The Holy Spirit of Jesus is for today, for us, and for our share in God's mission.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. Try to put yourself in the shoes of an early believer in Jerusalem. How might you have been feeling a) in the days between Jesus' resurrection and his return to heaven? b) being told to wait until power came upon you? How do you think you might have reacted to the events on that first Day of Pentecost? Describe your emotions. Your hopes and fears.
2. We tend to be quite individual when it comes to achievements, gifts, experiences. What matters is what WE do, receive, experience. How does this differ from the more corporate or communal understanding in biblical times? How do we avoid overdoing the stress on ME? What are the main reasons God gives the Holy Spirit? How can we ensure that the emphasis is placed less on benefit for the individual and more on equipping the whole christian community for mission?
3. People can still be fearful of standing up for Jesus. What factors come into play that might discourage us from effective mission? How can we help one another to face/deal with these? We will usually be ready to accept that we are saved not through our efforts but by God's grace in Jesus. Why then do we tend to imagine that mission is then all up to our efforts? How might we be helped to engage in more wide-ranging mission through recognising and receiving the "power of the Holy Spirit"? How could we make better links between the Spirit and mission?
4. Why are many modern Christians in this country fearful of anything to do with the Holy Spirit? What gets in the way? Why are we so wary? What would help to change attitudes?
5. Someone once said "God doesn't send the Holy Spirit on his people so that they can continue to do everything the same as it's always been". How do we cope with the idea that in many ways the Holy Spirit of Jesus is an agent of change?
6. Of course, just because someone says that what they are doing is "of the Holy Spirit" doesn't make it so. Gamaliel's advice is well made: If this is not of God it will fail, but if it is of God you won't be able to stop it and you may find yourselves fighting against God. Wait and see is one option but what other steps can we take to assess whether something is of God? (There are many but one test is to ask where Jesus figures in any work).
7. Anything else arising from the passage or the service?

Prayer Lord thank you that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to equip his people to share in his mission of love and grace; thank you that the Spirit is still with us; help us to be open to receive his equipping and encouragement to share in your mission today and tomorrow. Amen.