



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 23rd August 2020

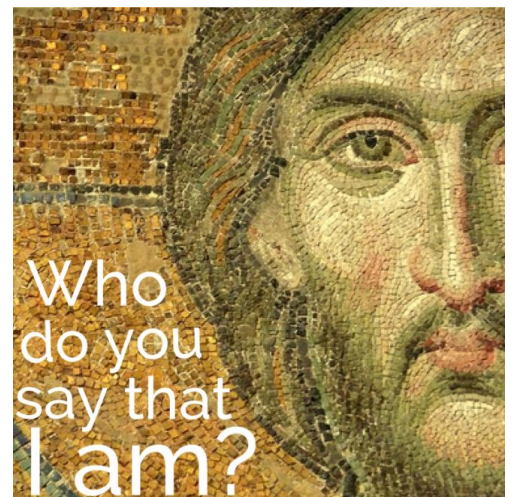
1. Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.
2. Read the passage again and spend understanding. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
3. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself 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 16:13-20

“Who do you say that I am?”

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.



A Short Thought

“But who do you say that I am?” - Though this question is posed to Jesus’ narrative audience, his disciples, it is a powerful query upon us as well today. Who do we say Jesus is? Your Answer Matters. Jesus knows there are a wide variety of opinions about his identity. There are many with a casual knowledge of, and exposure to, Jesus. Their opinions can be based on either ignorance and indifference. Jesus turns his attention to those who are his close followers and asks them directly “Who do you say that I am?” Peter says, speaking for the disciples, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Bingo!

The answer you give to the question “who is Jesus?” will impact every other aspect of your life. The call to follow and submit to Jesus is individual. It doesn’t matter who your parents say Jesus is, or the tradition you grew up in, who your spouse says Jesus is, or who Google says Jesus is. Yes all those people matter to God, but in terms of your specific relationship with God it is your answer that matters most. The question of who Jesus is demands a response. We all have to do something with Jesus, he is a real person in history. You can speculate, guess, investigate, but at a certain point you have to land on a position of who Jesus is. We all have to choose something to believe about Jesus. Regardless of what we choose to believe, Jesus is who he is. He will not be defined but us, we are defined by Him. Meaning what we choose to say about Jesus says way more about ourselves than it does about Jesus and your response to this question changes You.

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. This marks a turning point in the life of Jesus, and of the disciples. It is the first time that his disciples recognise him as the Messiah. Recall turning points in your own journey of faith when you came to some deeper understanding of who Jesus is.
2. “Who do you say that I am?” This is possibly the most important question that Jesus puts to us. In your heart of hearts, how do you answer this question today?

3. Jesus was not, for Peter, another great or admirable figure but was the one who could change his life. How do I give witness to who Jesus is my life not only about what I say but by how I let Jesus change and reconfigure my priorities?
4. Jesus praises Peter for his faith and comments that this was not his own doing but a gift of God. Perhaps there have been times when you have been conscious of the gift nature of your faith. Be thankful for the gift you have received.

Prayer -

God, greater than our hearts, higher than our minds, you know us far better than we know ourselves. Help us to live with the mystery of your presence and actions in world. In you we live and move and have our being. 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

*“For most of my life I have struggled to find God, to know God, to love God.
Now I wonder whether I have sufficiently realized that during all this time God has been trying to find me, to know me, and to love me. The question is not “How am I to find God?” but “How am I to let myself be found by him?” The question is not “How am I to know God?” but “How am I to let myself be known by God?” And, finally, the question is not “How am I to love God?” but “How am I to let myself be loved by God?” God is looking into the distance for me, trying to find me, and longing to bring me home.”*

(Henri J.M. Nouwen, The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming)

