



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 22nd August 2021

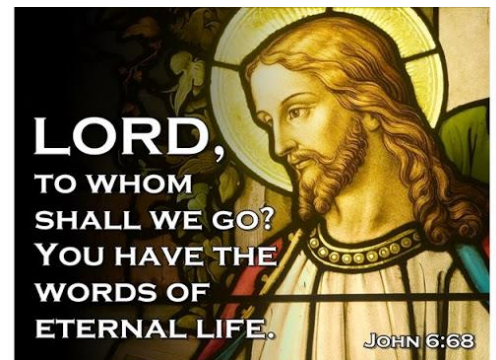
1. Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.
2. Read the passage again and spend understand. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
3. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself 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 6:60-69 *Lord, to whom shall we go?...*

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?' But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said, 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.'

Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'



A Short Thought

Today's Gospel concludes the discussion of Jesus as the Bread of Life. Not only the Jews who heard him but Jesus' own disciples had great difficulties accepting his call to eat his flesh and drink his blood as a way to life. "This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?" And, certainly on the basis of the words by themselves, we can sympathise with them; if we had been there, we would surely have had problems also. To understand the real meaning of Jesus' words comes from the gift, the grace of faith: "No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." And so, "after this, many of his disciples left him and stopped going with him". Faith is a gift. It is a gift open to all but it is a gift to which one needs to be open to receive.

Christ's invitation to accept his truth and his love is always just that: an invitation. He doesn't force himself on us. Each saving truth he presents is free to be accepted by us or left aside. As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer walked with him. As he had invited them to follow him freely, so were they free to go. All judgment is left to God's mercy alone. Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

The fact that we have been the Lord's disciple in the past does not guarantee that we will remain his disciple into the future. Indeed, every day we have to renew our response to the Lord's call. We have to keep on consciously deciding for him, choosing him. Faith is a gift but it also involves a decision on our part. That is why in this gospel reading Jesus turns to the twelve and asks them, 'What about you, do you want to go away too?' Jesus was asking them, 'Do you want to join the others who have decided to follow me no longer?' He was putting it up to the twelve to decide for him, to choose him as he had chosen them. The Lord puts the same question to us, 'Do you want to go away too?' He waits for our response. Faith is something that can not leave us apathetic – faith insists on a choice and no choice is a choice in it's self – So what is our choice? How do we live out that choice each day of our lives? Do we use, nurture, grow and rejoice in our gift of faith?

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Can I rest for a while in the doubt, confusion and uncertainty of the disciples? How do I understand the part played by doubt in my belief? Can I recognise the 'watershed' moments in my life; in my relationships; in my faith? To whom can we go?
2. Is my faith in Jesus a choice? Talk with Jesus about this. Talk with Peter. What evidence do I see in my life experience to say that I have come to know you are the Holy One of God?
3. Are there aspects of Jesus' teaching that I find too difficult to accept? What are they? Can I speak to Jesus honestly about them, and can I be open to hearing what he says in response?
4. On what grounds do people walk away from Jesus today? How much is He and His message distorted by a flawed Church? Pray for our community faith – Lord we believe... help our unbelief
5. The message of Jesus is still as revolutionary and challenging to those who hear it today. Faith never breeds apathy. Take a moment in prayer to God about where life, occasions, experiences and relationships challenge your faith. How is God asking you to put your faith into action?

Prayer -

Lord, by Your grace, we are made one in mind and heart. Give us a love for what You command and a longing for what You promise, so that, amid this world's changes, our hearts may be set on the world of lasting joy. May we always have strength and courage to live our faith. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, in union with the Holy Spirit, 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

