

Through The Bible In One Year

The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

Daily Devotional Companion

Week 8

Day 50. Read Leviticus 7.28-9.6; Mark 3.31-4.25;
Psalm 37.12-29; and Proverbs 10.5.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Leviticus: All the preparations are complete, but there is a dilemma. How can the priests begin their sacrifices? How can an unholy priest offer sacrifice? Can he cleanse and consecrate himself? Someone else must. The priests must first be cleansed and set apart by another. Someone else must initiate the new way God has given to have their sin removed and fellowship with God restored. Who can do that? Only a mediator chosen and put forward by God can. Moses, the mediator, steps in. Moses takes the anointing oil, sprinkles it on the altar, then on the high priest's head, to consecrate them. Moses offers the first sacrifice to purify the altar and then the sacrifice to ordain the high priest. For seven days the sacrifice goes on. Finally, all is truly ready; now the sacrificial system and the priests to offer sacrifices are set apart. So begins the endless sacrifices for sin to reestablish relationship with God sundered again and again - until the true Mediator comes, the One who by sacrificing himself ends all sacrifice. **Questions:** 1. In baptism, believers are cleansed and anointed for God's service. What does it mean to me that I am chosen and set apart by God for his service by my baptism into Christ? 2. What particular gifts has God given me to use in his service? 3. What opportunities are there for me to use my gifts in some ministry or service for God's faith community? For the community at large?

Mark: Who are his relatives, really? His blood kin? His mother by birth, his brothers and sisters by blood, are left outside. Looking around at those listening to him, following him, he declares 'Whoever does the will of my Father is my brother, sister, and mother.' Can that mean someone like me? Me, his *mother*, too? How can that be? Can I birth Jesus into the world, bring him to life? Can I nurture and care for him? Raise Jesus to maturity? Yes, God working through me can do that through me, just as he did through Mary - birth Christ into another! Jesus shares a story about how God showers his word of invitation to new life with God like an eager and energetic farmer who scatters seed everywhere in the hope it will bear much fruit. On the path. Among the stones. In the thistles and weeds. But also some finds the good soil, where it bears fruit—even a hundredfold in one case. There is much to choke the seed and kill it—and much to choke the children God wants to bring to life through his Word. The Evil One steals God's word of forgiveness and

invitation. The world smothers it, distracts and deflects us from it. Our cares and desires choke it within us. But Christ's promise is true: Whoever has, more will be given him or her...to give away to others. And whoever does the will of God is his sister, brother and mother. **Questions:** 1. Who scattered the seed of God's life-giving Word in my life? How can I thank them? 2. What acts to choke the Word in my life? 3. How can I open myself more to God's presence and power in my life, so I can bear more fruit for God?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you took the first step. You consecrated me by your cross and blood. You chose me and set me apart by your sacrifice. Your body laid in the tomb for me was like the seed of my new life. Your rising from death was like the seed sprouting in the spring, the seed of my new life in you. I, too, am the fruit you have born for God. I am part of your family; because by your grace, your Father is mine. You are my brother. I praise you! I love you! Can I also be your mother? Bring you to birth? Nourish you? Lead you to maturity? In another, yes. That's what you desire, don't you. As we do the will of God, you are born in others. Through our serving and our sharing of your invitation to new life, others will spring to new life, like seeds sprouting from the thawing spring soil. Let me bear much fruit for you, many brothers and sisters of yours, from the people I know who need you. Amen.

Day 51. Read Leviticus 9.7-10.20; Mark 4.26-5.20;
Psalm 37.30-40; and Proverbs .

