

## Time for God – Take 2

Purpose: To assist the congregation with further reflection on the theme of the Sunday service/passage.

### Week beginning Sunday 18 November 2018 When will this be?

Pray that we would keep a balance between our concern for our futures in this life and our concern for the life to come, in heaven and that the latter would impinge on the former in a helpful and constructive way and that we would be able to offer realistic hope in times of trauma and conflict through the love of God.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Mark 13:1-8.

Background There are tensions in the disciple band. Jesus is making it apparent that he is heading to Jerusalem with all its dangers looming. Disaster ahead – seems to be the order of the day – and quite naturally the disciples, concerned for themselves as well as for their Master, appear to be very wary about his direction of travel and question its necessity. Jesus reference to the Temple, a literal fixture, causes them real upset and worry. He might as well have said the world was coming to an end. We must not belittle the concerns then or not but neither must we lose sight of the significance of hope when God is in the middle of the situation.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. Disaster – perhaps we overuse the word but there are times when circumstances home in on us so that we feel bereft (at times, literally) and feel that the consequences emotionally, practically, spiritually are – disastrous. Over the past few days/weeks – how often have you used the word disaster and why? What has made you feel that way? How far has it been things you've had an influence on? Virtually no say? How does that make a difference? Does it matter if these situations are ongoing or short-lived?
2. What difference does it make if we have a faith? It doesn't help if people say, "Never mind, God will be with you". He will, but we can still be sore/upset/vulnerable. So what difference does it make to know that God is working out his purposes and is with us?
3. Jesus let the disciples know that there were monumental changes coming. Few envisaged the destruction of the Temple. Over the last 100 years there have been times when people thought the world as we know it was coming to an end (maybe actually coming to an end). Things were humanly speaking touch and go. The danger is that we quickly readjust to the here and now and forget about God's ultimate plan to bring all creation under his dominion – and for there to be a new heaven and a new earth – life in fellowship with him. How do we make room for these "final things" while still playing our full part in life today? The accusation is sometimes made "Christians are too heavenly minded to be any earthly use". How far have we gone the other way "Are we perhaps too earthly minded to be of much heavenly use?"
4. How do we take full account that heaven lies ahead while not ignoring the present? How can we allow our (limited) appreciation of heaven to influence our lives now in a positive and constructive way? Disasters are real. Christians feel the hurt and pain just as much as anyone else. How can we convey the difference knowing Jesus makes in these situations a) among ourselves b) among those who don't appear to share our faith?
5. "Everything will be fine" isn't what we should be saying – at least not without sharing the pain of loss and disaster. What can we learn about Jesus' honesty in letting his disciples know that following him would involve tough times, even disaster? Yet at the same time not allowing trouble/strife/conflict/disaster to have the last word?
6. Please discuss/consider anything else that arises from the passage or service.

Prayer Lord, life is not trouble free and sometimes "disaster" comes home to us or people close to us. Help us to share our burdens and sorrow with one another and to be open to your presence and comfort in the midst of the strife. But help us too to keep half an eye on heaven and allow the hope you give us to give us the grace to face the difficulties here and now in a positive way, through Jesus our Lord. Amen.