



# Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

## Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> Sept 2020

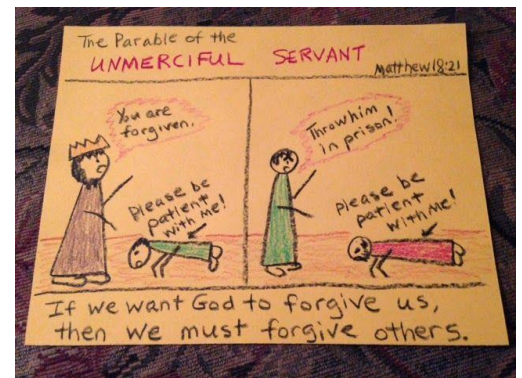
1. Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.
2. Read the passage again and spend understand. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
3. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself 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 18: 18:21-35

*'...Lord, if a brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive?'*

*Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."*



### A Short Thought

Our Gospel reading today is on forgiveness. Some of us may be going through a time or have gone through a time in the past where we found it difficult to forgive those who wronged us. I think the act of forgiving can be very difficult and sometimes it seems easier to hold a grudge against someone. In this passage we see that we must forgive others with our whole heart. If we cannot forgive those around us, then how are we supposed to be forgiven? I know you have probably heard this multiple times in your life, but we need to remember that Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice just so we could be forgiven. If Jesus was willing to do that for us, couldn't we learn to sacrifice just half as much as him and forgive those around us for whatever their transgressions may be? In the grand scheme of life, it is worth it to forgive others. For those of us who have trouble forgiving, as many of us do, let us pray that God will give us the strength to do so.

*"The world needs forgiveness; too many people are caught up in resentment and harbour hatred because they are incapable of forgiving. They ruin their own lives and the lives of those around them rather than finding the joy of serenity and peace."* (Pope Francis in Assisi in 2016) His point is that those who do not forgive, who hold on to resentment, hurt themselves almost as much, even if they are unaware of it for a while.

A challenge today is to think of a time in the present or past where we have found ourselves unable to forgive someone. Think of that situation and think of Jesus' sacrifices. Are we above forgiving others after what Jesus did so we could receive forgiveness? Let us try to forgive someone we haven't forgiven yet. Whether it is a personal action or involves telling someone we have forgiven them, let us make an effort to do this. It will be a great weight off of each of our shoulders.

## **SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER**

1. Jesus surprised Peter by telling him he needed to forgive seventy-seven times. Perhaps you have known the truth of this when something reminds you of a past hurt and you find your need in your heart to forgive again the person who hurt you. What was this like for you? How has a capacity to have a forgiving heart helped you?
2. As you pray this familiar story - read it twice and see does anything new strike you the second time. A story of Jesus throws light on the person reading it and on the reality he speaks about; in this case, on the call to forgive and on the nature of God's forgiveness. The call is to forgive from the heart, not just with words. Pray the prayer he taught us - 'forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.'
3. Sometimes we need to forgive ourselves for things we regret about past behaviour. What happens to you when you cannot do this? How has your ability to forgive yourself for past mistakes influenced your attitude towards yourself now?
4. Forgiveness can be very hard. C.S. Lewis wrote: "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive". But when I fail to forgive, I am shackled to the evil which has been done to me. I cannot move forward. How free am I, or am I tied to resentments?
5. Are there people whose ability to forgive has inspired you? Recall them and the forgiveness they showed and give thanks for their example.

## **Prayer -**

O God most high, you are slow to anger and rich in compassion. Keep alive in us the memory of your mercy, that our angers may be calmed and our resentments dispelled. May we discover the forgiveness promised to those who forgive and become a people rich in mercy. Grant 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 **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*

