



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home Sunday 12th September 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.

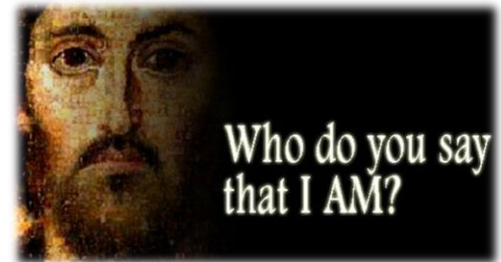


THIS SUNDAY'S GOSPEL – Mark 8:27-35 *'But who do you say that I am?'*

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.' And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.'



A Short Thought

Today's gospel reading leads us into a section of Mark's gospel that explores challenges confronting all disciples on their journey of faith. The first challenge is to clarify the nature of our commitment as disciples of Jesus. If we fail to understand who Jesus is, then we have little chance of understanding the nature of our own call to follow him. Two questions ("Who do people say that I am?" and "Who do you say that I am?") are addressed to our forebears in faith communities of the latter part of the first century and to Christians across the millennia. We are invited to hear these questions anew. Do we simply share what "the people" say about Jesus? Are we like Peter who has the right language but only partial insight? Or do we have the wisdom to seek a deeper understanding of the identity of Jesus? Who Jesus is for you, how you come to that understanding and how you strive to make your relationship deep are fundamental in shaping how you live out and shape your faith.

Maybe this week spend a bit of time reflecting on this quote from Henri J.M. Nouwen,

"For most of my life I have struggled to find God, to know God, to love God. Now I wonder whether I have sufficiently realized that during all this time God has been trying to find me, to know me, and to love me. The question is not "How am I to find God?" but "How am I to let myself be found by him?" The question is not "How am I to know God?" but "How am I to let myself be known by God?" And, finally, the question is not "How am I to love God?" but "How am I to let myself be loved by God?" God is looking into the distance for me, trying to find me, and longing to bring me home."

(Henri J.M. Nouwen, The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming)

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Inevitably, we are addressed by this text. If I were arrested for being Christian, would there be

enough evidence to convict me?

2. The same question is always relevant: Who is Jesus? Peter said You are the Messiah. That is, Jesus is the one sent by God to set his people free. Do I allow Jesus to be my Messiah and set me free? If not, what is holding me back? Can I talk to him about it?
3. We all believe in Jesus. But some believe that Jesus is in one way, others in another way. Which is today the most common image that people have of Jesus? Which is the response which people today would give to Jesus' question? And I, what answer do I give?
4. Where do I find out more about Jesus? Jesus can always surprise us; every time we read a bit of the gospel we can learn something new about him or about ourselves.
5. It can be useful to distinguish belief and faith. Belief is what I believe, expressed in doctrines. Faith is the inner disposition of trust, the movement of the heart, which must flow over into my life it is to be alive at all.

Prayer -

Faithful God, you call us to lives of trust and faithfulness. Help us to love you with our heart and soul, with our mind and strength. With the very same love, may we love our neighbour as ourselves, as Jesus taught us, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God 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



CHRIST MAKES US CROSS-BEARERS IN HIM

Mark 8:27-35