



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 13th June 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 4:26-34 The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Jesus said to the crowd, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come." He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

A Short Thought

Mark contains few parables, but the ones that are there really count. Today's Gospel give a simple but extremely challenging message. Mark's outlook on the reign of God will not endorse a passive stance on our part. While there is something inevitable about God's deliverance, still other passages in Mark call us 'disciples' to participate in the Christ's activity.

The Markan parables do not promise a gospel of unhindered progress, as if God's reign is guaranteed to be more prevalent and influential ten years from now than it was ten years ago. But the parables do insist that the new order Jesus declares through his words and deeds will not be relegated to confined and controlled spheres. There is no special climate to which the mustard plant is confined. With its seeds carried by the wind and stuck to hikers' shoelaces, it will grow where it will. The reign of God does not carve out a separate sacred space; it claims all aspects of human existence. There is no such thing, not in Christianity at least, as an apolitical gospel. There is no economically neutral gospel. There is no gospel that dismisses the importance of embodied existence and interpersonal relationships. Whatever you preach, however you live out your faith (and it does demand active participation) and however your church conducts its ministry, if it doesn't provide sanctuary, hospitality, sustenance, and renewal to those who need it, like little birds in a field full of foxes, then it isn't the gospel.

In short, there is no gospel in which Jesus remains buried in the ground like a dormant seed.

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Jesus loves images from farming and nature: how simply they show the dynamic of his faith-movement. Give the image some extra time to sink in. Imagine how an un-scientific middle-eastern

farmer of two thousand years ago was in awe of the wonder of “growth”. If you sow seeds, or watch plants grow, you have ample opportunities to pause in wonder at the whole process of growth. It takes place imperceptibly and comes to fruition in beautiful flowers, majestic trees and abundant harvests.

2. There will always be something hidden and mysterious about the kingdom of God. At best we get occasional hints as to what it may be or where it can be found. The first parable today reminds us that, while we live our ordinary day-to-day lives, the kingdom continues to grow – we do not know how! It is not we who bring it about but some mysterious power beyond our understanding. Were have you seen/experienced growth?
3. In the second parable Jesus invites us to reflect on the importance and significance of relationships in our lives as they grow and mature. This is true both of our relationship with God and with others around us. When have you found a relationship in which you could “make nests in its shade”?
4. In these parables Jesus tells us about how unobtrusive and unnoticeable our growth in the Christian life can be. For this reason Jesus never ceases to remind us that we must listen and make our own all of the signs of his love in our own lives, in the lives of our family and friends, as well as in all things when seen as gifts. Talk time to think of the gifts you have been blessed with and give thanks.
5. From even the tiniest seed planted in a soul, the Kingdom of God can grow so that the person who trusts in God is a source of nourishment and care for others. Where and when are you planting these seeds for others? Who planted these seeds for you?

Prayer -

O God, at whose bidding the seed will sprout and the shoot grow towards full stature, hear the prayer of your assembled people. Make us trust in your hidden ways, that we may pray with confidence and wait for your kingdom now growing in our midst. We ask this as always through Christ our lord, **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

This is what
we are about.

We plant
the seeds
that one
day will grow.

We water
the seeds
already planted
knowing that
they hold
future promise.

-Bishop Ken Untener

used as a reflection
on the martyrdom of
Archbishop Oscar Romero

