

Time for God – Take 2

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

Week beginning Sunday 14 October 2018 What must I do?

Pray that we would be ready to listen and act on the lessons here – to be less interested in what we have going for us and appreciate the vital issue that the Christian faith is all to do with what **God** does, with grace and not works but having taken that fully on board that we would face up to the challenges of being rid of things that prevent us from fully engaging with God's plans for the world.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Mark 10:17-31.

Background A rich young ruler comes to Jesus asking what he needs to do to inherit eternal life. There is an interchange and it appears that the man is an honourable and sincere believer who knows his scriptures and who had made a determined effort to live out the commandments. He is commended for that by Jesus. However, he senses that he is short of the mark. Jesus tells him to go and sell everything he has and to come and follow him. His riches are holding him back. Given the huge disparity in wealth across the globe it may be that wealth and possessions are seriously drawbacks to us but there may be others but we need to remember the importance both of grace (we have nothing to contribute) and dedication (we are to live our whole lives in eager gratitude for all that Jesus has done).

Possible questions/points to consider

1. People may not ask it in so many words (What must I do...?) but there are still people who are interested in knowing what Christians have to do or believe. What experience have you had of this? What sort of questions have they (or might they) ask of you? How have (might) you answer them? Are there any trends?
2. In the service we thought about achievements and tick lists. What is your attitude to these? What different attitudes are there to human achievements in general? And ours in particular? How do these square with Jesus' approach?
3. Why is there such a deep seated sense of need to contribute something, to play our part? How do we cope with that running counter to Jesus' emphasis on grace and salvation being all of God?
4. The rich young ruler's conduct was highly commendable – even Jesus said so but there is a sense in which even the man himself knew that it wasn't "enough". In what way was he short? Ok his riches were getting in the way but was there more to it than that? If so, what?
5. There is all the difference in the world between us doing things because we feel that they will earn us God's favour and doing things out of gratitude to God for all he has freely given. How is this misunderstood? How do we counter this ourselves and in the impressions we give to others?
6. Bonhoeffer was very critical of "cheap grace" – of us belittling the cost of our salvation and not following through with generous and costly discipleship in gratitude for all that God has done for us in Christ. How can we ensure that we are wholehearted in following Jesus (and making sure our lifestyle is in keeping with his love) in our day and age? How do we do that without giving the impression that it is us buying God's favour?
7. How far might we be compromised by our "wealth" given the extent of world poverty? What can/should we do? How tied are we to our possessions and physical well being? What other things hold us back from being the people who Jesus means us to be? How can we help one another?
8. Please discuss/consider anything else that arises from the passage or service.

Prayer Lord thank you that you accept us freely in Jesus and that there isn't anything we can contribute to our salvation. Help us not to attempt to earn it but at the same time make us less thirled to anything that holds us back from dedicated service to you out of gratitude for all you have given us in Jesus. Amen.