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Leviticus: Because he sins again and again, like all people, the high priest's first act, before he can offer sacrifices to God for others, is to make atonement by sacrifice for his own sin. After the sacrifices, the high priest lifts his hands over the people and blesses them. Only then can he bring the sacrifice of atonement for the people. Everyone sins, even priests. That is underscored when two sons of the first high priest take matters into their own hands. Using their own ideas, not God's, they offer incense in a way that God had not commanded. Fire consumes them. There is only one way to approach the Holy God: the way he provides. The priests of God, like all God's people ultimately, are to be set apart and different. They must discern what is acceptable and unacceptable to God and teach God's people all of what God has decreed about how God's people will live and act.

Questions: 1. The New Testament will reveal that, under Christ, all God's people are priests. What does it mean to me that I am to be a priest for God? What am I to be like? What am I to do, as God's priest? 2. In what ways, or through what means, does God want me to approach him? 3. What are some ways people wrongly seek God in the world today (for example, tarot cards, séances, cults or world religions)? Do I or others I know compromise with these or get involved with these?

Mark: Does God really care? Can God even make a difference? Where in this world is the 'kingdom' of God? Does my loving and following God make any difference in the world? The kingdom is like seed, Jesus says. Once sown, a seed grows steadily on its own, no one knows how exactly, until it bears fruit. Again, Jesus says, the kingdom is like a mustard seed, tiny at the beginning, but when fully grown, is so big even birds can nest in its branches. Where Jesus comes, God's kingdom comes. God has invaded his world through his Son. When a storm arises and the disciples struggle to keep the boat afloat, Jesus sleeps peacefully in the stern. Don't you care, Jesus, that we are perishing? With a word he stills the wind and the waves. Though they have been with him for months, they ask in amazement, 'Who is this man? Where does he get such power?' While the storm clouds are still scattering, they land and meet a man whose storm rages inside himself. Demons rule him. He lives among the tombs. He cuts himself. "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of God?" he cries out. Jesus wants him to know healing. Jesus want him to have life in fullness. When the frightened townspeople come, they find him in his right mind, sitting at Jesus feet. Who is this man, Jesus? Where does this power he has come from? "I want to go with you," the healed man tells Jesus; but Jesus has another plan. 'Go to your hometown and tell people what God has done for you.' Go spread the seed. Watch the kingdom grow. Watch the storms be stilled and the demonic destroyed.

Questions: 1. What have been the worst storms in my life? Guilt and regret? Shrinking from something or someone because I was afraid? Abuse or injustice I have suffered? How has Jesus stilled them? 2. Who around me is experiencing a storm, or destructive, demonic forces? What can God do through me to still their storms? 3. What would I say to someone who asked what God has done for me? Whom have I told what God has done for me?

Prayer: Lord, it's so stormy outside. And inside. Those are the worst storms of all, the storms of shameful memories, of fears, of lightning swift anger and the gales of grudgingly held hurts. Sometimes, I wonder if you are asleep...or there at all. Are you able to do anything? Do you even care? Then, suddenly, I discover you are here, Jesus, beside me in my tiny toy of a boat on this immense stormy sea. The manger was your first boat, when, as a baby, you were already adrift on the vast sea of human rejection. The cross was a lightning rod where you took the full force of God's just anger that should have been mine. And, hung to die on that mast, you stilled the storm of my guilt, giving me life. I would like to stay with you where you are, leaving all this behind, but you bid me go home to those who know me. You bid me tell them what you have done for me...and will do for them. So be it. Still their storms, too! Scatter new seeds of your kingdom, in the storms, and lets the rainstorms nourish the new life you bring. Amen.

