



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home Sunday 12th July 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 – Matthew 10:1-23 – Parable of the Sower.

That same day, Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside, but such large crowds gathered round Him that he got into a boat and sat there. The people all stood on the shore, and He told them many things in parables. He said, 'Listen, a sower went out to sow. As he sowed, some seeds fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate them up. 5 Others fell on patches of rock where they found little soil and sprang up at once, because there was no depth of earth; but as soon as the sun came up they were scorched and, not having any roots, they withered away. Others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Anyone who has ears should listen!'



Then the disciples went up to Him and asked, 'Why do You talk to them in parables?' In answer, He said, 'Because to you is granted to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not granted. Anyone who has will be given more and will have more than enough; but anyone who has not will be deprived even of what he has. The reason I talk to them in parables is that they look without seeing and listen without hearing or understanding. So in their case what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah is being fulfilled: Listen and listen, but never understand! Look and look, but never perceive! This people's heart has grown hard, their ears dulled, they have shut their eyes tight to avoid using their eyes to see, their ears to hear, their heart to understand, changing their ways and being healed by Me. 'But blessed are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear! In truth I tell you, many prophets and upright people longed to see what you see, and never saw it; to hear what you hear, and never heard it.'

So pay attention to the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom without understanding, the Evil One comes and carries off what was sown in his heart: this is the seed sown on the edge of the path. The seed sown on patches of rock is someone who hears the word and welcomes it at once with joy. But such a person has no root deep down and does not last; should some trial come, or some persecution on account of the word, at once he falls away. The seed sown in thorns is someone who hears the word, but the worry of the world and the lure of riches choke the word and so it produces nothing. And the seed sown in rich soil is someone who hears the word and understands it; this is the one who yields a harvest and produces now a hundredfold, now sixty, now thirty.'

A Short Thought

In this week's gospel we read about the Sower and it is one of Jesus' greatest parables because as a wisdom teaching, which is what a parable is, we get new insights into some aspects of life. There is nearly always an element of surprise in parables. We see the sower as a free and generous spirit continuing to sow even though he may not always see results. He trusts that his faithfulness will eventually bear abundant fruit .Are

there times in our lives when we had the temptation to give up sowing seeds of faith in people's lives because we did not see the results we expected?

As we see in nature, tiny seeds have an astonishing, miraculous effect. Go back over your own experience and recall something which began modestly but which in the end grew surprisingly. The reign of God is like that - the modest beginnings of Jesus' own preaching had tremendous effect.

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. This is the parable of Christian optimism: even if the sower was only moderately good, most of the seed would fall on good ground, bringing forth abundant fruit, at least a thirtyfold. Let anyone with ears listen! Do I share his optimism?
2. Parents with children, teachers with pupils, speakers with listeners, are all like sowers in a field here the preparation of the soil is up to another—the child, pupil or listener. They can sow the seed but cannot guarantee that it will bear fruit. At times there may be a temptation not to try any more. The challenge is to sow in hope. When have you been surprised by the harvest you have reaped?
3. The Word is the seed sown in us. Personal experience is the soil in which it takes root. When we "hear the word and understand it" it yields a rich harvest. Do we give the message of Jesus a chance to go deeply into our heart and into society?
4. We can become very greedy, sometimes self-centred, disheartened, or worse apathic and what does not bring results immediately we can omit altogether. But Jesus tells us no good work goes unwasted. All in God's time. Where do I need to try and trust more?
5. Where have I seen my efforts bear fruit? Give thanks to God.

Prayer -

God of the heavens, God of the earth, all creation awaits your gift of new life. Prepare our hearts to receive the word of your Son, that his gospel may grow within us and yield a harvest that is a hundredfold. Help us Lord to believe that to live in the Kingdom is to live in the hope that our good actions are in co-operation with the work of God in our world and will yield good fruit. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. **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

