

Time for God – Take 2

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

Week beginning Sunday 8 September 2019 Binding and loosing

Pray Thank God that he offers us love in great measure which isn't dependent on our efforts. Pray that we would be willing to let go of those attitudes and behaviours that hold us back from giving our all in Christ's service. Pray too that we would learn in a practical sense how to give real priority to loving Jesus and loving others for his sake.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Luke 14:25-33.

Background It's not unknown now for us to use over the top language to make a point or emphasise it. We expect people not to take us absolutely literally – a thousand thanks, or Gaelic's traditional hundred thousand welcomes. Even more so in Israel in the 1st century – hyperbole or to us over the top language was very common. So don't get too worried that Jesus appears to be urging us to hate other people – the main lesson is that we are love God way, way more so that in comparison it might be thought that we "hated" our family. That said, there is definitely a strand running through the passage that urges us to cut ourselves free from things that are holding us back from true discipleship, really following Jesus.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. Try not to be put off by Jesus' words about hating father and mother. Ask yourself what is he really on about here? What point is he making? (Can you honestly imagine that Jesus is advocating hatred towards anyone – whatever the words?) So putting it positively how are we to love God in comparison to loving our family? Given that most people love their families immensely what is Jesus saying should be the nature of loving God? Try to tease this out and compare it with what how we actually relate to God. What needs to change? What help can we get and how can we change things?
2. At weddings a minister/priest sometimes makes reference to "leaving and cleaving" – some of the bonds towards family have to be loosened (leaving – sometimes literally in leaving home though these days that can often happen beforehand) so that husband and wife can really bond together in every aspect of married life (cleave). And yet sometimes at wedding receptions a groom or bride's father (or indeed both) can talk about welcoming their daughter in law or son in law into their family. Many people can grasp that it is all a bit of both – leaving/cleaving AND family bonds being strengthened. Discuss.
3. So how do the thoughts in Q2 shed some light on the relationships that we have as Christians towards our families and friends (and things that we've been accustomed to apart from faith) and towards God and Jesus? What aspects of our lives may need to change (what might we need to shed in order to better "cleave" to Christ?) How might a closer relationship with Jesus actually improve our relationships with family and friends?
4. Occasionally, our actions and attitudes or the influence of key people close to us can hinder or in extreme cases be destructive towards our faith. How do we deal with that? If that isn't an issue for you, try to imagine what someone else in that situation might be going through. How might you help them? How might you seek help?
5. It can be very hard for someone without a real faith to see how their friend/loved one can "prefer religion to them". How do we help people to see that loving Jesus is a good thing and not a reflection on them? You can't put a monetary value of the love of God but life in and with Christ is "life in all its fulness". How can we get that message across in a way that they can understand? And if actions really do speak louder than words how can we SHOW them?
6. Feel free to explore any topics from the passage/theme even if they weren't raised on Sunday.

Prayer: Lord, thank you that your love for us plummets the depths and reaches the heights. Help us to respond in dedicated service with as deep a love as we can manage and not to allow our attitudes to hold us back. Make us sensitive to others who don't understand our position. Help us to go on loving them dearly for your sake. Amen.