Day 52. Read Leviticus 11.1-12.8; Mark 5.21-43;
Psalm 38.1-22 and Proverbs 10.8-9.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Leviticus: Being in relationship with God affects every area of one's life. There is nothing 'secular' or outside God's concern for the people of God. Everything, even the smallest event, has significance. Some things are fitting, others are not, for people of God. The code of conduct even includes one's eating habits, what can be eaten and what can't. Try as we might, there is no easy way to determine what to do through our own reasoning. Some meats can be eaten, others cannot. Some birds, but not others. Even some insects, but not others. The bottom line is be in close relationship with and listen to the one who says 'I am the Lord who brought you out of slavery in Egypt; therefore be holy because I am holy.' Ultimately, it means following what God says in every situation. The holiness required applies even in menstruation and childbirth. Everything, and everyone, is to be related to God. God makes compassionate provision to restore us to holiness with God when we become unclean through the sacrifice of spotless animals without defect. Special provision is made for the poor who cannot afford the normal sacrifice: two doves or pigeons, which will be the sacrifice of Mary at the birth of Jesus. **Questions:** 1. What areas of my life have I turned over to God mostly? 2. What areas am I holding back from giving God control of? 3. Now that Christ has restored me to relationship with God, how is holiness required of me as a response?

Mark: Who is this Jesus? He is the talk of the town. Different people understand and approach him in different ways. Out of desperation, hoping against hope, a respected religious leader pleads for Jesus to lay his hands on his young daughter so she will be healed and live. To him, Jesus is one with the power to heal. By being seen with Jesus, he openly risks the condemnation of other religious leaders who openly challenge and criticize Jesus. A woman considered unclean and unfit for society because of continuous menstrual bleeding has heard of Jesus and the power at work through him. If she but touches even the hem of garment, she believes she will be healed. She does. She is. Jesus, ever attuned to life, senses power going forth from him. 'Who touched me?' he asks, searching the throng that surrounds him. Trembling in fear that she will be rejected, she confesses. 'Daughter' he says, 'your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be free of your illness.' Rather than being rejected, she is received as a daughter. She is freed for life. Then the hammer falls. The religious leader's daughter has died. 'Don't trouble the Teacher any more' the mourners suggest. Jesus, to them, is just a good teacher, nothing more. 'Do not be afraid' he responds 'only believe.' With a touch and a gentle word, 'Little girl, I say to you arise!' the dead daughter comes back to life. Who is this man, Jesus? A teacher? A miracle worker? Yes, and more. Much, much more. **Questions:** 1. Who is Jesus to me? ___ A Teacher ___ A Friend ___ God's Son with power to work miracles ___ My Savior ___ Lord and Leader of my life and actions 2. When and how do I reach out with hope and expectation to touch even the hem of Jesus garment—seeking to come into closer contact with Jesus~ and receive blessing from him? 3. When and how has Jesus' power flowed into me and helped heal me? 4. When Jesus says "Go" to me, what does he want me to do? For whom?

Prayer: Lord, are you really interested in me? In all of me? Can it be that even the most mundane aspects of my life are still keenly meaningful to you? How, then, can I go through whole days without ever being aware that everything I am and do is of infinite importance to you. Like a loving parent you watch over me, with breathless anticipation, waiting for me to turn to you, to share every aspect of my life with you. My Lord, draw me to reach out for you. Lead me to turn toward you. To touch even the hem of your garment is to know healing and wholeness. You have that power. Your touch does that to me. You have even called me by name and raised me from death to life. Thank you for the ways you touch me. Thank you for your power of your new life alive in me forever. Let my hand be yours now to reach and touch others for you, for there are many around me I know who are in danger and dying. Move my heart to prayer for them like a father begging for the life of his dear daughter. I plead with you now: come with me to them! If only you will touch them, they will live too. Amen.

