



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 25th April 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 – John 10: 11-18 “The Good Shepherd”

‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.’

A Short Thought

Jesus knows each of us by name, and calls us into abundant life, leading us to safe pasture and sweet water. The metaphor of sheep can seem an unflattering one. But if we look closely at what Jesus is saying, we see that his riddles aren't really about sheep. Jesus is talking about recognizing the shepherd.

Remember that he just gave sight to a man who had never seen, and yet that man recognized him as God's Messiah while the Pharisees, who should have recognized the One they'd been waiting for, were blind to God's power working among them. Now, Jesus explains his miracle by comparing these respected religious leaders to thieves and bandits who only want to steal and destroy. By refusing to accept Jesus as God's own Son, the Messiah for whom they claim to hope, the Pharisees threaten God's people, stealing their hope, destroying their trust in God alone, who is the Good Shepherd.

We cannot completely experience that abundant life until we share it. As sheep who know our shepherd's voice, we also lead other sheep through the gate that stands open before us. By joining in Christ's mission to bring abundant life to all of God's children, we experience that life even more fully. This means engaging with those around us. Abundant life isn't the goal. It is the result of following Jesus, who made the blind to see, the lame to walk, who fed the hungry and comforted those in sorrow, who offered his own life and then conquered death once and for all.

Here is the gate. Will you go in? Christ is the gate. Will you show him to someone else? He came to give life in abundance. It's more than you or I can keep to ourselves. Christ is calling you by name, to enter the gate, and to lead another sheep into a life of abundance

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Jesus presents himself as the good shepherd who knows his sheep, cares for them and lays down his life for them. He contrasts himself to hirelings (the Pharisees). He emphasises that he lays down his life, himself. No one takes his life from him. The sign of this will be his power to take up his life after he has laid it down. Do I believe Jesus? Do I believe that he loves me so much that he will give his life for me? He tells me that he is the good shepherd and will never allow real harm to come to me.
2. "Care" seems the fundamental image here. It invites a reflection on our own experience of being cared for, in all sorts of ways. It opens us to the experience of being cared for by God in Jesus. Can you write your own prayer of being loved? Where do you experience God loving you?
3. The shepherd keeps the sheep in view, regarding them and seeing beyond them. I ask God for the humility I need, that I might listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd, allowing him to lead me and trusting that he is leading others too - even if in ways I don't understand.
4. In looking for meaning, when did I realise the Gospel is really not a teaching but a person, a living & dynamic word? Offer a prayer of relationship.

Prayer -

O God, you never cease to call even those far away, for it is your will that all be drawn into one fold. Attune our ears to the voice of the Good Shepherd, who leads us always to you, that we may find under your tender protection life in all its fullness. We ask this through Jesus, who died and rose for love of us and who lives and reigns 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

