

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 5 November 2017

Welcoming the new

Pray Praise God that he does work out his purposes for good through as well as for his people. Give thanks for his sustained love and ask God to show us his loving purposes going forward and pray for the faith to get behind those purposes.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Joshua 3:7-17.

Background In a situation that is very reminiscent of the people's escape from Egypt we have an account of their crossing of the Jordan to enter the Promised Land. The Arc of the Covenant is the tangible reassurance of God's presence with them. The crossing of the river marks a turning point in their history – notwithstanding the challenges ahead. Their wilderness wanderings have come to an end and they enter a new era as well as a new land. But as they do that they are going to have to learn the importance of keeping faith with God.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. At a journey's end it is understandable that we may wish to rest up for a while. However, even in ordinary life we can't do that for long before we need to move on to the next phase. When it comes to living out our lives as Christians God always has something else for us. How much do we regard ourselves as a pilgrim people? A people on the move? Or have we become "settled". What is there in the passage that might prompt us to a more "on the go" type of discipleship?
2. Joshua was without Moses though he was very aware of God's presence. What steps can we take to ensure that what we do (even for God) is done not in our own strength but in the strength which God provides? How easy is it to tell the difference? One wee clue that might help is to ask "who are we really doing this for? Who gets the credit/glory?"
3. Change is not always as clear cut as the Israelites crossing of the River Jordan. Often it is incremental and changes run in parallel with a continuation of the pre-existing. How do we ensure that we embrace the changes God wants us to make without being held back or being disparaging towards the familiar? How do we know when to step out? How do we know when it is time to bring some work to an end in order to facilitate new work? And how do we do that sensitively?
4. Joshua lived in an age very different to ours and unchecked military expansion would be anathema to us now. Yet, it is case that we have a vital message to take to the people of our day and age that runs counter to the way many people think and act. How can we be true to our calling while being sensitive to the views of others? We won't get anywhere if we simply go along with the status quo yet we're hardly likely to make any inroads if we are confrontational. Where do we strike the balance? What can we do both to understand and to be understood?
5. While worship is important to us we aren't really into ritual in a big way. Are there modern and appropriate ways of marking significant changes or new steps in our pilgrimage that would encourage us to make the transitions and help us to see God in them? Any ideas?
6. Any further thoughts arising from the passage or the service?

Prayer Change and decay in all around I see, thou who changest not abide with me. While it is wonderfully comforting to recognise that you are always with us, Lord, perhaps especially in times of change, turmoil and sadness, help us not to be too negative about change but to embrace the changes you want to make in our lives and circumstances and to play our part in initiating changes that will help bring the good news of the gospel to ourselves, our neighbours and our world. Amen.