

# Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

## Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> Dec 2021 – Second Sunday of Advent

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 – Luke 3:1-6

#### **Prepare the way of the Lord**

*In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:*

*A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."*



### A Short Thought

What if this Advent, we allow ourselves to imagine a life that is different? A life that recognises God at work in all aspects. How different would our life be? If love was the first principle, if we lived by love, how would our community, our world be different? The prophet always points to a better time. Maybe that longing in the most hidden corners of our hearts is something holy, a desire for a deeper relationship with God.

We might squirm at that and stammer all of the excuses we know: *Not now. I'm really busy.* I've presents to buy and bills to pay. I'm not a very holy person. God's good for Sundays. God's only for the older generation. I'm going to get to a serious relationship with God as soon as my kids are gone... when I don't have to care for my parents; when I get the promotion at work; when we move to a new house, when there is more time... There are dozens of ways we can evade the issue, but still, that longing is there for something more.

Advent is a time to recognise both our holy longing and the healing love God has for us, despite the many barriers we put up between ourselves and God. We can start simply and just rest at the edge of our beds in the mornings, open our hands and whisper, "Come, Lord Jesus!" If we let ourselves feel what is in our hearts, we know they are filled with love. We can carry that experience with us as we go through even the busiest of our days. We may not know exactly where to begin or how to fill this longing in our hearts, but it is simple. God waits with infinite love and with arms outstretched to meet us. The words we say don't matter. We can speak as if God is a friend we have not seen in a long time, but one with whom we can sit in a comfortable silence. If we took time to recognise God at work in our lives, what difference would our Faith then make to our everyday lives; How better our world would be? How much more would we feel, understand and be agents of real hope and peace.

### SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Sit with the text and pick a word or phrase that stands out to you. In the stillness repeat that word or phrase in your mind.
2. Why is that word or phrase relevant to you at this moment? What feelings does it evoke?
3. Who is preparing the way of the Lord in our community, our world today? How are you preparing?

4. We are always invited to open ourselves to further conversion, to an ever-deeper change of heart, to a deeper listening to what Jesus is asking of us – pray “Lord, what do you want me to do, to be?”
5. Who are the voices crying out in our communities, in our church, in our world today?
6. What hope does this passage awaken in you today? How is it calling you to prepare?

## Prayer -

Lord, this Advent, give me a welcoming heart. Let me be open to the messengers of your word, especially to those whom at first glance I might resist, for they are your prophets today urging me to change my way of thinking and living! Help me to be courageous and to be a voice in the wilderness. I 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*