Day 53. Read Leviticus 13.1-59; Mark 6.1-29;
Psalm 39.1-13 and Proverbs 10.10.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Leviticus: What if a person is dangerous to others? How can we be sure? We were created for community. One life touches many others, for good or ill. What if they are sick and infectious? What if they have a boil or a burn? Intricate instructions are given to test and be certain. For the good of the community, the priest is appointed to preside over the process. If symptoms show, the person is to be quarantined for a time. If still infected, they are to be quarantined yet again, just to make sure. No haste or hurry. Even the sick are cared for and shown compassion. If cured, the person must wash their clothes and will be pronounced clean. They are restored to fellowship, to relationship in the community of faith. But if the infection spreads, they must be separated from the community. One life touches and affects many others, for good or ill. So, too, even articles of clothing. If infected with mildew, they must be washed. But if the mildew returns, it must be burned in the fire. God's people are to be holy, and the holy can have nothing to do with the unholy. **Questions:** 1. Jesus made a point of touching lepers when he healed them. What does that tell me about God's deepest desire for people, even people considered unfit for society, according to society's own standards? 2. When and how have I affected another for ill, influencing them in ways that cause physical or spiritual harm or unhealthiness? 3. Our un-holiness makes us unfit for God's kingdom, and yet we have been welcomed into his kingdom in Christ. A wondrous exchange occurs when we come into contact with Christ through faith: he receives our impurity and we receive his purity. How does it change my view of my own sin and shortcomings to know Christ has carried them away completely? How does it change how I perceive others viewed as 'unclean' by society? 4.. Whom do I know that others might consider unclean that needs me to minister God's love to them?

Mark: We expect respect, and receive rejection. Jesus was rejected himself in his own hometown. He teaches in the synagogue he grew up in, the very place where he heard God's Word, and worshipped God as a child, and they are amazed. "Where did he get all this—these powerful words and more powerful actions?" they ask in disbelief. Jesus came to share not only our life, but our lot. He faced all the condemnation and discrimination any person can face. 'Isn't he the *carpenter's* son' they sneer, condemning him because his father is of the poor working class. The words would have sounded better, made more sense somehow, if he was the rabbi's son, or the scribe's, or the wealthiest man's son. 'Isn't his mother, Mary?' they whisper, winking an eye and shaking their heads. They remember the rumors about misfortunate Mary, pregnant before the marriage. 'Aren't all his brothers and sister still among us?' They have him pegged...pigeoned-holed. There is another person amazed: Jesus. Jesus was amazed at their unbelief. And God's redemptive work was restricted. He could heal 'only a few' sick people. But he proclaimed the Good News even to the townspeople who judged and rejected him. The kingdom had come near and was open to them. A few are healed. A few experience new life. People have it in their own power—and responsibility—to choose. Will they receive, or reject? Will they take offense, or take hold of the new life Jesus offers? Some accept him. He sends out his disciples to share the Good News and do his work. Many are freed from the demonic that binds them. Many are healed. Even the king, Herod, must decide. How will the power people respond? Will he, as one of the power people, accept Jesus as his Lord and leader? Or will he 'take offense at him'—hold out and hold onto control of his own life?

Questions: 1. What about following Jesus causes 'offense' to me? What aspects or parts of my life do I resist giving him control over? 2. In what ways has Jesus healed me—made my life more wholesome, joyful and fruitful? 3. In what ways do I take Jesus for granted, assuming I know best what he can or can't do for me, or through me?

Prayer: Lord, how can I build up those around me one moment, and then batter and bruise them the next? I want to help others have life in wholeness, but so often I actually infect them with my own self-centeredness instead. Deep within me there is still that contagion that crucified you. I am still contagious and dangerous to others I know. Yet, even so, you come to me and touch me, again and again and again. How I need your healing touches! How I love your touches! For, far from contaminating you, my sickness is swallowed up in your infinite life. Forgive me when I sit as judge over you, deciding in my mind what you can or can't do for me, through me. Be at home within me, as you have promised, and do your deeds of power according to your will. Amen.

