



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 8th Nov 2020

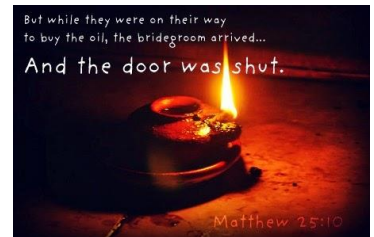
1. Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.
2. Read the passage again and spend understand. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
3. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself 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 – Matt 25:1-13

The Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids

Jesus said to his disciples, "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."



A Short Thought

The custom at the time of Jesus was that the bridegroom typically took off to party with his friends after the wedding. Then late in the night, the groom would come and collect his bride. When the bridegroom finally appeared, the custom was for the bridesmaids to light the way to his house with lamps.

Jesus' version is a bit different. At midnight, the bridesmaids were awakened when the sentinel cried out: "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out and welcome him!" Immediately, all ten of the bridesmaids went out to meet the bridegroom. However, five of the bridesmaids had not anticipated that the bridegroom would dally or party so long. Foolishly, they had not brought any extra oil for their lamps; thus, when the bridegroom finally arrived, their lamps no longer had any oil in them. Their lamps were dark; they could not escort the bridegroom to his bride! Now the other five bridesmaids were wise and prudent women. They had planned well and brought along some extra lamp oil, just in case it was needed. Thus, they could escort the bridegroom to the bridal chamber.

Today's Gospel invites us to ask ourselves: Am I wise or foolish? Or am I a bit of both, depending on the circumstances? Within us, we each have a wise person and we all have a foolish person within us. We may find ourselves secretly sympathetic to the foolish maidens. Does the church really live as though the bridegroom's arrival is certain? Some have become caught up in trying to determine the day and the hour, while others have let their lamps run out. To live in vigilance means for the disciples to do the tasks that they have been appointed to do in preparation for the Master's coming. In Matthew's Gospel, those tasks include bearing witness to God's kingdom by welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry, visiting the sick and imprisoned and making disciples in all the world. Are we, as a Church, doing this especially in these times?

Today, we also are waiting for the bridegroom to come to each one of us. Do we have our lamps lit? Are we prepared and alert? Or has our oil been used up and our lamp dark? Or perhaps we have fallen asleep?

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Readiness, being alert, a sense of expectancy and hope, these are all things that Jesus tries to

communicate through some of his parables. Do we live as disciple, living our calling, awaiting our masters return?

2. We are asked to show our readiness by living out the Gospel message in our lives, in our time. Would others know Jesus by the life that we live?
3. Who am I in the parable? Am I willing to wait on God even when I don't know how long it will take? Can I faithfully entrust myself to the unknown with the certainty of God's goodness?
4. Jesus tells us that there is a right time and a time when it will be too late. Ask God's help that I may realise what it is, what I might do now, how I might recognise the approaching bridegroom and welcome him.
5. God is a God of surprises – where and when has God surprised you in your life?

Prayer -

Loving Master, may my heart always be awake to the blessings in my life and your love around me. Allow me to be constantly alert to the surprises you surround my day with and may others seek to come to know you by my example. I 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

