

Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home Sunday 22nd Nov 2020 – Christ The King

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 25:31-46 *The Son of Man will sit on the throne of his glory 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was*

hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

A Short Thought

I remember being in secondary school when I first truly reflected on today's Gospel passage. I was struck by how stern of a command it was, and I remember specifically being afraid that throughout my life I might forget the needy and consequently be condemned for it. It frightened me, especially because the local parish priest was a well practiced preacher who drove the message of fear home. As I have gotten older, this Gospel does not scare me as it once did because I see that it is a call to love and not to condemnation. God does not operate on fear: Jesus doesn't want us to care for the needy because He has scared us into it; He wants us to do it to show that we love Him by loving them.

It is a passage that should challenge us: do we care for the poor as we ought? Are we doing enough individually, as a community and and as a society both 1) to provide charity and 2) to work for justice for those in need? Saint Mother Teresa, the Angel of the Slums, once mentioned that the greatest poverty is loneliness. In this light, perhaps our whole understanding of who the poor are should be challenged? In addition to providing for the needs of those in physical want, do we work to bring aid to those in mental, emotional, or spiritual need? More so in the times that we are in – who are the forgotten and the 'over-looked'? If this is the case (and I believe it is), I am convinced that the poor are not some far off concept away from our own comfortable homes, careers, and lifestyles: instead, the poor, those in need, are all around us: our classmates, co-workers, neighbours, friends, and family members.





Firstly we have to recognise our own poverty, our own need for God, forgiveness and love. This should not turn us in ourselves but should lead us, drive us out to alleviate the poverty of others. In these times between the big things we can not do and the small things we refuse to do the danger is that we do nothing – and that danger is real. Apathy, finger-pointing and excuses for inactivity seem to be biggest plague. The Gospel today makes it clear that we are called *to notice, to respond, to act, to serve* – in essence, To Do, not do nothing.

If we do follow the words of Jesus, if we let his positive law of love reign in our actions toward the poor, we will have life as today's psalmist said. Over the next week if you can, make a conscious effort to set aside some time in prayer to examine how we, ourselves can better answer Jesus' call to recognise, respond to and to serve those in need. How can we do those little things that we can do? And can we start with ourselves?

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

- This judgment scene contains surprises for us. One is that nobody is condemned for doing wrong, but for their failure to do good. Jesus is telling us that being his disciple is a positive choice about how we live and relate to others. Perhaps sin-avoidance has sometimes dominated your view of what was being asked of you. What difference has it made for you when you viewed your Christian life as a daily opportunity to make a positive difference to others? A gift given in love, is given to be enjoyed, treasured, and used. Through fear, one servant failed to recognise the loving trust being shown to him and buried the talent. When have you found that overcoming fear helped you to make the most of opportunities in life?
- 2. Jesus is very clear about the criteria for knowing whether I am a sheep or a goat how have I loved, how have I cared for other especially the poor, the needy and the marginalised? Looking back over the last day or week, recall times when I have acted as Jesus asked, and give thanks. Also recall times I have failed to act as Jesus asks, and seek forgiveness. Is there anything I can do to try make good the harm my failure may have caused?
- 3. Where are the hungry, the naked, the homeless who would call on me if they could reach me? Or have I so organised my life that the needy never impinge on me? Lord, you have made this the sole criterion of judgment. How will I measure up?
- 4. Jesus says that when we do something for another, He considers it as done to Himself. When has seeing Christ in others helped you in your dealings with them?

Prayer -

Almighty God, you have conferred upon Christ Jesus sovereignty over every age and nation. Direct us, in the love of Christ, to care for the least of his brothers and sisters, that we may be subject to his dominion and receive the inheritance of your kingdom. 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

