



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home Sunday 14th Feb 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.

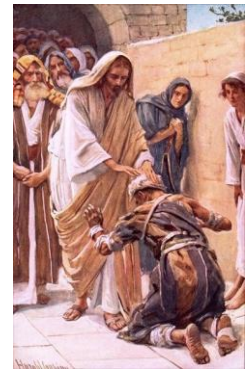


THIS SUNDAY'S GOSPEL – Mark 1:40-45

Jesus cures a leper by the healing touch of his hand

A leper came to Jesus begging him, and kneeling he said to him, “If you choose, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, saying to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.” But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.



A Short Thought

The predicament of the leper in the time of Jesus was truly pathetic. Those unfortunates were debarred from all social life, both religious and commercial. We might try to explain their plight with examples from our own local surroundings, although it is difficult to find such an all-embracing boycott and exclusion, in modern cultures. Jesus crosses social and religious boundaries in order to cure the leper. But before this could happen, the leper had the courage to break the Law of the Old Testament and approach Jesus. The outcast had such a high opinion of this holy man that he risked a rebuke from him for ignoring the normal prohibitions. At the heart of the encounter, compassion moves Jesus not only to respond with a word of encouragement, but also to reach out and touch him. Here Jesus shows us God's attitude to human disability, human suffering and human exclusion. He wishes to reach us in our weakness and restore us to fullness of life.

It is not enough that the outcast is restored to health. Without the permission of the priest at the time he could not regain his place in society and would remain an outcast. Jesus wishes to re-establish communion in a broken human family. Before congratulating ourselves for not being so “primitive,” it might not be any harm to ask who are the marginalised and excluded in our own time and culture? The categories are wide: socio-economic groups, ethnicity, orientation, religion. Are there people I never encounter?

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

- Jesus' compassion for people's suffering was an outstanding characteristic of his ministry. We see the healing power of God at work through him. Recall times when the compassion of others has had a healing effect on you. Remember also when your compassion towards someone in trouble brought them hope, healing or strength.

- Listen carefully to the leper's prayer: "If you choose, you can make me clean". And to Jesus' reply: "I do choose. Be made clean". What does this exchange tell you about the leper's convictions and feelings, as well as those of Jesus? Have you seen this pattern in your own prayers of petition?
- The leper was not just cured from a physical disease, he was also readmitted to contact with the community. Perhaps you recall people who were once ostracised being brought back into family or community. Who was the Jesus person who helped this healing to take place?
- The leper becomes a disciple – he spreads the word. He witnesses to Jesus' goodness. Can I let him take me by the hand so that I too may become a witness to what God is doing in my life?

Prayer

We come before you, O God, confident in Christ's victory over sickness and death. Heal us again from all that divides us, and from prejudice, which isolates us. Bring us to wholeness of life through the pardon you grant your people. I ask this in trust and confidence through Jesus my companion. 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

