

Through The Bible In One Year

The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

Daily Devotional Companion

Week 13

Day 85. Read Deuteronomy 5.1-6.25; Luke 7.11-35;
Psalm 68.19-35; and Proverbs 11.29-31.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: You do it for us! After all, why should we die? To hear the Word of God speaking out of the fire and live? Can anyone get so close to the holy God as that—to actually hear his voice—and survive? To know him, his life, and yet, how can we be with him? People turn to a mediator to help with the insurmountable problem. ‘Go near and listen to all the Lord, our God, says,’ they tell Moses. ‘Then tell us whatever the Lord, our God, tells you. We will listen and obey,’ they promise. Moses does. He recites the entire set of ten commandments that mark how the people of God will live toward God and other people, showing forth the nature of God in their actions in all their relationships. Moses relays the Word that will bring life—the way that, if people will follow, they will experience life to the fullest, life with freedom and joy. Life with God. Life like God, sharing not only his ways of acting but especially his character. All they have to do is listen and obey. To listen, they have to stay in close enough personal contact for a conversation. To obey, they have to put into practice what God says. Simple enough. Profound enough for anyone. Problematic for everyone because of the very brokenness that necessitates someone to come between us and God. And then all who believe are to be mediators of a sort. They are to tell their children the story of how God rescued and redeemed them from slavery, for life full and free with him. They are to pass on the story of God’s faithfulness, power, and compassion to their children...and all who will listen. Questions: 1. To whom and how do I try to turn over my responsibility to others to develop a close personal relationship with God? 2. What does God ask me to do or to risk that makes it safer to let someone else be intimate with God and then tell me what to do? 3. To whom does God want me to tell about his saving acts toward me personally?

Luke: What a thing to say to someone in such deep grief! ‘Don’t cry!’? Whatever was he thinking, asking her to go against nature so? Who does he think he is? To a mother mourning for her only son. And her a widow, no less. He piles grief upon her grief, till it must have become like a mountain crushing her. Only... then he moved the mountain. Just by speaking. ‘Young man, I say to you, get up.’ Insane! And the young man obeys! How did his dead ears even hear the Word? This Word is not like mine. His Word...is

like the Word that spoke 'In the beginning...let there be light...and there was light.' They say a great prophet has appeared. Now that's great news. For centuries God has been silent. Now his Word is alive and active in this world again. And the word is getting around. John the Baptizer hears of him in prison. 'Can this be the One?' John asks. What has happened to you, John? You yourself baptized Jesus; you were there when the Voice from heaven attested to him 'You are my Son...' But now you send your followers to ask Jesus, "Are you the One...or should we look for another?" What happened to you? Has the pain of imprisonment or the fear of death fogged your thinking, made you forget, caused your hope to fade? Jesus is patient with John: 'Tell him what you have seen and heard: the blind see, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.' Go and tell what you have experienced personally. Tell the one in prison, the one questioning and suffering in deep despair. Anyone who does not take offense at me will find the blessing they seek. All who hear and heed his call will find the new life they seek, and be people stolen back from death itself. **Questions:** 1. What causes me to question or doubt that Jesus is the One? 2. How has God acted in my life to cure my blindness, heal my brokenness, help me to hear, proclaim good news to me, in short, raise me from the dead? Do I live like one so freed—with astonished joy and gratitude—or do I still live like I am in prison? Why? 3. Whom do I know who is still seeking and questioning? How can I carry the good news to them that in Jesus they will find what they are seeking?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you came and spoke your life-giving Word to me personally. I was in prison...bound in death...and you set me free. You didn't ask anything of me. You didn't wait for me to be good enough. You just acted, and I was set free. Why do I still live as if I am in prison? Why do I let things become like bars between us? Why don't I walk through the door you have opened to the new life you invite me to? Why do I settle for religion instead of relationship with you? Why do I ask others who have that real relationship to speak to me about you, when you beckon me to speak with you? Lord, speak your Word that frees me even from this. Lord, keep speaking to me. Let me hear...and heed...and then speak to others, so they may hear your life giving Word as well. Amen.

