



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 26th 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 13:44-52

The parable of the hidden treasure

'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 'Have you understood all this?' They answered, 'Yes.' And he said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.'

A Short Thought

In today's two parables Jesus gives us a new angle on the Kingdom of Heaven. He knows we all love to find a bargain –either by accident or a lengthy search. Firstly, Jesus draws on the custom of people hiding their valuables in the ground, when they feared someone would steal them. They hoped to be able to recover their treasures, as the need arose. But, sadly, such precautions could misfire - when the only one who knew the secret whereabouts of his valuables died, before he'd recovered them! Then, many years later, someone might accidentally stumble across his hidden wealth. That's what happened in this parable. The man then bought the field so that he could acquire the treasure he'd discovered there.

In our own time, this could also happen if a ship, laden with bullion, sank in a storm. Then, centuries later, a scuba diver accidentally discovered it. He would need to sell all his possessions to raise the funds to recover the lost sunken treasure -if he judged such a sacrifice was worthwhile. This parable tells us that some people do stumble across the Good News of the kingdom, without looking for it. Meeting a committed, loving, caring Christian may touch their hearts and open their eyes to the wonder of God's Kingdom. They may be moved by the hope and sense of purpose Jesus has given His followers. That, they realise, is something they must have. And they will gladly make any sacrifice to get it.

In the second parable, about the pearl of great price, it's not a question of someone accidentally discovering something precious, but of his devoting his life to finding it. He's a pearl merchant, who knows what he wants, and when he discovers it he realises that it's worth more than all his other pearls put together. Shrewdly, he's prepared to sacrifice everything he has in order to obtain that one precious pearl. That pearl merchant represents all of us, who are seeking the greatest possible happiness. Like him, we can appreciate so much that is good and beautiful in life. But we are restless and dissatisfied until we discover God, who alone can satisfy our deepest longings. St. Augustine famously sums up our restlessness in this search, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." So what do we hold precious? What are we searching for? What would we be willing to sacrifice everything for? Where have we discovered this precious gift in others?



SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Have you ever found yourself saying “that was worth it” after giving up something (time, pleasure, money, etc.)? What was the treasure that made the sacrifice worthwhile?
2. Have I found the pearl of great value, for which I am ready to sell all I have to buy it? Am I still looking for it, or am I resigned to a life of mediocrity in my relationships with others, with God in my prayer, in my work life? If I have found it, am I ready to sell all that I have to obtain it? The parable is not inviting you to think about somebody else – about some random trespasser. Jesus is inviting you to recognise where your heart is. For whom or for what would you go without everything else?
3. The “kingdom of heaven” is when God is really the ruler in our life. What treasures have you obtained when you allow God to be at the centre of your life?
4. Think about this hidden treasure: it inspires, enlivens, and opens horizons of new plans and dreams. Not everyone should be told about it immediately but the excitement that it brings cannot be hidden. God looks at us and sees a hidden treasure, wondering when we might discover it. Take a moment to thank God for what gives meaning to your life.
5. In life, we gather a lot of things, some good and some bad. The wise person in the kingdom of heaven, knows how to sit down and make decisions on what to keep and what to discard. When have you undertaken that kind of discernment? What have you discarded? What have you held on to?

Prayer -

Generous and loving God, you alone impart the gift of right judgement. Grant us an understanding ear, that we may value wisely the treasure of your kingdom and gladly forgo all lesser gifts to possess that kingdom’s incomparable joy. We make our prayer 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

