

Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 1st May 2022

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 – John 21:1-19

‘Jesus took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish’

Jesus showed himself again to the disciples. It was by the Sea of Tiberias, and it happened like this: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two more of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said, ‘I’m going fishing.’ They replied, ‘We’ll come with you.’ They went out and got into the boat but caught nothing that night.

It was light by now and there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. Jesus called out, ‘Have you caught anything, friends?’ And when they answered, ‘No’, he said, ‘Throw the net out to starboard and you’ll find something.’ So they dropped the net, and there were so many fish that they could not haul it in. The disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord.’ At these words ‘It is the Lord’, Simon Peter, who had practically nothing on, wrapped his cloak round him and jumped into the water. The other disciples came on in the boat, towing the net and the fish; they were only about a hundred yards from land. As soon as they came ashore, they saw that there was some bread there, and a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it. Jesus said, ‘Bring some of the fish you have just caught.’ Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore, full of big fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them; and in spite of there being so many the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’ None of the disciples was bold enough to ask, ‘Who are you?’; they knew quite well it was the Lord. Jesus then stepped forward, took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish. This was the third time that Jesus showed himself to the disciples after rising from the dead.

After the meal Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?’ He answered, ‘Yes Lord, you know I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ A second time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He replied, ‘Yes, Lord, you know I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Look after my sheep.’ Then he said to him a third time, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter was upset that he asked him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ and said, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep.

‘I tell you most solemnly, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go.’ In these words he indicated the kind of death by which Peter would give glory to God. After this he said, ‘Follow me.’



A Short Thought

We’ve had the resurrection, the upper room and Thomas doing his famous ‘doubting’ bit. The disciples are gradually understanding that Jesus is alive, but they are not sure what that means for real, everyday life. There is no more preaching and teaching, so they can’t follow Jesus and be his disciples anymore, but neither are they sure they can launch out without him. The disciples are feeling a bit like spare arms – not sure what they are for and a little bit in the way.

So Peter seeks the comfort of familiar routine. “I’m going out to fish,” he says, and the rest agree. It’s easy to do, to slip back into the comfortable, the known. After all, fish need catching, don’t they?

Yes, Jesus has risen, like he said he would. That’s great. But now what? What difference does it make?

Just after our passage comes one of the sweetest events in the gospels. Peter wades ashore and finds Jesus barbecuing fish on the beach for breakfast. Jesus tends to Peter’s physical hunger, and then fills his spiritual

emptiness too. "Simon son of John, do you love me? ... You know that I love you ... Feed my lambs ... Take care of my sheep ... Feed my sheep." Fisherman turned shepherd.

Jesus does this with us, too. He knows where our hurts are, our inner cuts and bruises, which are far more damaging to our well-being than physical infirmities. Jesus is being the one spoken of in Ps 103:3, he "who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases." But this healing and forgiveness is not merely so that we can sit there being healthy and forgiven. Jesus did not feed Peter's body and soul to have him be a fisher of fish. Resurrection is supposed to make a difference. How does it make a difference to you and your life? What is your comfortable place? And how is Jesus stirring you to step beyond it?

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. The disciples spend a fruitless night fishing and catching nothing. Things change dramatically when Jesus appears and invites them to try again. Remember those who came to you and encouraged you to try again when you felt discouraged. Perhaps on some of these occasions the results were beyond your expectations
2. Aren't there moments in times of need when help seems to come from an unexpected source and we sense the presence of the Lord. The unexpected catch of fish was such a moment for the disciples. Pray for light to recognise such a moment in the recent past.
3. The story can serve as a reminder that sometimes we are wasting our time if we try to work on our own without the Lord's help. When have you found that your work or life was more fruitful when you acknowledged that you needed God's help and you spoke to God about your need?
4. "Come and have breakfast." A homely invitation! Jesus knew the hunger of these men after a night's fishing. He knows our needs too. Tell the risen Jesus of yours right now. Wait quietly to receive Jesus' to be linger in his presence as he looks at you with a smile of affection
5. Peter is given the chance to be fully reconciled with his Master after his denial during the Passion. Remember those who have given you an opportunity for reconciliation after you had hurt them or let them down. What was it like for you to be given this chance? To whom have you offered the possibility of reconciliation?

Prayer -

God of life, in your risen Son, you reveal your abiding presence among us, and summon those reborn in baptism to lives of worship and service. Fill this assembly with reverence as we come before you in prayer. Grant us courage and zeal in bearing witness before the world to your Son. We ask this through Jesus, who died and rose for love of us and who lives and reigns 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

We pray for Ukraine. For all of humanity distorted by war. For all the lives lost, homes seized, and peace broken. May the Spirit of comfort and compassion envelop all who dwell in fear. May peace prevail and justice reign. May love always be the guide and measure of our actions and responses. Amen

