

Time for God – Take 2

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

Week beginning Sunday 1 September 2019 First and Last

Pray Thank God that he accepts us as we are and that we don't need to prove ourselves or earn his favour. Pray that we might learn to turn our backs on status and rights in favour of being open to serving others and God, being content with our position as his children. Ask for help as seek to do away with pecking orders – especially in the Church, but across society too.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Luke 14:1, 7-14.

Background First thing to notice is that Jesus didn't shut himself away – he interacted with his community even with those who the religious authorities considered undesirable. That included tax collectors. This went against the grain but he saw it as a mission field. Accepting their hospitality (contrary to social convention) he wasn't afraid to point out lessons which needed to be learned. The commonly accepted emphasis on status and pecking order based on deserving were rejected without compunction! Even in our day and age when, in theory, we are much more conscious of discrimination we have a lot to learn.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. What can we learn from Jesus' readiness to leave normal religious people and venture among those who wouldn't normally have any involvement? What is more of a stumbling block – our reluctance to go or people's reluctance to have anything to do with us? How do we know? What is to be lost by trying?
2. How far do rules and regulations or social convention prevent us from engaging in mission? How do we avoid "writing people off" before we begin? The great commission sends us out into all the world. What right have we to limit the scope of mission? That said, how do prepare to push out the boundaries?
3. Where might there be opportunities to reach people in and around Montrose? How might we rise to the challenges? How do we try to remove obstacles?
4. Jesus ate with outcasts and tax collectors. How many non Christian friends have we? How well do we mix with those who have no faith? How can we improve things?
5. I'm not the best at/the greatest/most successful...What word usually comes next in phrases like these? (is it not usually but?) So, while we may not claim to be top dog we sure as anything don't want to be viewed as being the bottom of the heap. Why is it that we usually don't have a problem looking down on others (however careful we are, however we wouldn't want to demean or be derogatory)? What is it about human beings and pecking orders? How does Jesus' approach run counter to normal practice? Why is humility so hard?
6. Some has said "Never forget that humility should follow naturally from God's acceptance in Jesus. We contribute nothing to our salvation so we have nothing to boast about." How might focusing on the free gift of forgiveness in Jesus help us to be more humble?
7. How might a more honest (and humble) attitude towards other people help our mission and outreach?
8. There are other issues that could have been discussed - feel free to explore any topics from the passage or theme even if they weren't raised on Sunday.

Prayer Lord thank you that we don't need to prove ourselves to you or make us acceptable to you – you take us as we are for Jesus' sake and make us what you would have us be. Help us to see what our pecking order is often way out of touch with your priorities. Help us to accept others as you accept us, freely and without favour, and go on to love and serve others generously for Jesus' sake. Amen.