Day 54. Read Leviticus 14.1-57; Mark 6.30-56;
Psalm 40.1-10; and Proverbs 10.11-12.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Leviticus: Two birds. One will live, one will die. For a person cleansed and healed of leprosy, the sacrifice is two birds. One is sacrificed and its blood collected in a clay pot. The live bird is dipped seven times in the blood over fresh water. The leper cleansed is sprinkled seven times with the blood and water mix. Then the leper releases the other bird. It is allowed to fly away free. Only blood will remove the sickness of sin and its inevitable result: death. Something has to die, so that someone sick might live. In this simple symbolic sacrifice, God mystically prophesies how later One will die on a cross so that all might be cleansed and set free. Lepers, once cleansed, become like totally new people, almost as if they are reborn. They must wash their clothes clean; they must shave off all their hair and wash themselves. It is as if they have been reborn into the family of God, as baptism will later signify. Their entry back into the community must be carefully accomplished. The whole painful and drawn out process begins outside the camp, where the infected one must be examined by the priest. Even when finally pronounced clean, they can't actually enter their tent for a week; and when the week is up, they must again wash and shave. They are like new. Thankfulness is the right response. On the eighth day they must bring an offering to the Tent of Meeting. If he or she is poor, two doves or pigeons are acceptable to God. In this very 'discount' God shows his deep desire that everyone be cleansed and welcomed back into his family. **Questions:** 1. Now that I have been set free by the sacrifice of Christ—like the bird set free after the other has been sacrificed—what will be the direction of my free flight? What would it really give me joy to do as a thankful response to God's freeing me? 2. What things still need to be cleaned in my life, like the clothes of the leper who'd been restored to health? What needs to be completely cut off, like the cleansed leper's hair? 3. How is that God restores me to true community when he cleanses me with Christ's death and washes me in Baptism? How am I called to be different when I "enter my tent"—return to the people God has put me in relationship with?

Mark: Ecstatic! The disciples gather giddily around Jesus, sharing all they had done and taught. So many hurting people. So much need. Their excitement is soon dampened. They cannot even find time to eat, so Jesus invites his followers away to a quiet spot to get some rest. There is no escape. Even in the desolate spot the need finds them. Even there people flock to them, seeking Jesus. And Jesus pours out from some supernaturally inexhaustible source what they truly need. He feeds them. First, the word of God. He teaches them and nourishes them on what truly gives what is truly life. Then he feeds their physical hunger. 'You give them something to eat' he bids the overwhelmed disciples. "What do you have? Five loaves and two fish?" They little suspect how much they have. They have him. He looks to heaven, blesses the meager supply, and has them share it with the thousands who hunger. All eat until they are satisfied. So is everyone who tastes of the true bread of life, God's Word made flesh. Jesus sends the disciples ahead of him and dismisses the crowd. He goes alone to the mountain and taps into the endless supply of the Source in prayer. He walks on the stormy night sea, about to pass the disheartened disciples by. Where was he going? Why would he pass them by, knowing their need? 'Don't be afraid; it is I' he calls. When he gets in the boat with them, the wind's fury fades. At landfall the human storm continues undiminished. Hurting, hopeful people flock to

him from all around the region. All who touch him are healed. **Questions:** 1. When have I been amazed what God has done through me? Do I tell Jesus about it (thank him in prayer and give him the honor) whenever I experience him working through me? 2. What area of my life or work for Jesus makes me feel like I have just five loaves and two fish in the face of seeming impossible need? How can I give that to him and trust him to provide what is needed? 3. In those times when Jesus seems to be leaving it up to me to work, while he seems to be “passing by” me and about other business, how do I respond, with fear or confidence...or both? 4. How is my faith family or church doing in our “rowing” on the sea right now? Pulling together on the oars, or sitting about wondering “what next?” Do we act like God can do all things, or are we shaken in the face of seeming insurmountable need? What can I do to strengthen my sisters and brothers?

Prayer: My Lord, for freedom you have set me free. You don't want to clip my wings, as so many misunderstand you. You want me to soar. That's why you set me free. It's scary, Lord, to be so free. I would rather be in the boat, even if the work is back breaking. You say to me, 'You give them something to eat.' Me? Who am I to do that? What have I to offer? I am one you have set free. You are the wind beneath my wings. You have made me for flight. Lord, remove my fear and let me fly where you will. Let the wind of your Spirit take me where you want, and to whom you want. And you provide what they truly need, as you have done for me! Amen.

