

Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 27th 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.

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THIS SUNDAY'S GOSPEL – Luke 6:39-45

The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good

Jesus told a parable to his disciples: 'Can one blind man guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit? The disciple is not superior to his teacher; the fully trained disciple will always be like his teacher. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the splinter that is in your eye," when you cannot see the plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter that is in your brother's eye.

'There is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit. For every tree can be told by its own fruit: people do not pick figs from thorns, nor gather grapes from brambles. A good man draws what is good from the store of goodness in his heart; a bad man draws what is bad from the store of badness. For a man's words flow out of what fills his heart.'



A Short Thought

Jesus' two parables allude to the proverb: Without vision the people perish! (Proverbs 29:18) What does the illustration of a blind guide and a bad eye (the log in the eye) say to us? A bad eye left untreated and a blind guide can only lead to one thing -- disaster! We can only teach others what we have been taught ourselves. And how can we help others overcome their faults if we are blinded by our own faults? A disciple is one who listens to the voice of the Master and who overcomes his faults through the skilful help of the Divine Physician. If we are to be guides and teachers for others, then we must have clear vision for where we are going and a map that shows the way. If our destination is heaven, then there is only one way, and that way is the cross of Jesus Christ. In the cross of Christ sin is pardoned and the sinner is made whole, darkness and corruption give way to light and truth, death is defeated, and new life restored. The cross of Christ frees us from condemnation and guilt and shows us the way of perfect love. Why is judgmentalism so rampant today, even among Christians? "Thinking the best of other people" is necessary if we wish to grow in love. And kindness in judgment is nothing less than a sacred duty. The Rabbis warned people: "He who judges his neighbour favourably will be judged favourably by God." How easy it is to misjudge and how difficult it is to be impartial in judgment. Our judgment of others is usually "off the mark" because we can't see inside the person, or we don't have access to all the facts, or we are swayed by instinct and unreasoning reactions to people. It is easier to find fault in others than in oneself. Jesus states a heavenly principle we can stake our lives on - what you give to others (and how you treat others) will return to you. The Lord knows our faults and he sees all, even the imperfections and sins of the heart which we cannot recognize in ourselves. Like a gentle father and a skilful doctor, he patiently draws us to his seat of mercy and removes the cancer of sin which inhabits our hearts. Do you trust in God's mercy and grace? Ask the Lord to flood your heart with his loving-kindness and mercy that you may only have room for charity and compassion towards your neighbour.

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

- Can you remember an occasion when you were giving out about the behaviour of another person, and later realised you had some of the same fault yourself? Was that a wake-up call for you? Jesus tells us it is more constructive to correct our own faults, than complain about the faults of others
- As Fr Tony de Mello used to say, “when I change, my whole world changes”. Not only that, but when I change, other people are likely to change but, and even if they do not, my attitude towards them will not be the same. To quote Fr de Mello again, “Attitude is everything” - my attitude. What does this ask of me?
- If we want to help other people we need to have our feet on the ground, with a realistic awareness of our gifts and our limitations. Otherwise we will be impractical, like the blind leading the blind. What has helped you to be realistic about what you can and cannot do? How would you translate this Gospel into ‘your language’ without softening the teaching?
- “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit.” This parable invites us to examine the motivation behind what we do. If our basic motivation is love, then our lives will bear good fruit. If love is absent from our lives then the fruits will be conflict, disharmony and abuse of people for our own selfish ends.

Prayer

O God, our teacher and judge, hear our prayer as we gather at the table of your word. Enrich our hearts with the goodness of your wisdom and renew us from within, that all our actions, all our words, may bear the fruit of your transforming grace. 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