



## Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

### Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May 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 16:15-20** *“Ascension Sunday - Proclaim the good news to the whole creation”*

And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.'

So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.

### **A Short Thought**

The issue of Jesus' leaving this world and entering heaven, with consequent apparent separation from his followers, is of widespread concern in the New Testament. It is all the more surprising, therefore, to realise that the original ending of Mark's Gospel had no such "ending" at all and that none of the three or more endings added to it later is original. In its first edition, Mark ended starkly: *So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.* (Mark 16:8). As this was the first Gospel to be written and there were no other endings, an ending such as in the others would not have been expected. Why a stark ending? Mark is continuing his theme that he has throughout his whole Gospel of the failure of those closest to Jesus, including even the women at the empty tomb. That there are no guarantees! With Jesus gone the mission Jesus gave to his Apostles must have sounded totally impossible, beyond their comprehension: 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole of creation.' They, a group with so many limitations and who had drawn back at the moment of crisis, are now entrusted with the mission of Jesus himself. Perhaps even more astounding is the fact that they did carry out this mission, and we, together with so many others, are the beneficiaries of their faith and trust in Jesus and Jesus' trust in them.

So, Mark's original ending in v.8 does not ring quite true. If the women had said nothing to anyone at all ever, then we would not have had the proclamation of the resurrection! We could ask how is the Risen Lord with us? The New Testament and the church tradition offer a rich array of "presences." Christ is present in the neighbour in need, in created reality beautiful and awe-inspiring, whenever the disciples gather, in the word proclaimed, in the sacrament celebrated and through the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we do not always feel this presence, but the words of Jesus are a guarantee that no matter what is going on in my life or my community or my church, he is with us, our Emmanuel. His trust is in us to carry on and be that good news and to carry this to the whole of creation!

## SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. It is time for Jesus to return to his Father. He meets his disciples for the last time. His final words give them direction for their future. Perhaps you can recall such parting moments in your own life - leaving home, school, college, training, the death of a loved one. What was that like for you? Was there an occasion when words spoken then gave you direction for your future?
2. In current times the loss of contact and feeling of isolation can creep in. But Jesus assures us we are not alone, the lack of his physical presence will be made up to them by the sending of the Holy Spirit, who will be with them permanently. Where and when do you feel God's presence?
3. In the preceding verse Jesus had rebuked the apostles for their lack of faith. Despite this he commissioned them to bring the Good News to the whole world. Witnesses to the Good News do
4. not have to be perfect. There is encouragement for us in this. To whom have you brought good news? Who has been a messenger of good news to you?
5. Jesus told his disciples that although he would not be with them as in the past he would be with them in a new way right through their lives. Have there been times when you were reassured by the love and support of another even though s/he was not physically present with you?
6. Each of us is called into the ministry of Jesus in some way. We are called to be 'other Christs', to be people who wish to make known and spread the love of God and his care for his people in the world. We may never know how much we have done this; it is sufficient that we do what we can. God has some work to do that can be done only through each person. Where, when and how did you get a sense of the meaning and purpose of your own life? How does that sustain you now? Is there any way in which that purpose ties in with the mission given to the eleven to make disciples of all the nations?

### Prayer -

God of majesty, yours is the power that raised Christ from death, yours the glory that exalted him to your right hand. By the mystery of the Ascension, sustain our hope as we bear witness to our baptism. By the perpetual outpouring of your Spirit confirm your Church in its mission of salvation. Grant this through Jesus Christ, the first-born from the dead, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen. **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*

