

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 8 October 2017

Community is Right Living

Pray Thank God for his commitment to us and for his readiness to continue to work with us to enable us to respond to his standards. Sometimes we forget that he has the right to set these and we can react against them. Praise him for his readiness to forgive.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Exodus 20:1-20

Background There was a real fear of God – quaking in your boots fear – that was based on the understanding that a holy God and sinful humanity could not mix. It was generally thought that the only outcome for a human being encountering God was death. Moses was the go between (later it would be the High Priest) but nevertheless (as seen in the last verses of the passage) people were scared. Perhaps these days things have gone too far the other way so that many wouldn't have any respect for God at all but it is still worth pointing out that God intends us to have a right relationship with him and he provides the means of this being achieved – Jesus!

Possible questions/points to consider

1. Many people assume that Christians are spoil sports, that we are people who by default are against pretty well everything. What were the commandments intended to do? They are often interpreted negatively. How far would you say that they could be used positively as signposts to right living?
2. No one is ever going to be able to keep the commandments in their entirety (Remember the rich young ruler). Some might ask “What’s the point then?” How would you answer them?
3. Society these days is rather law and rule averse. There would be lots of people who would take the view that “as long as it doesn't hurt anybody it shouldn't matter how we live”. Leaving aside God for the moment what problems might that lead to? Who decides whether people are hurt or not?
4. Let's be clear: the Christian faith is not founded on rules and regulations but on faith. Why should we strive not to be pigeon holed by legalism? What was Jesus' take on the women caught in adultery? How does that speak to the commandments? Does it mean Jesus came to throw out the law? If not, why not?
5. Forgiveness and grace does not mean that “anything goes”. How should forgiveness and grace affect how we live? How might it change our lives for the better?
6. Someone once said – we're never going to get it all right but if we err a bit on the side of grace (rather than on the side of law) we're probably understanding the law correctly. What's your view on this?
7. Concentrating too much on keeping (some) rules is likely to lead to ignoring others. It can lead to pride in our achievements (at least in some areas) whereas we ought to rely on Jesus. How do we keep a balance between respecting the commandments (which obviously have a significant place in God's scheme of things) but ensuring that the forgiveness and grace that comes through Jesus get pre-eminent place?
8. Anything else that arises from the passage or from the service.

Prayer Lord, thank you that you make it possible for us to live in fellowship with you. Help us to take seriously the standards to which you call us but not to be legalistic. May we give law its place but rely on your grace and forgiveness in Christ our Lord. Amen.