



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 7th Feb 2021

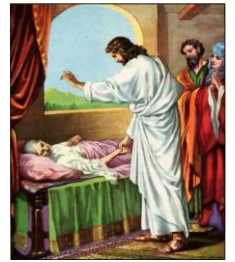
1. Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.
2. Read the passage again and spend understand. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
3. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself 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 1:29-39

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.



A Short Thought

The heart of Jesus went out to those in need; they knew that and he was the type of person who would attract those in need. The healing he communicated was not always physical, but was like a healing of anxiety, guilt and all that weighs us down. A strengthening of ourselves that gives a lift for the future. This happens still in his care for people today. The church, his community, is to be the people of healing, like a 'field hospital' (Pope Francis). The peace of mind people find in prayer or in a holy place is like the ministry of Jesus. The lift of the soul in deep human love, listening and sympathy is also like the ministry of Jesus.

Jesus goes to the deserted places of our lives to draw us there. If he didn't go first, if he didn't invite us to that place, my hunch is that none of us would ever go there. Yet, the wilderness and desert places of our lives are sacred places. In the desert there is only God, there is nothing but God. Jesus is drawing us deeper and deeper into the heart of God. Ironically, that happens in the very place we thought was barren, empty, and desolate. In the gospel Simon and his companions tell Jesus "Everyone is searching for you,". Yet Simon and his companions were the only ones to find him. Maybe they were the only ones willing to go to the deserted place. I wonder where the others were searching. The safety of town? The familiarity of neighboring houses? Standing in line at the door? I wonder where we will search when the night-time of our life comes. Go to the deserted places of your life, places that you think are barren, empty, desolate, and there you will find Jesus, praying.

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

- Many aspects of the life of Jesus come together in this reading. After the morning drama in the synagogue, Jesus went to the home of Simon and Andrew. The restrictions of Sabbath observance

necessitated their having a quiet day. But Simon's mother-in-law was ill and Jesus was moved to cure her. He always put compassion before the law.

- The Sabbath ended at sundown and this allowed "the whole city" to come with their sick and possessed. They encamped at the door until Jesus had exercised his healing power. How late was it when all that was over? Yet in the morning, "while it was still very dark", Jesus slipped out of the house, found a deserted place, and gave himself to prayer. Why did Jesus feel the need to pray? Are you surprised?
- Who do you take your troubles to? Jesus heard Simon's prayer for his sick mother-in-law and the fever left her. There is no trouble he will not face with us and for us. Put your trust in him.
- Jesus shows himself as a person seeking to break new ground. The disciples want him to continue ministry where he is. He wants to move on. What has been your experience of breaking new ground, moving beyond your comfort zone, or trying something you had not tried before? When has this had a lifegiving effect for you?

Prayer

Out of your power and compassion, O God, you sent your Son into our afflicted world to proclaim the day of salvation. Heal the broken-hearted; bind up our wounds, bring us health of body and spirit and raise to us to new life in your service. 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

