

# Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

## Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November 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 13:24-32

***But about that day or hour no one knows, but only the Father'***

*But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. 'From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*



### A Short Thought

Today's Gospel seems a hard one to get a handle on – but at its heart is a message of hope. Sometimes, to try and understand a piece of scripture that doesn't seem to make sense or is just plain hard to wrap your head around, we have to know the context. Whenever something is written down, it is always influenced by the context around it. So this gospel was written sometime around the year 70, about 40 years after Jesus died. Which is the same time of the Jewish-Roman war. The Jewish community led an uprising against the Roman empire, which eventually led to Rome taking over Jerusalem. During this hostile takeover, hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed and the temple, God's dwelling place, was destroyed. What does it mean for your faith when so many of your people are killed and the house of God, the place where you believe God to be located, is destroyed? Suddenly, everyone is asking, where is God when God's house is torn down? Is God lost? It is great and unimaginable suffering. Perhaps it even feels like the world is coming to an end. The author of Mark's gospel, as he is writing, is living in that time of war and crisis of faith. Now imagine yourself as an original reader of the gospel of Mark, back around the year 70, with smoke and dust from a lost war still lingering in the air, and family members dead and gone. Listen to the words that Jesus spoke, which seem to relate so much to the suffering that you have just experienced. "But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven." Can you see what the author is trying to say to his people? "These days have been dark," Jesus says, "the violence has been so thick that it feels as if even the sun cannot penetrate it, the moon does not shine through. It is as if the heavens are shaking, and the stars are falling on us. O God, what is happening? Is this the end? But then out of the clouds all will see the Son of Man coming. He will come with such great power and light that the darkness will be cast out to all corners. Angels will come and they will gather all of you up. This war will not be the end of you and this violence will not be the last word, for God and the angels are coming."

This is a message of hope that the author is giving to his people who are hopeless. It is a message that says the pain and suffering that you experience will not be the last word. It is a message to is so current in our world of uncertainty, Covid, Climate change, etc.. Where can we see the hope? And Where can we be the hope?

## SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Jesus speaks of the established order falling apart, but the collapse of the old order opened the way for new possibilities. When have you seen something new and hopeful emerge after the collapse of something that you had expected to endure much longer, perhaps even for ever?
2. We frequently hear the phrase, "the signs of the times". This gospel deals with the signs of the end-times. It is asking us to be aware, be prepared to welcome and respond to Jesus who is with us always. Where do you see Jesus in our times? How do you respond?
3. Even in our darkest hour the Lord does not abandon us. His eye always upon us He watches over us night and day. In today's reading Jesus speaks of being on our guard for we do not know the day or the hour when we will be called to Him. But if we take his words to heart and stay close to Him as we journey, we have nothing to fear. His gift to us is His presence with us 'till the end of the world. Thank God for his presence with you. The word of God spoken in love, always a light in life, will never pass away. Prayer is our inserting of ourselves into the reality of that word and that love. Bring your worries and fears to the comforting presence of God in your prayer – in trust.
4. The parable of the fig tree. Even in winter it begins to put forth leaves which give a hint of the fruit to come. Where have you found signs of hope in a wintry situation – in your own life, in the life of some group, in the life of the Church?

## Prayer -

Your creation, O God, runs its appointed course; as far as the ends of the earth you gather a people you call your own. Confirm us in the strength of your abiding word. Steady our hearts in the time of trial, so that on the day of the Son of Man, we may without fear rejoice to behold his appearing. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, 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*