Day 86. Read Deuteronomy 7.1-8.20; Luke 7.36-8.3;
Psalm 69.1-18; and Proverbs 12.1.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: Who me? Destroy them totally? Sure! Seven nations, all larger and stronger than us? Right! The next part seems more like it...though still hardly possible for us to do. Don't come to any covenants or compromises with the people around us? They live right where we live...in the same neighborhood. Don't intermarry and intermingle? Don't socialize, and above all, don't 'relig-acize' with them? Oh. To do so is to lose our identity. What's that you say, God? Why did you choose us, since you brought it up? Not

because we're more numerous...or mighty...than other people? When did you first get the clue? Okay. I'll bite. Why did you choose us? What! Because you love us? And because you keep your Word? Well, it is hard to be yours, because it means being so...different than others around us, even if there is no difference between us in our own natures. The difference is you. And your choosing us. Because you love us. And to follow you—who loves us and chose us—is to have life, and increase, and enter and possess the promised land. What's that? Not get proud? Not say to myself, 'It's because I am so special or strong or wise that all this blessing has come to me.' Yeah, right. You really are expecting a lot! What? If I do, then I will be just like the people I am not supposed to be like? And what happened to them will happen to me? And you don't want that to happen, do you. Because you love me. Oh, I get it. **Questions:** 1. What forces and factors around me make it hard for me to follow Christ and live like Christ? Why do they have such a powerful pull on me or over me? 2. How does knowing that God loves me and chooses me just as I am, with all my shortcomings, change my image of myself? My lifestyle and actions? 3. What is my identity as one chosen of God, and how should it play out in my relationships with those around me, especially those who don't know God yet? How am I to show the same care and compassion for them that God has shown toward me, without compromising with their ways and slipping back into my old nature again?

Luke: Who loves the most? Who really loves? What is love, after all? A warm emotion? A red hot passion? A half-hearted hospitality given to a stranger, a temporary guest invited for dinner? If Jesus were a true prophet, he would know that this was a woman of passion, not real love. I mean, look at her! She demonstrates her indecency right before everyone's eyes! The place reeks, like her soap-opera actions, of over-expensive perfume...so appealing to the senses...even as she does. She caresses his feet and kisses them! Please! But then Jesus questions, not her, but...me! Who loves more? Who loves really? I know the answer. Everyone knows the answer. The one who is forgiven more. That is the person who truly loves. Not the one who thinks they are lovable. The one who knows they have fallen short, have fallen...far. 'Your sins are forgiven,' he says to her. How about mine? I have water to pour on your feet. I have strength to stoop and serve you, to bathe your feet and bring you refreshment. Yet, I hold back. How about my sins? How I long to hear what she heard. 'Your faith has saved you, go in peace.' My search for peace is what made me invite you in, Jesus. And it made me question you, whether you really are from God. Where could she go? Anywhere, I guess, because she has been set free...because she is loved much, and because she loves... much. Where did she actually go, after she left the banquet room that night? The rest of the story says that Jesus himself went on from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God, open to all. The Twelve were with him. And also 'some women.' Could one have been a woman... forgiven much...and loving much...loving enough to walk with him on his arduous way? **Question:** 1. What questions do I have about Jesus' credentials or his identity? Do I think he is like a prophet, or who he said he was, the Son of God? 2. How does my level of understanding and faith in Jesus affect how I live and act every day? Do I truly walk with him as a partner in his work like the female and male disciples who followed him when he walked the earth physically? 3. How much do I really think I have

been forgiven? How much do I really love Jesus? 4. How do I lavish my love and gratitude on Jesus one-to-one, like the woman in the story?

Prayer: God, you are worthy of all the love and worship my whole heart, mind, soul and strength can give, everywhere, and all the time. You are all- glorious, all- compassionate, all- wise, all- powerful, perfectly pure and holy, highly exalted above all: and, yet, you bent low and stooped to choose me as I am, forgiving me every wrong I have ever done, and loving me beyond my ability to measure. Such love is above me and beyond me...and yet mine! I will ever walk with you, though I will stumble and fall along the path. Let me lavish my love upon you, you who really love, as I cannot yet love. Through your love transform my lost-ness and loveless-ness toward you and others. Lead me in your way. Knowing love in you, let me love more....and more...and more...till all my love is not mine, but yours. Amen.

