

Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 30th Jan 2022

Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.

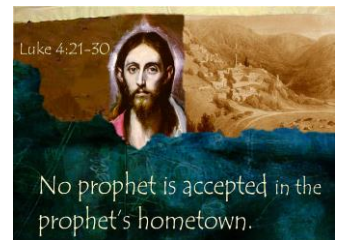
1. Read the passage again and spend understand. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
2. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself might pray the text over the next few days.
3. Over the next week, set aside times to come back more than once to the passage. You could 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 4:21-30

No prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown

Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.



A Short Thought

Have you ever been in a place where you really felt comfortable and at ease and you take advantage of the situation, not in a bad way, but in a good way? In a way that you would see people being advanced in their life? Jesus had settled in the synagogue in Nazareth. He had returned home. He was the 'local', so to speak, in a rather peculiar setting. He had perched himself in the synagogue and began to read the scriptures once again. This time, however, his reading of the Isaiah passage began to take a new route. As Jesus interprets this text it becomes clear that Jesus is feeling the fulfilment of the prophecy through the reigning of God's Spirit in his life.

All well and good by Jesus, but what about those who heard what he said? Those who were "in his hearing?" The people of the synagogue! Early in the text, the people in the synagogue, according to Luke, were proud of Jesus. This was after all the local hero, the local boy, Joseph's son. But in the same breath, Jesus suggests to the hearers that there is more to the divine picture than just this small world in Nazareth.

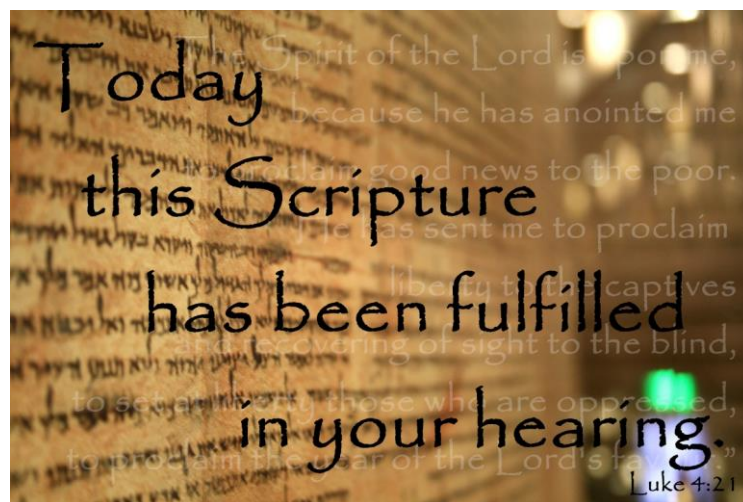
It is here that Jesus begins to preach the rejection of inclusion. You see, Jesus was reading and interpreting scripture in a way that moved beyond the local notion into what was soon to be seen as an inclusive Kingdom of God perspective. As often is the case, when we step on uncomfortable ground we risk the possibility of either offending someone or being ostracized ourselves! Here, Jesus accomplished both! Jesus, here, in the midst of Luke's gospel, becomes the radical ecumenical missionary. He steps out of the box and proclaims the radical perspective that the up-and-coming church is going to be an inclusive and encompassing body of believers that is beginning to "think outside the synagogue" as opposed to "outside the box!" The plan is bigger than us. Jesus proclaimed to them a new way to look at the world and new way to treat people! He was proclaimed to them the bigger plan, a plan they didn't want to hear, but a plan that was right for the world. We as the church are called to look beyond ourselves to a world that is in need. We are called to be "religiously mature," we are called to hear the Word of God in an inclusive way that brings the Kingdom of God to be known by everybody. How does this challenge us today!!

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

- The people of Nazareth could not accept that this local boy was one to teach them. It can be difficult for us to see those close to us as people through whom God is going to reveal some truth to us. Yet what a difference when we drop our prejudices and are open to what is being said. Perhaps you have experienced this?
- Spend a little time imagining this dramatic scene: how the mood of Jesus' audience shifted and became so ugly. Ask yourself if you always find his words 'gracious' or whether you desert him when he asks something demanding of me. Is it acceptable to me that God can bless people outside the Christian churches? Am I willing to make room for everyone at the table of the Kingdom?
- The anger of the people arose when Jesus confronted them with God's inclusive ways. God was 'their God' and God's blessings were for them. Jesus reminded them that this is not God's way. When have you been challenged to think in new ways and not to be excluding some people from your thoughts or concerns? Was there good news for you in the challenge?
- Jesus offers healing and help to all of us – but we ourselves must be open to allowing him to act in our lives. Where do I need healing in my life – today?
- Jesus continued his work despite the opposition. Have there been times when despite opposition you have been able to 'walk through the people' and 'continue on your way'? Have you seen this courage in others?

Prayer

God of salvation, in your Prophet, Jesus the Christ, you announce freedom and summon us to conversion. As we marvel at the grace and power of your word, enlighten us to see the beauty of the gospel and strengthen us to embrace its demands. 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