

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 26 November Recognising the King

Pray Thank God for the wonderful assurances of blessing that he offers us in and through Jesus. Pray that we may be given the grace both to see and to act upon Jesus' true position as King of kings, aware that he had little thought about status and every thought about service (and so should we!).

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Ephesians 1:15-23.

Background In the early church (and arguably throughout the Church's whole history) there have been disputes around the nature or status of Jesus. If he wasn't human, then how was he able to stand in our place? If he wasn't truly divine how is he able to forgive us? If there is no proper connection between his divinity and his humanity, then don't things fall apart? Paul is concerned to ensure that his readers grasp the significance of Jesus' supreme position of authority in heaven as well as on earth. No way, would he ever have accepted that Jesus was just a great human being – he was God too, King of kings and Lord of lords. But he wasn't a despotic ruler intent on status – in stark contrast to many leaders then (and now) Jesus was a Servant King. Paul pleads for us to recognise Jesus' position and authority, to give him his due honour but to go on and to demonstrate that in our lives, reminding us that blessings will follow.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. Not only royalty but all kinds of leadership is coming under question these days. Why is it that the public are so wary of many of our leaders? In the past a leader's private life might have remained private whereas now it won't. How far is that a good/bad thing? To what extent have we lost the notion of service in public life? How much of it is about status?
2. Paul paints a pretty spectacular picture of Jesus' authority and status. In your own words how would you begin to explain Jesus' position to someone who showed a little interest in the Christian faith? Why would it be important to let them know that Jesus was far more interested in loving and serving others than any status?
3. Actions speak louder than words is a phrase that we've all heard many times. How does this help us understand that if Jesus is going to be king – we can't stop simply at words or worship, we need to work out his kingship in the way we live? Ask yourself – how far does the way I live square with the worship I offer Jesus? How far does it help/hinder those who know that I am a Christian? How do you react to the view that the way we live out our lives is part and parcel of our worship?
4. Seek first the kingdom of God and all these other things will come after. What does it mean to seek (first) God's kingdom in 21st century Scotland? Try to be as practical as you can. How might we do things differently to advance this aim? Paul speaks of wonderful blessings that flow from Jesus being given his true place. While blessings for ourselves (or others) won't be our prime consideration what blessings are mentioned here and how are they regarded these days? How might our views need to change so that they are better aligned with God's purposes?
5. Where do prayer and thanksgiving come in? For Paul and his readers? For today? What place does the Together We Pray initiative have? "We can do nothing apart from God" "He has no hands but our hands" – how do these two phrases help us to understand how we need to work in partnership with God if we are to further his reign and bring blessing on our world?
6. Discuss anything else that comes out of the passage or the service.

Prayer Thank you Lord for the promise of blessing not just for us but for all your people as we give Jesus his true place and as we are equipped to live for his reign. Amen.