



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 16th Feb 2020



1. Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.
2. Read the passage again and spend understand. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
3. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself might pray the text over the next few days.
4. Over the next week, set aside times to come back more than once to the passage. You could read it all or part of it again, slowly. Perhaps there is a special word for you in this passage of Scripture? Keep this word or phrase in your thoughts and gently repeat it, bringing it to mind and allowing God to speak to you in your heart.
5. Finally, come back to the text to conclude: What is God in this scripture asking of you this week? What is the one challenge, one little change you are asked to make or the thing you have been asked to do? Then say a prayer of thanksgiving for the good news in the passage. End in quiet prayer.

THIS SUNDAY'S GOSPEL Matt 5:17-37 I have come not to abolish but to fulfil.

(It is a longer Gospel this week so I have included the shorter version)

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.' But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God. Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one

A Short Thought

What a week of change in government, in politics and in the weather. The phrase "seismic shift" has been almost played out and interesting times lie ahead. In the midst of this today's gospel has a very powerful message. Jesus begins by telling his disciples that his purpose is not to abolish the law or to criticize what the prophets proclaimed and taught. Jesus' intent is to fulfil the law. Jesus also emphasizes that keeping the commandments is essential. But Jesus was often attacked and criticised for not following the law? So what law is Jesus asking us to follow? Jesus followed most of the Jewish laws and customs. However, when it came to people in need of love and compassion, Jesus lived by the law of God! Yes, all the commandments are important and necessary. For Jesus, the first two commandments are the foundation for the other eight commandments: love of God and love of neighbour. Love should come before all else! So apt in this Valentines week. Knowing that we are loved, we were created in love and that we were called to be that love for others is the basis of our faith and the foundation for our hope. Love then is the one thing above all others and love frees. When the law of the land or the church neglects, forgets, enslaves or oppresses then it becomes the god. When the law serves the few, focus' on the self and forgets the 'other' it is not God's law.

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. In this section of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus proposes standards that go beyond external ways of behaviour but challenge how we feel in our hearts. When have you found that living out of inner conviction is more life-giving than keeping up appearances?
2. How often in life do we simply go through the motions of being Christian? Jesus challenges us all to enter more fully into God's law of love, compassion, forgiveness and inclusion. What is it that God is actually calling me to in life? What does following God's laws, God's commandments really mean to me, and how does it change my life? Does the practice of our community of faith mirror and witness to that love in our community?

Prayer

Loving God, you alone judge rightly our inmost thoughts. Teach us to observe your law from the heart even as we keep it outwardly. Let love be our constant, hope guide our message, and compassion be our measure. Let our faith compel us to be the love we wish see in the world. We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever & ever. Amen