



## Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

### Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> 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 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 – Matthew 14:24-43.** The parable of the Wheat and the weeds

*24 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.*

*27 "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 28 "'An enemy did this,' he replied.*

*"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'*

*29 "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"*

*31 He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."*

*33 He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds[a] of flour until it worked all through the dough."*

*34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. 35 So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:*

*"I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world."*

*36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."*

*37 He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. 40 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.*

*42 They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.*

### **A Short Thought**

**A parable of the weed.** *The man had sowed good seed, but the enemy has sowed weed among it at night. The servants would like to remove the weed, but the master tells them to wait until the harvest. Because the disciples do not understand the parable, Jesus explains it. The good seed are the children of the kingdom, the weed the children of wickedness and evil, the enemy who sowed*



*it, is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the world. 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.*

*Jesus replies with the parable to a question: From where does evil come from and why God does not remove all sinful and evil from the world? Why does he allow it? The question is as old as humankind. Already Job in the Old Testament dealt with it. God appeared to him as evil, unjust, because he allowed such evil in the world. The bad are having good times, but the righteous are suffering. How can God allow it? Why not remove all the sinners? Job opposes God, he wants to prove to Him his wickedness and injustice. And what does God answer? Something like this: "All right, come into my place and you lead the world. Take the reins in your hands, make order, clear all the wicked from the face of the earth, then I will glorify you and give you a praise." With these words, Job becomes silent. He admits he does not understand everything. The world is full of things we do not understand or are difficult to accept. The suffering of innocent children, accidents, sudden death, exploitation, war ... How can God allow all of this? One can choose between two: accusing God of being evil, wrong, or admitting that he does not understand everything and is silent. Many unfortunately choose the first option. They are too much orientated in their understanding of justice. Or they are similar to the servants who want to take the weed out immediately. What is Jesus' response? The weed should grow together with the good seeds until the harvest. That is, God is patient. He gives the sinners the time to convert. And God speaks by the prophet Ezekiel: "I do not want the death of a sinner, but to convert and live." The parable therefore speaks of God's mercy.*

## **SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER**

1. The owner of the field who allowed the wheat and the darnel to grow together is a reminder to us to be patient with ourselves and with others when we see everything is not right. Sometimes a preoccupation with the negative (the darnel) can blind us to seeing the positive in our own lives and in the lives of others. When have you found that a willingness to live with the messiness of the present created the conditions for future growth?
2. We see here a great example of the patience and love of God! How do I deal with imperfection in myself and with others? Can I live with limitations in myself and others?
3. Sometimes we may think that perfection is acquired by becoming aware of our faults and working to root these out. However, when we become more familiar with Jesus' attitude to the limited and sinful side of ourselves we learn to accept our limited and sinful self just as Jesus did with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). If we don't accept this side of ourselves, we tend to become fixated with it and fail to appreciate the fullness of life Jesus has already given us. Where do I see God's blessing in my life?
4. The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven are reminders that seemingly insignificant things can have incredibly positive results. Have you ever been surprised by the benefit to yourself or others of a kind gesture, a small initiative, or a word of encouragement?

## **Prayer -**

O loving God, patient and compassionate, you alone know fully the goodness of what you have made. Strengthen our spirit when we are slow and temper our zeal when we are rash, that in your own good time you may produce in us a rich harvest from the seed you have sown and tended. 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*