



Worship outlines

'All of life belongs to God'

Purpose

To show that there should be no separation between 'God-time' and 'work-time'.

Bible passages

Isaiah 45:1-7, 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, Matthew 22:15-22 (from Year A, 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

Preparation

Have some coins ready as a visual aid. Make sure they have figureheads on them.

Content

Read Matthew 22:15-22.

Talk Talk about the coins. Do they have figureheads on them? Does this mean that the coins belong to that person? Discuss the fact that many Jewish people would not even handle Roman coins because they bore the image of Caesar and thus fell foul of Jewish law which banned all images. What did Jesus mean when he said, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's" (verse 21)? Any Jew would have known that there is no separation between the secular and the sacred, between work and worship, and that all of life belongs to God.

Prayers Before the prayers of intercession, ask people what they will be doing this time tomorrow. Offer these activities and situations to God. After the prayer, remind everyone that God will be with them this time tomorrow – at work, in the home, in the neighbourhood, in their leisure activities – just as God is with us in worship. Indeed, even if we are too busy to notice, God is always there.

Sermon Discuss why we separate the secular and sacred when God does not. Cyrus was neither a Jew nor a God-fearer, but he was used by God and came to be thought of by the Jews as a 'messiah'. Are there modern day equivalents to Cyrus? Does God work through people who would not call themselves Christians, like Bob Geldorf or Bono ?

Everything is potentially sacramental because God is universally present. Gerald Manley Hopkins in his poem 'God's Grandeur' writes: "The world is charged with the grandeur of God/ It will flame out, like shining from shook foil..." We should remember the words of the hymn 'Fill thou my life': 'So shall no part of day or night from sacredness be free...' Our faith is enriched by and expressed through every single moment of our lives. How might such awareness affect the way in which we view our work and our workplace?

Hymns

Fill thou my life (H&P, MPC, SoF); *Jesus calls us o'er the tumult* (H&P, MPC); *The kingdom of God* (H&P, MPC); *To God be the glory* (H&P, MPC, SoF); *What shall I do my God to love* (H&P)

'Spiritual armour'

Purpose

To show how a modern work situation can help us to understand our spiritual needs.

Bible passages

1 Kings 8:22-30,41-43, Psalm 84, Ephesians 6:10-20, John 6:56-69 (from Year B, 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time)

Preparation

During worship ask a Christian police officer, firefighter or someone who wears protective clothing at work, to describe how their clothing protects them. Prepare them beforehand to discuss what stresses their job contains and to relate what protects them physically to what protects them spiritually.

Content

In Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul talks about the nature of the spiritual armour we need in order to protect ourselves when engaged in our ministry in the world. In a service on this theme, a serving police officer, who was a church member, attended worship in her full uniform. She described the way in which this uniform was designed to protect her. She removed the protective items which were then placed on the communion table as a symbol of thanksgiving to God for the protection they offered to her and for her role as a police officer. There followed a short question and answer session about her job, the stresses it involved and how her faith helped her undertake it.

The sermon related all this to the spiritual tools we need to be a Christian in today's world. What opposition to our faith do we face in the workplace? How can we counter negativity? How can we build ourselves up in the faith? How can we support one another in the workplace, not least by listening to those under stress? How can prayer help us in our working life? Could Bible study, fellowship groups, or a group exploring how we can be faithful in our workplace offer the spiritual support/armour we need? (The congregation found this act of worship highly relevant to their own experience and the police officer felt valued and supported in her working life.)

Resources

Be thou my vision (H&P, MPC, SoF); *Have faith in God my heart* (H&P); *Take my life and let it be* (H&P, MPC, SoF); *This, this is the God we adore* (H&P)

If children are to be present, look at Thatcher, David and Baker, Arthur, *Instant Art for Bible Worksheets Book 1*, Stowmarket, Kevin Mayhew, 1988 and Burt, David, *Fifty Dramatised Bible Readings*, Eastbourne, Kingsway, 2003

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