

Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 20th March 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.

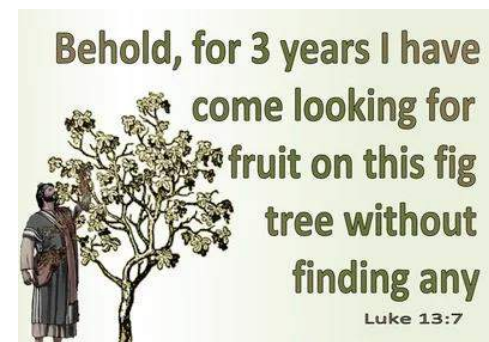


THIS SUNDAY'S GOSPEL – Luke 13:1-19

“A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it but found none”

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, ‘Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them-do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.’

Then he told this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, “See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?” He replied, “Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.”’



A Short Thought

There is a saying that having a child is like putting limbs on your heart and setting it free in the world. As parents we have this intense love for our children - no matter what - that indeed makes us vulnerable.

Imagine that love we have as parents is merely a small reflection of the vulnerable, all-invested love that God has for us all. God's heart walks this earth by the billions. God carries a perfect love, even greater than that of a parent for a child, for each and every one of us. For me, that's unfathomable. Jesus tries to give us a sense of it in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, but as we know, Jesus used parables to give people a glimpse of understanding into something far greater than they could possibly comprehend. Thus, that parable shows us that the love of the forgiving father is just the beginning.

Now here's the challenge. The all-invested, life-changing love that a parent has for a child is also just the beginning. We are called to be disciples on this earth, to serve others, to be agents of God's love and mercy, and to treat others as Jesus would. Does that not mean that the intense love between a parent and child should be the same love we offer every child of God? ...

Father of us all, teach us to love all of your children as we love our own, so that everyone of this earth may glimpse the unfathomable love you have for us. Amen

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

- This is a challenging reading and one not easy to sit or stay with, but it is one that calls me to growth and bear fruit. *How can I do this?*
- Jesus rejects the idea that personal misfortune is God's punishment for sin. Yet a serious illness or accident can serve as a wake-up call about how we live our lives. How have such experiences given you a greater appreciation of the value of your life and relationships, and of the time and opportunities at your disposal?

- We may be surprised at Jesus' harshness – '... unless you repent you will perish as they did'. But indifference and apathy are harsher still. The Gospel is a living word that transforms. What moves me to action?
- How does the Gospel message bear fruit in my life? What injustices do I see around us? In my community? In my country? In my world? What can I do about these injustices? How does God's love bear fruit through my life?
- With the deluge of agendas, political and otherwise, from news sources & social media, what can I do or learn to be able to find the truth in world events?
- Perhaps there have been times when you saw yourself like the tree in the parable—useless, merely a waste of space. Think of friends who came to you at such a time, people who saw your potential and were prepared to give you another chance, people who also dug the soil around you and gave you the helps you needed to grow. Perhaps in your turn you have been able to do this for others.

Prayer

Patient and insistent God, knock again on the door our hearts. We are never really ready—a sign perhaps of our everyday need of you. Help us undertake again to dig around and manure, so that under your grace, we may bear fruit, fruit that will last. Amen. 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

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

