

Time for God – Take 2

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

Week beginning Sunday 7 October 2018 Who is with us?

Pray that we would be less concerned about status and privilege and more concerned about doing what Jesus requires. Pray that we would be more open to accepting others who share God's perspective about advancing his reign even where they don't belong to our "label" of faith.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Mark 9:38-50. (Note that because of Harvest last week we are a week out from the lectionary).

Background Jesus is gaining in popularity. Word has got out and it would appear that others, unconnected with the disciple band, are engaging in healing and casting out of demons "in Jesus' name". The disciples are unimpressed and bring the problem to Jesus who appears to be relatively unconcerned. What matters is that people DO his heavenly Father's will. The second aspect has to do with taking action to stop sin and other unhelpful behaviours from preventing or limiting the advance of the kingdom. Using dramatic overstatement Jesus makes it clear that such behaviour is not insignificant, and we really need to take it seriously.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. Who should be allowed to take a service in the Church? How do you decide? What factors? Training? Experience? Education? Certification? What really matters? Would the answer be different if it was "now and again" or regularly? What do you think Jesus would do in our day and age?
2. The disciples complained that there were others casting out demons and healing people who did not belong to their circle. What do you think they expected Jesus to do about it? What was his response? How do you think the disciples might have reacted?
3. What lessons should we take from Jesus' response? His concern seems to be not being overly concerned about the qualifications of the other parties but more on the outcome – how was the kingdom of God being furthered by their actions? How far would you apply this today? What might it mean for our processes?
4. Jesus simply wasn't interested in status and position. How far could that be said to be true of the Church in Scotland today? In what ways should we be changing this? Are there any signs that it is changing?
5. Jesus uses hyperbole, exaggerated language to illustrate the necessity that we deal with sin and other behaviours that are hindering the advance of God's reign. How seriously do we take behaviours that hinder God's work? Are we equally challenging of them all? If not, where and why do we tend to challenge some vigorously but all but ignore others?
6. Jesus is particularly critical of those who cause others (esp vulnerable) to sin. Again, how far do we act in line with Jesus' challenges?
7. Please discuss/consider anything else that arises from the passage or service.

Prayer Lord thank you that it is your equipping and provision that enables your people to do your work. Help us to put in place processes that protects the vulnerable and that fosters the widest possible use and development of the giftings and talents of your people but to ensure that across the board we are intent on doing your will and furthering your purposes rather than protecting particular interests. Amen.