



# Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

## Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> Oct 2020

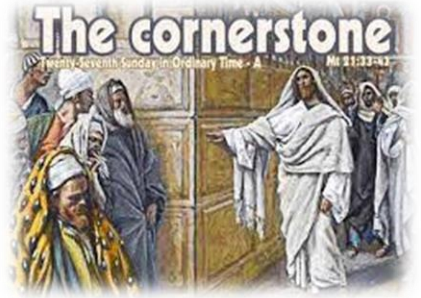
1. Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.
2. Read the passage again and spend understand. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
3. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself 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 21:33-43

***The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone***

*'Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watch-tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance." So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' They said to him, 'He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.'*



*Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures:*

*"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes"? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.*

### A Short Thought

The Bible frequently uses variations of the image of the vine and the vineyard to express the relationship between God and His people. The Gospel of today provides us with a variation on the theme of the vineyard that is violent, tense, threatening! God has shown His loving care for His vineyard (*His people*) by transplanting them from Egypt to the fertile Promised Land. He has cultivated and protected His vineyard - *His people*. He couldn't have done more for them. Showing unbelievable patience, God, sent His Son as His representative, thinking the tenants would welcome Him. Instead they killed him! This parable is a powerful indictment of the Jewish religious leaders to whom God had entrusted His people. In this parable Jesus makes a very forceful prediction of His own Passion.

However, not even the murder of God's Son could thwart His plan for His vineyard – *His people*. Instead, God drew on other resources! His vineyard would be handed over to other tenants –pagan converts! By contrast they would welcome the Son and produce a bumper harvest.

Through the parable of today's Gospel the Church confronts you and me with the questions, "How do we carry out the responsibilities God has given to each of us? Do we bear the fruits of loving and serving God and each other -the fruits God expects of us? Or are we just a bunch of useless sour grapes?!"

### SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Jesus reminds us that the kingdom does not belong to us – it is a gift of God. Consider what it is that I think I own and consider how it is that all good comes from God's hands.
2. This parable is a story of opportunity for life presented and rejected, and they lose out in the

process. How important have you found it to recognise and accept opportunities for growth, development and new life when these were presented to you?

3. It is also a cautionary tale about the destructive effects of greed – doing violence to the rights of others and eventually destroying the greedy themselves. What attitude towards possessions has helped you to be at peace in yourself and at peace with others?
4. The vineyard of the Lord is an image for God's people. As we look at the vineyard we have been given, we can ask ourselves "are we good tenants?" Recall times when you have been a good tenant and reached out caringly for those around you.
5. "It was the stone rejected by the builders that became the keystone. This was the Lord's doing and it was wonderful to see". Sometimes a person not highly regarded plays a key role in a project, and it is wonderful to see. Can you recall examples of this?

## Prayer -

Lord of the vineyard, you call us to live the Gospel and to produce its fruits. Send your Spirit into our hearts, that we know the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. May we be ever willing workers in care of your people. 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*

