



Study notes - week 11

A community that serves in the community

w/c 17 November 2019

"Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." (Archbishop Desmond Tutu)

Archbishop William Temple famously said that, *"The church is the only society that exists for the sake of those who are not its members"*. If we really took those words seriously what changes would we at St James need to make?

The biblical approach to service always seems to be that it is something we do simply because it is a good thing to do. Service is not done that that we may gain an opportunity to share the gospel; it is sharing the gospel.

Read Isaiah 1:13-17

Two weeks ago our study emphasised Jesus words (John 13:35) describing how the love we have for each other will be the way we are recognised as his disciples. This week, the focus turns to our willingness to work for those in need in society around us. As Isaiah put it, not being willing to *"do right"* makes all our religion meaningless or worse. What would count as 'doing right' in and for our society today?

How should thoughts of seeking justice and defending the oppressed affect our choices in the current political debates? How can we, as a church and as individuals, engage more in the political life of our country? Are there areas where we should not have a view; if so, what are they?

Read Matthew 5:13-16

Salt will permeate throughout food; it gets everywhere. Light, as Jesus says, cannot be hidden. Where would you be uncomfortable to go? When would you prefer that your faith was less visible?

Reflect on aspects of society today; where can you see issues that might never have occurred had Christians in the past taken being salt more seriously and ensured their presence in the relevant parts of the society of their day?

In Psalm 103, David writes that *"The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed."* (verse 6) - how does the linking of these two ideas help us see the message Jesus was giving us in talking of salt and light as similes for our life as his followers?

It is often said that in serving, the church should aim to meet people at their place of need. How do we find out where that is? How do we balance the need to simply be the body of Jesus in and to our community with the equally biblical injunction to action?

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." (Mahatma Gandhi)