



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 31st May 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 understanding. *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 – John 20:19-23 “Receive the Holy Spirit – Pentecost Sunday”

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

A Short Thought

For the fourth Gospel, the day of Pentecost is no tongues of fire or a bewildering, amazing, perplexing cacophony of voices, but the peace of one voice, the shepherd's voice, who bestows on his disciples the abiding presence of "I am." Jesus comes to us and gives us his peace with God. Then he gives us power to do the kinds of things that mere humans can't do — like defeating our own self-centredness, and loving other people, and holding Christ above all. And then with that peace and that power he gives us our central purpose for existence: "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

Jesus says that I'm sending you to extend my peace and my light and my truth and my life in the world. I am going to my Father. But I give you my Spirit. I am the power in you. So go and glorify me in this world. That's our great purpose — in the peace of God, by the power of God, to do the will of God for the glory of God, and for the good of others. That is our challenge, that is our gift and that is our commission. We, filled with true peace, guided by the power of the Spirit bring receive and bring that life-giving, transformative and empowering peace of God to others.

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Jesus came to the disciples at the time of their great fear. He came to them although the doors were locked. He comes to me too, wherever I am locked in by fear, and he gives me his peace. Think now of those areas in my life where I am afraid. Imagine Jesus coming and standing before me and saying, "Peace be with you". How do you respond?
2. The disciples recognise Jesus, but he is not the same Jesus they had known. This peace he offers is ultimately a deep and heartfelt awareness of Emmanuel, 'God with us'. Have you ever had an experience like the disciples? At a time of crisis and fear have you been made consciously aware of this 'God with us'? Sit with this memory.
3. The disciples are baptised in the Holy Spirit. This is a new birth and a new baptism. The regenerative power of the Spirit makes it possible for us to become children of God. With this new birth, we

become a new creation, formed by the same Spirit of God which moved over the world in the opening lines of Genesis, when: “the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” What is it that blinds me to the reality of the Pentecost?

4. When free from possessiveness and pretension, the recognition of the gifts of the Spirit can be a source of life and joy. Can I name my own sense of belonging as a Christian? What are my gifts? With whom do I share them?
5. Jesus calls his disciples into mission. We too are to be the Good News in our own place and time. Where have I been Good News, where have I experienced Good News and how have I brought the Good News to others?

Prayer -

Loving God, in the Spirit you call us into fellowship and communion. We thank you for your different gifts to each and all. As we recognise you the one giver, may we imitate you in the building up of all. We ask this, as always, through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Prayer in these uncertain times

We pray for all those in our country and throughout the world suffering from the Corona Virus. May its victims and their families be strengthened by the support of our community of faith and restored soon to full health. We also pray for our leaders and medical personnel who deal with the virus. May we keep calm and may we join together in solidarity with care and compassion to tackle this emergency. This we ask in confidence through Christ Our Lord. Amen

