

Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 20th Feb 2022

Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.

1. Read the passage again and spend understand. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
2. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself might pray the text over the next few days.
3. 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.
4. 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.



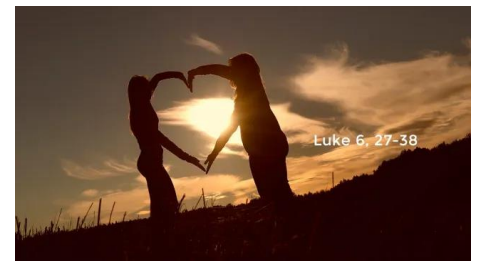
THIS SUNDAY'S GOSPEL – Luke 6:27-38

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return

'But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

'If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

'Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.'



A Short Thought

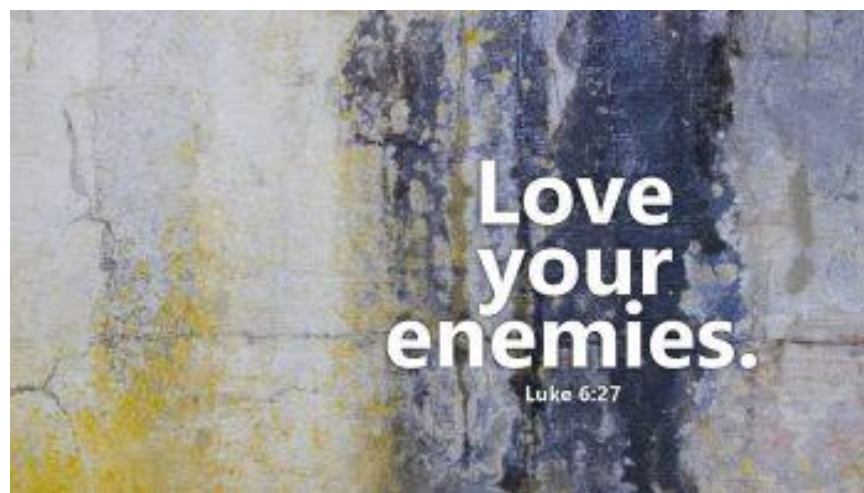
In this Gospel passage Jesus talks a lot about how we should treat each other, especially when it comes to loving our enemies and forgiving others. These two things are extremely difficult for any person. Jesus gives us many challenges and obstacles but we are always encouraged to love one another! I read a book recently called, "Thrift Store Saints" by Jane Knuth. It is about a woman who shares inspiring stories of those she encounters at a thrift store she volunteers at. When I was reading this Gospel passage it reminded me of a specific scene from the book. There was a lady who was coming in because she needed clothes for a job interview and began to talk about her life, specifically her relationship with her father. She talked about her journey towards forgiveness towards him and how even when she felt she could not forgive her father, she would ask God to forgive him. This way she knew her father would be receiving forgiveness even if it was not from her. After years of praying for him, the hurt and betrayal she felt from him began to hurt a little less and she began to not only pray for him but forgive him. She related it back to the scene with Jesus on the cross when he said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Jesus was praying for their forgiveness just as she was praying for her father's. Forgiveness is never easy. Loving our enemies and those who hurt us is never easy. But Jesus usually does not ask us to do the easy thing; he asks us to do whatever brings about the most love. A way to show love for others is through service. Another quote from the book that I liked was, "I think true charity is very rare. And it can appear in the least likely people." Jesus talks about how it is easier to love someone who already loves us, but what is rare is loving someone who has hurt us. This kind of service is hard to come by today. Our challenge is to be one of those rare people, one of those people who are able to give so much love and forgiveness even if it means not receiving anything in return. That is what Jesus is calling us all to do.

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

- The words of Jesus today are particularly challenging and difficult for us. Although we may be very familiar with these phrases, trying to live them, may feel impossible for most of us, most of the time. We are being called to a new way of living, behaving, responding to our daily, human encounters. How does this reading challenge you?
- Our natural tendency when attacked is to self-protection and when we are attacked we attack back. We respond to an angry word with another, or to a blow by hitting back. Here Jesus suggests that at times there may be another way to act. What has been your experience of retaliation? Has it been life-giving? Have you experience of another way of acting?
- How would you translate this Gospel into 'your language' without softening the teaching?
- The love that Jesus speaks of is not just emotion: it is a commitment of the will. It is extravagant and limitless, and it includes us all, good and bad alike. This is the true love that frees up the world's gridlock of hatred, judgement, blame, recrimination and violence. Think of a time when you experienced this love?
- Jesus proposes the generosity of God as a model for our generosity and says that the generous will be rewarded. Perhaps you have experienced rewards, even in this life, from generous behaviour.
- Take a moment pray for all of those who might be thought of as 'enemy' or despicable, calling to mind all those who are overlooked and neglected. Pray that they may experience kindness and love and that any who may describe them negatively may be given the vision that Jesus had.

Prayer

Compassionate God and Father, you are kind to the ungrateful, merciful even to the wicked. Pour out your love upon us, that with good and generous hearts we may keep from judging others and learn your way of compassion.. We ask this, as always, through Jesus Christ your son, 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