



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 11th July 2021

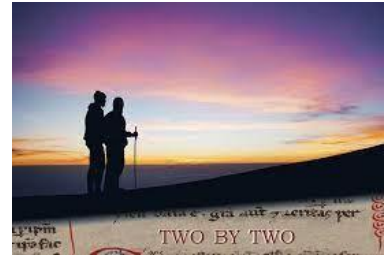
1. Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.
2. Read the passage again and spend understand. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
3. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself 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 6:7-13 ... *he sent them out two by two*

Jesus called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.



A Short Thought

We now reach a new stage in the formation of Jesus' disciples. There was a calling of the first disciples to be "fishers of people", then the choosing of twelve who would share in the very work of Jesus. Now the Twelve, the foundation of the future community, are being sent out to do exactly the same work that Jesus has been doing.

They have been given authority over unclean spirits, they preach repentance – that radical conversion (metanoia, metanoia) to the vision of the Kingdom, anointing the sick with oil and healing them. Notice that these three activities cover the whole person: spiritual, mental and physical. Healing and wholeness, health and holiness. To be holy is to be whole.

They are instructed to travel lightly, bringing only what they absolutely need. No food or money or even a change of clothes. They will not need these things because they will be taken care of by the people they serve. They are to stay in the first house that takes them in. Overall, they are to show total dependence on and trust in God. This is freedom at its best.

Do we really need all the baggage we carry through life? As someone has said: Those are really rich whose needs are the least. That is what Jesus is teaching us. And, of course, he was a living example.

The disciples went off and did the three central works of Jesus:

- *They proclaimed the Kingdom and called for a radical change of heart from people so that they might see life in the way that Jesus, the Son of God, was proclaiming.*
- *They liberated many people from evil influences, injustices and compulsions. Freedom is of the essence of Christian discipleship.*
- *They anointed the sick with soothing oil and brought them healing and wholeness.*

They not only preached the Kingdom; they made it a reality in people's lives. This is what we too are all called to do within the circumstances of our life. Having little but giving much.

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. "Wallet, keys, phone..." Many of us have a mantra we recite as they leave home, to ensure we are ready for the day. Jesus sends us out with less, inviting us to trust, to be ready to engage with and

respond to the world around us. How does your faith equip you to face the world?

2. Jesus gave the disciples a share in his mission by sending them out ahead of him. It was a gesture of trust and confidence on his part, even though they did not fully understand his mission. Have you ever been surprised by the trust shown to you by others to speak or act on their behalf?
3. Jesus sent the disciples out two by two. Reflect on where and when you have needed the support and encouragement of another? We can not journey in faith alone.
4. The teaching that God's love is present in welcoming strangers and neighbours has been a strong belief of many cultures. The Indian writer, Tagore tells us that when people left his hut, he found 'God's footsteps on the floor'. The divine lives in each of us, and when we welcome each other, we welcome God, and Jesus the Son of God. Where have you felt welcome? Is your church a place of welcome?
5. Imagine that you have been invited to join the twelve apostles: you are excited about being sent out to speak of the kingdom of God. You expect to learn the master strategy from Jesus. Instead, you are told to travel light: no show, no dependence on a bank account, no big car. You are to depend on one thing only, the power and grace of God!
6. The best portion of a good person's life "is his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love" (William Wordsworth). Be with Jesus in a quiet place for some time and then listen to his appreciation of how life-giving are your "little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love".

Prayer -

God of justice, God of welcome, from every land you call a people to yourself. Yours in the work we do, yours the message we carry. Keep your Church single-minded and faithful to you. Let failure or apathy not discourage us nor success beguile our hearts, as you send us to proclaim the gospel. May our faith in the trust you bestow on us always give us courage. I 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