Day 55. Read Leviticus 15.1-16-28; Mark 7.1-23;
Psalm 40.11-17; and Proverbs 10.13-14.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Leviticus: We are made for relationship with other, to be fulfilled in true community. Every aspect of my life interrelates with every other person, because we are all interconnected. In our fallen state, we carry contamination within us, beyond our control. God provides cleansing for us in every way necessary, for every aspect of our being, including our sexuality. Life should be sacred at its source. So the emission from a man makes him unclean. So the menstruation of a woman, the issue from the sexual source of life, makes her unclean. The sacrifice is the same. They must wash themselves, put on clean clothes, and offer as a sacrifice two doves or two young pigeons. Always at the Tent of Meeting, for this is the holy God's deepest desire: to meet and reestablish relationship with people fallen from holiness. God provides the way of cleansing. Unclean things must be separated from the clean. Even the high priest cannot come within the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle to meet with God whenever he chooses. He can enter only once a year when he makes special atonement for the people: two goats, one sacrificed at the altar, and the other, literally the 'scapegoat,' is released into the wilderness, as atonement. Before the one is slaughtered, or the one abandoned to die outside the camp, the high priest lays

hands on their heads, transferring the sins of all onto them. After offering the sacrifice, the priest must wash himself, and the man who led the goat into the wilderness must wash himself, because they have touched the sacrifice who bore their sins. God is foretelling the sacrifice of his Son outside the city, a shameful death that takes away the shame of all who believe in him. **Questions:** 1. How does the way that God pre-figured and prophesied the death of Jesus ‘outside the camp’ in the ‘scapegoat’ a thousand years before Christ’s crucifixion strengthen my faith? 2. Do I lay my sins on Jesus by regularly confessing them to him in prayer, or to a trusted brother or sister in Christ who will pronounce Christ’s forgiveness so I can truly believe it is meant for me personally? 3. How does the forgiveness that comes through Christ free me to use my sexuality in God honoring ways? How do I still struggle in terms of my sexuality?

Mark: They are caught “red handed.” How dare his disciples violate the traditions! Eating without washing their hands! Unclean! Jesus, why do your disciples ignore the traditions of the elders? They won’t attack him directly, instead they criticize his disciples. Jesus responds by reciting God’s Word to them: ‘your words seem so holy, but your hearts are far from me. You worship me vainly, substituting rules and rituals imagined by men. Listen everyone! Nothing outside a person makes them unfit for relationship with God. Only what comes from the inside, from the heart, that is what makes a person unable to relate to God. Out of the heart come all manner of things unimaginable. They are what defile.’ **Questions:** 1 How have human made rules and rituals—even my own—hindered my having a personal, loving relationship with God, and following his will? 2. How does God want me to ‘paint outside the lines’ of acceptable social custom in order to reach someone with his love and demonstrate my devotion for him first and foremost? 3. How do I treat people who act in ways that seem strange to my customs and understandings?

Prayer: God, how easy it is for me to imagine what I think you might want me to do rather than just listening to your word and then following your way. Much of the time I am just going through the motions, doing again what I have done before, doing again what everyone before me has done, the things I was taught and I fell into without wondering whether this is what you really want. Forgive me when I get in your way. Forgive me when I shut and lock the door through my own comfortable habits. Interrupt my routines. Break down all the barriers I build between us, so our love is fresh and free moment by moment. Most of all, forgive me for how I keep others from experiencing the joy of new life in you through my own joyless rules and routines. Make me come alive, and make my life in you contagious, so others around me will catch the fire of your love. Amen.

