

Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

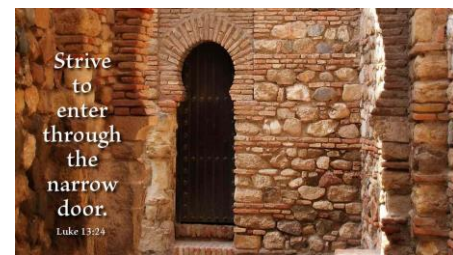
Sunday 21st August 2022

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 – Luke 13:22-30 - The Narrow Door

Jesus went through one town and village after another, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, 'Lord, will only a few be saved?' He said to them, 'Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. When once the owner of the house has got up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, "Lord, open to us", then in reply he will say to you, "I do not know where you come from." Then you will begin to say, "We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets." But he will say, "I do not know where you come from; go away from me, all you evildoers!" There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out. Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God. Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.'



A Short Thought

The term 'narrow' can often have a somewhat negative resonance. Few of us, for example, would like to be thought of as 'narrow minded'. We associate narrow mindedness with bigotry and a lack of imagination, whereas the broad-minded person is considered tolerant and open.

In today's gospel, however, Jesus is happy to use the term 'narrow', in response to a question put to him by someone in the crowd, 'Sir, will there be only a few saved?' Jesus did not answer the question directly. Rather than getting into an unhelpful discussion about how many will be saved, he challenged those traveling with him to strive to enter by the narrow door. The invitation to 'strive' suggests struggle and exertion. To get through a narrow door you need to be focused and attentive. You need a clear vision of where you are going and a certain commitment to get there. Jesus declares that those who wish to be his followers need all these qualities of commitment, clarity of vision, focus, and determination.

Becoming one of the Lord's followers is never a laid-back affair. It requires a conscious and deliberate effort on our part. Taking Jesus as our gate, our door, entering through him, requires a certain effort and focus on our part. Walking in his way, living by his values, does not happen automatically for us. There are plenty of other doors and ways that compete for our attention; there are other sets of values that try to engage us. We have to consciously choose the Lord's door before other doors that open up for us and that may be easier to get through and make less demands on us. Choosing the narrow door, choosing the Lord, involves coming to know him with our heart and mind, growing in our relationship with him, so that he becomes a significant presence in our lives. For Jesus, the time is short, so the moment is decisive. But if we think about how things really work – how little things add up, how "we are what we habitually do," how "the jug fills drop by drop" and all that – maybe the present moment is always the decisive one.

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Where we come from can be understood as the source of our actions, our motivation, our intent, etc. If we do not keep our whole life centred on and rooted in God, we can be led astray. It all rests with God. There will be no check list for salvation as we imagine. Our desire and willingness to do God's will in our life, despite our weaknesses, will be important. How do you feel about this gospel? How can you live your life to strengthen an everlasting relationship with God?
2. When faced with situations that make us angry, how often do we stay calm? When faced with folks who are better and more successful than us, how often do we give in to jealousy?
3. Will there be only a few saved?' This looks like an eminently reasonable question, but Jesus does not even find it worth an answer. He prefers to talk of more relevant issues, like the need to choose well, even if this is difficult. How much energy is lost in the Church arguing about irrelevant or marginal questions, while we neglect what is really central and important?
4. Jesus reminds us that we each have a part to play. There is a gate we need to go through, if God's desire for our lives is to come to pass. The gate is always open. Jesus is always an open door. No one can close it. Yet, we have to keep passing through it. Every day we need to choose to follow Jesus, to keep learning to live like him, to keep inviting the Holy Spirit to fill us with Jesus' love for God and humanity. Thank Jesus for the opportunities that you are given
5. When faced with people in need of our love, our respect and our kindness - our parents, spouses, children, neighbours, orphans, widows, the weak and underprivileged, the lonely, the elderly...how often have we given them our love?

Prayer -

Loving Father, give us the courage and strength to follow you in this moment. May our eyes see the opportunities that you present to us each day. May we never shy from choosing the narrow door of love. We ask this through your Son who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever 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



The most important hour is always the present.
The most significant person is precisely the one sitting across from you right now.
The most necessary work is always love.

Meister Eckhart