



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 5th 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 11:25-30 – *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

"Jesus said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'"

A Short Thought

To all those labouring under harsh religious and political systems, Jesus says, "Come to me... and I will give you rest." Rest (anapausis) in the Septuagint can refer to Sabbath rest, the rest of death, or rest from war when Israel's enemies have been subdued. Rest also functions as an image of salvation, of what will be when the world is finally ordered according to God's purposes and enjoys its full and complete Sabbath. In promising "rest," Jesus promises life under God's reign in the new world that he is bringing into being. What is the yoke Jesus offers? We might infer that it is his teaching, his way of discipleship, which is not burdensome but life-giving. He invites the weary to learn from him, for he is not a tyrant who lords it over his disciples, but is "gentle and humble in heart." His yoke is easy (christos, better translated "good" or "kind") and his burden is light. To take his yoke upon oneself is to be yoked to the one in whom God's kingdom of justice, mercy, and compassion is breaking into this world, and to find the rest for which the soul longs.

Preachers find rich treasure in this text, for themselves and for their congregations filled with people who are "weary and carrying heavy burdens" of many and various kinds, deeply longing for rest. To all who are weary to the bone and weighed down, Jesus says, "Come to me... and I will give you rest."

It is not that Jesus invites us to a life of ease. Following him will be full of risks and challenges, as he has made abundantly clear. He calls us to a life of humble service, but it is a life of freedom and joy instead of slavery. It is life yoked to Jesus under God's gracious and merciful reign, free from the need to prove oneself worthy and sin, free to rest deeply and securely in God's love and grace.

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Human beings are always setting up barriers which divide people into those who are important and those who are not. It happens in every community and Jesus met it among the Jewish people of his time. God wants to break down these barriers so that those who are on the wrong side of them can experience that they too are his children and have a unique contribution to make to their

community. Perhaps you can recall someone whom you did not think of highly but who turned out to be very good in some sphere. What good news that you were wrong!

2. A saying of Saint Catherine of Siena was 'Where we see sins, God sees weakness'. She points to the reality that many people try to do their best but find their faults and failings often overcome them. God sees the heart and sees our efforts to do good, even though these efforts do not always succeed. Think of a time or a person where you maybe have found it hard to see the good in someone.
3. The ministry of Jesus was to free people from the burden of a legalistic understanding of religion, and to introduce them to a faith marked by freedom and love. Perhaps you have made that journey also. Who has been a Jesus person for you and helped you to find freedom, joy and rest in your faith?
4. Great intelligence is not sufficient to develop a relationship with God, unless combined with an open childlike capacity to wonder. Does this resonate with your experience?
5. It is easy to feel weighed down when I struggle on my own. Consider what it is like to carry my burdens with Jesus' help, who promises you do not carry your burdens alone. He promises that his attitudes of humility and gentleness will make a difference. What burdens can you dare to trust to God's hands?
6. The last lines today have been a huge help and consolation to millions of people over the years. We all know the times of carrying heavy burdens of failure, pain, loss, shame, guilt, depression, hopelessness. We can all add to this list. All can be part of our prayer and relationship with God. Only in honestly admitting our big needs can we find the rest of soul which we need. A soul at rest can share with many the peace of God.

Prayer -

Father, Lord of heaven and earth, by whose gracious will the mysteries of the kingdom are revealed to the childlike, make us learn from your Son humility of heart, that in shouldering his yoke we may find refreshment and rest. 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

