



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 2nd August 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 13:44-52

The feeding of the five thousand

Now when Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

A Short Thought

The feeding of the crowds in the wilderness is notably straightforward. Jesus was moved by compassion for the crowds and healed them. Late in the day, the disciples assessed the situation (in the wilderness there is nothing for the hungry crowds to eat) and perhaps they, too, were moved by compassion when they suggested the crowds be sent to nearby towns where they could buy food. Jesus had another idea:

feed them right here with what we have. Taking the five loaves and two fish the disciples had on hand, Jesus blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples. The disciples fed the crowds, numbering five thousand men, plus women and children. Everyone had enough to eat, and they gathered up the leftovers. The story does not tell us how the hungry crowd is fed in the wilderness; only that no one leaves hungry. And so the story invites us to use our imaginations.

I wonder if the "miracle" of the feeding is not so much what Jesus does as what happens among the crowds in the presence of Jesus. Maybe the crowds experienced the transformative power of Christ's presence when he ordered them to make themselves comfortable on the grass, as if they were honoured guests at a meal. And when he blessed the loaves, the crowd sensed this meal was special. Perhaps as the disciples moved through the crowds distributing the food, no one feared there wouldn't be enough, and so they didn't think of themselves and their own needs. The men shared with their wives and sisters and mothers, and the children were fed first. Maybe Jesus' compassion was contagious in the way they cared for each other. And Jesus' healing touch inspired them to gratitude for a simple meal abundant by wilderness standards. Conceivably the most profound thing Jesus does in the story is to insist that the disciples imagine possibilities for distributing food for a hungry crowd so that there is enough for everyone. Where in my life are there opportunities to "share my food" so others will have enough?



SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. In this gospel we can see how God takes care of his people. We can read the feeding in two ways.

On the one hand, we can simply take it as a miraculous event, pointing to the divine origins of Jesus. On the other hand, we can see that once the disciples began to share the little food they had with those around, it triggered a similar movement among the crowd, many of whom had actually brought some food with them. When everyone shared, everyone had enough. A picture of the kind of society the Church should stand for. Is this how you be and experience Church?

2. Where in my life are there opportunities to “share my food” so others will have enough?
3. When Jesus saw the crowd, he recognised their need and reached out to them. Who has been a Jesus person for you, someone who recognised your need and reached out to you? For whom have you been a Jesus person?
4. When the disciples became aware of the problem they wanted to send the crowd away but Jesus told them “You give them something to eat”. They thought what they had was insufficient, but Jesus used the little they had to feed the crowd. When we give the little, we have to a situation the results are often beyond our expectations. Have you had this experience?
5. “Lord, it is an extraordinary thing: if we complain about the little we have, we never have enough; but if we take what we have, raise our eyes to heaven, and say the blessing over it, we have as much as we want, and even twelve baskets of scraps of leftovers.” *Michel de Verteuil*

Prayer -

Generous and compassionate God, you place in the hands of your disciples the food of life. Nourish us at your holy table, that we may bear Christ to others and share with them the gifts we have so richly received. 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