Day 56. Read Leviticus 16.29-18.30; Mark 7.24-8.10;
Psalm 41.1-13; and Proverbs 10.15-16.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Leviticus: Once a year, atonement must be made for all the sins of all the people. This is in addition to the regular, routine sacrifices for sin. It is as if God were saying, the endless animal sacrifices finally won't suffice, there must be a different, special sacrifice—once, for all. And anyone of God's people or the foreigners who live among them who offers any sacrifice apart from the ones appointed at the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, that person must be cut off from among the people. The only sacrifice that will suffice to restore forgive sins and restore relationship with God is the one God appoints. Because God is their God, people must not do as others around them who do not know or follow God. Everything about a person who loves and follows God, including the expression of their sexuality, is to reflect God's holiness. Sexual relations with near relatives, the neighbor's spouse, same sex persons, or animals are excluded because God is holy, and so must be the people who love and follow God. It is for practicing things such as these that God has rejected the people of the land and now gives the Promised Land to the people of Israel. Because God is their God, they will not do not do these things. **Questions:** 1. In what ways does modern society seek to make me compromise my faith? 2. In today's world, how does society and the media use sexuality to get me to compromise godly values? 3. How does Christ's sacrifice on the cross, once for all, relate to the Day of Atonement God required annually of his Old Testament people? What does it mean to me that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for my sin 'once for all'?

Mark: Jesus resolutely refuses to fit the molds society would press him into. Risking further criticism for breaking the rules of the elders, Jesus travels among foreigners, which would render him unclean through contact with them. A Greek-speaking woman born in Syrian Phoenicia accosts him: drive the demon from my daughter. Men in Jesus' society and day did not speak in public with women, especially foreign women. His harsh refusal must have hurt her: 'the food is for the children, not the dogs.' His ministry is to Israel, not foreigners. Is it her desperation for her daughter, or something she has seen in Jesus or heard about him, that spurs her on? She persists, pleading 'Even the dogs are entitled to the crumbs that fall from the table.' "Go," Jesus says "For such a humble, faithful saying, your daughter is made well!" A deaf man who can hardly speak is brought by the people he is isolated from by the barriers to speech and hearing. 'Be opened!' Jesus says, putting his fingers in his ears, and actually touching his tongue. He can hear again. He can speak. The barriers have been broken down and he is restored to the community, to real relations with the people around him again. As Jesus' fame spreads, he is overwhelmed with crowds. Thousands gather to him, for days at a time. He has compassion and feeds them—first on the Word of God as he teaches...and then physically, with just seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. They are all satisfied and baskets full of left overs are gathered. Abundance belongs to Jesus and is bestowed by his word and by his touch, to everyone who seeks him. **Questions:** 1. For whom does God want me to be crying out to him in prayer, because they have some special need or are facing some specially trying situation I know about? Whom do I need to bring to Jesus for healing or help? 2. Where and how do I need Jesus' healing touch to free my mouth to speak for him and my ears to hear what

he says to me? How do I need his help with my hearing, so that my ears might be truly open to hear someone's calling for help, or my tongue to be freed to speak a good word to someone who needs to hear it? 3. How does Holy Communion, where I receive Jesus' body and blood in the bread and wine, satisfy my deepest need for God? What does it mean to me that Jesus feeds me spiritually with himself, the Bread of Life, because he has compassion on me personally?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, so often I just 'go with the flow' of life around me without thinking, or even being aware of you and the others around me for whom you care so much. They are hungry, they are hurting, they feel hopeless and helpless, and I don't even notice. Even worse, I notice, and turn away. I turn a deaf ear. I keep silent. Heal me and make me whole—make me truly human again, like you. Open my ears to hear—their cry and your call. Their cry is your call. Then open my mouth to respond, my hands to help. You didn't turn a deaf ear to my cry. You spoke your word of hope to me. Make me your ears and mouth to all around me, I pray. Amen.

Through The Bible In One Year: Week 8

Sunday Worship Lessons

First Lesson (Old Testament): Leviticus 18.1-6, 20-28

Psalm: 40.11-10

Second (New Testament) Lesson: Mark 7.14-23.

Theme: Inside Out