



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 31st Jan 2021

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 – Mark 1:21-28

When Jesus heals the man in Capernaum, people recognise the power of his message

Jesus and his disciples went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching-with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.



A Short Thought

Jesus is teaching in the synagogue. His authority fills not just the place but each person there. And almost immediately this man with an unclean spirit shows up. The presence of Jesus, the man with a clean spirit, draws out the presence of the man with an unclean spirit. Jesus has that effect on people. His authority and teaching reveal the truth about his listeners' lives. He represents the human condition. Behind his question is, I believe, the unspoken longing and hope that Jesus would say, "Everything. I have everything to do with you." Those are the words that can begin to put his life back together. The person with unclean spirit in the gospel cries out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?" He senses the distance between his life and Jesus'. His words betray his isolation. He is the spokesperson for all who feel disconnected from themselves, others, or God. He represents the human condition. Behind his question is, the unspoken longing and hope that Jesus would say, "Everything. I have everything to do with you." Those are the words that can begin to put his life back together. We're not so different. Each one of us also longs for that answer because we too know the separation and brokenness of our own lives. We've lived in isolation. We have been trapped in grief. We have carried the burden of guilt. But through this the true voice and the true image are always present. That's why the man with an unclean spirit can cry out, "I know who you are, the Holy One of God." He speaks from a deep place of knowing. His recognition of Jesus is at a profound level a recognition of himself and his own holiness. For every voice that denies that and leaves us crying, "What have you do to with us?" Jesus says, "Shhh. Be quiet. That's not who you are. You are mine and I have everything to do with you." Do you hear that call, that voice, that question in your own life? Dare to listen to that voice and you too may be astounded at what can become of your life.

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

- "...he taught them as one having authority" - Jesus not only preached the Good News in what he said but more so by what he did. Today's Gospel story shows us a person who spoke with a courage and a

wisdom that struck the ordinary people with its ring of authority. Where do you see this in your life, in your community?

- Jesus' combined teaching with healing, and he drove the evil spirit out of the man. The power of God that worked this wonder through Jesus is also at work in and through us today. When have you been freed from some bad habit or practice?
- At some point in their lives many people may feel themselves being brought to their knees by circumstance, urges and forces that they feel may overwhelm them. When have you turned to a power or for support beyond yourself?
- The teaching of Jesus is straight from his heart, from his relationship with God. How can you strengthen your relationship with God?
- It is not only individuals but groups that can be struggling with an evil spirit – jealousy, rivalry, malicious gossiping, abuse of power, etc. Sometimes a Jesus person comes into the group and drives out that evil spirit. Have you experienced this? Perhaps you yourself have been this person on some occasion?

Prayer

Faithful God, your Holy One, Jesus of Nazareth, spoke the truth with authority, and you confirmed his teaching by wonderful deeds. Through his healing presence, drive far from us all that is unholy, so that by word and deed we may proclaim him Messiah and Lord and bear witness to your power to heal and save. I ask this in trust and confidence through Jesus my brother. 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

