

## Time for God – Take 2

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

### Week beginning Sunday 23 September 2018 Hard questions

Pray that we would be willing to ask the questions that need to be asked, be willing not to prejudge the answers and most of all that we would be open to act on the answers we get from our God who only wants the best for us.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Mark 9:30-37.

Background Jesus is moving in both mind and body towards Jerusalem. He is intent on sharing his vision of his ministry and forthcoming suffering and death (as well as resurrection) but it proves to be a sair fecht. His disciples (and many people today) struggled to understand the significance of suffering having power and might to the fore in their thinking. The disciples had many questions but it seems that they were reluctant to ask (sound familiar?). Jesus goes on to point to a youngster as reversing the order of significance. We still struggle with the issues of power in the Church and suffering and service are often misunderstood.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. Who calls the shots? In Jesus' day there is no doubt that authority was vested in the Roman Emperor and his local representatives backed by the might of the occupying Roman Army. The religious establishment had their own additional authority but they often played into one another's hands. What would it have been like for anyone wishing to challenge authority in those days? Or even to comment publicly on controversial issues? How would Jesus' speaking out have been viewed a) by the Roman authorities b) the religious authorities and c) the general public?
2. As now, people regularly made up their own mind about Jesus but there is evidence that at least some saw him as coming to restore Israel's fortunes. Unspoken, for it would have been too dangerous to voice openly, that probably meant ridding the country of their Roman occupiers. Why do political clout, power, might and money often go hand in hand with authority? To what extent did people assume that Jesus would use his special gifts to force change, to use power and might to get change?
3. Instead he spoke of his readiness to serve, to suffer and to die. How does this run at odds to most people's thinking? How do you think such thinking is meant to apply to us today? Serving isn't usually highly regarded, even in the Church – how might we need to change? How can Jesus' promises help us?
4. Children in those days were to be seen and not heard – or if truth be told even better not seen either. There was no sense of children being spoilt – they had no rights and while I'm sure that most of them were cared for and loved, they had fewer rights than slaves. Jesus teaches us that our assumed pecking order is all wrong. Instead of power and influence being most significant it is our readiness to serve, put ourselves about for others, even suffer for them that counts. What changes does this really call on us to make a) in our own lives b) in the way that we are Church?
5. What questions do we tend to put off and why a) in life generally b) as far as God is concerned? How can we encourage one another to face up to these? What good might come from biting the bullet?
6. In this Year of Young People are there lessons from the passage that we need to learn about the place of young people in society and in the Church?
7. Please discuss/consider anything else that arises from the passage or service.

Prayer Lord thank you for your readiness to answer our deepest questions and for your readiness to demonstrate some of the important answers in the way that you lived. Show us how we can change so that service and even suffering become more important than status and power. Amen.