

Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 10th April 2022 – Palm Sunday

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 22:14-23:56

(Shorter form Luke 23:1-49) - The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ

The assembly of the elders of the people rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king." Then Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He answered, "You say so." Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man." But they were insistent and said, "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place."

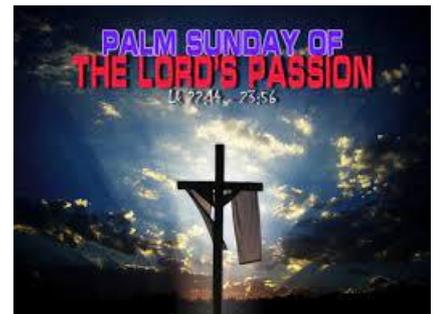
When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him."

Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!" (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him." But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his



chosen one!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

A Short Thought

This Sunday's Gospel is often known as 'the long Gospel'. Don't let that put you off otherwise you miss the drama of the journey that this week offers you. Luke's version emphasises the mercy, compassion and prayerfulness of Jesus. It is a story that most know and reveals the drama of the week ahead. It is also the only gospel during the year that the congregation plays an active role in. Try to read all of today's Gospel, or part of it each day, this week. Read it as if hearing the story for the first time. It is a Gospel that speaks for itself and leads us into a week not of events but a journey - Holy Week is not an event but a profound journey. It encompasses all our human and spiritual feelings, emotions and longings. It is a journey that ebbs through darkness and light, from lows to highs, from suffering to joy, from loneliness to elation, from devastation to glory. Our natural reaction may be to move quickly to the resurrection and skip past the rest. Or to get stuck in one moment that horrifies or appeals. But try, this Holy Week, to stay 'in the moment' with the story of each day as it is unfolding. Move with the story and feel the emotion, the drama, the fear & the elation - Allow this week to speak to your own story.

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

- We hold up our palms singing "Hosanna, Hosanna" as we prepare to follow Jesus into Holy Week. How can we enable this to be a personal 'moment of opportunity' for us too?
- What does it actually mean to be a follower of Jesus? What does this self-emptying on the cross challenge us to do this Easter season?
- What parts of the story are uncomfortable? What parts are easier to read? Why?
- Which characters in the drama of this week appeal to you? Why?
- Think about the fact that Jesus' love, his love shown on the cross is the ultimate sign of his love, mercy and his glory. Remember that suffering is never the will of God, but the cross shows us that God is with us in our suffering – we are never alone. What will the love of God, the mercy of God, as revealed by the cross, empower you to do?

Prayer

Jesus, may we always read your Passion with love as our lens and know that, even at life's most devastating, we are never alone. You are there guiding and comforting us. We ask this, as always, in your name, Amen