Day 87. Read Deuteronomy 9.1–10.22; Luke 8.4-21;
Psalm 69.19-36 and Proverbs 12.2-3.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: All right! The Promised Land! Finally! After all this messing and mucking around in the wilderness, now the main attraction. What we've all been waiting for all this time. Forty years! Our reward. What? It's not a reward?! What are you saying, Moses? It's not because of all we did or our superior character qualities? It's because the people there evicted themselves by living the way which is not really living? The very same 'stiff-necked' way we acted for forty years in the wilderness, messing and mucking around? Okay, so we made idols to worship when Moses was gone forty days and nights. We thought he was gone for good. So what? He pleaded to God for us, again... and again. And every time he did, God listened...and relented...because Moses stepped between us. What does God want? Oh. Simply for us to be awestruck by the glory of his nature, to walk in all his ways, to love him with all our being, and to observe all his commands. Everything in all the universe belongs to him, yet he set his love upon us and chose us. We are to love everyone who is in need of food and clothing, everyone who is an alien, because we were all aliens and slaves in Egypt...stiff-necked and obstinate. Yet he chose us and freed us to live with him. Enough messing and mucking around. Questions: 1. What chapters in my life's story would I characterize as my 'wilderness wandering?' How have I been 'stiff-necked' in hearing and heeding God's call to a different life with him? 2. Whom has God put in my life to help me discern and grow through my spiritual shortcomings? Do I have a caring, spiritually- mature friend who helps me know myself accurately, yet without despairing of or disparaging me? 3. Who is wandering in the wilderness, or stiff-necked toward God, that God wants to use me as a go-between to touch with his love and new life?

Luke: Words. They enter through our ears, pass on into our minds, and then lodge in our spirits. Stories. They touch us in ways and places which we are not even aware of. Jesus tells a story about a sower who goes out to sow seed in his field. Wildly. Wastefully. He flings the seed with abandon about everywhere. What farmer in this world is like that? Oh, the farmer is somewhat familiar. He obviously wants to maximize his harvest, to have as many plants and as much fruit as possible. That's why he is so extravagant with the seed. But on the path? Among the rocks? Where the weeds—the thorns and thistles—abound? No farmer in this world would do that. 'The seed is the Word of God' Jesus says simply. Oh. The farmer is God. God wants everyone, no matter the condition of their soul/soil, to hear his Word, have the chance to spring forth with life, and bear fruit—find meaning and purpose. Some will have the chance for life trampled out of them. Some will have it snatched from them by the evil one. Some will let it be choked out of them by letting the cares and concerns of the world ensnare them. But everyone will have the chance for true life, if this God has his way. And he will. And some will find that life and bear fruit beyond belief. Life x 100! Jesus puts it all in a paradox: whoever has, will be given more, and whoever doesn't have, even the non-life he has, that he thinks is life but isn't, will be taken away. The invitation is for everyone. Anyone who hear God's gracious, life transforming, powerful word, and puts it into action, is his mother and brother. They are his true kin, born of the same seed. Questions: 1. Who are the people God used to sow the seed of his Word in my life? Have I told them how deeply I appreciate what they have done for me and thanked them? 2. Who speaks God's Word into my life today? What spiritual friendship, small group, or faith community am I a part of that has as its center getting into God's Word together? If I am not, why not? 3. Of the three enemies of God's Word- in this story—times of testing, the cares of the world, or the evil one—which is the most difficult and dangerous for me personally? How can I enlist the help of other believers to counterbalance these attacks on the Word active in my life?

Prayer: God, every where around me, and even within me, there are obstacles. The distracting cares of the world, the destructive temptations sown by the evil one, and most of all, my own fickleness in the face of life's tough trials, seek to steal away the life you want to give me as a gift. Lord, keep speaking life into me through your Word. Lord, keep sowing your Word upon me, even when it meets with my hardened heart and stopped-up ears. Especially then, Lord. Don't ever give up on me, even when I give up on you and forget your Word, which is life itself. May your Word sown into my soul bear fruit for you more and more—a hundredfold more praise, and people touched with your Word through me. Make me a fruitful field for you, and sow your seed with abandon through my words and deeds. This I pray in the name of Jesus, the Word made flesh among us. Amen.

Day 88. Read Deuteronomy 11.1–12.32; Luke 8.22-39; Psalm 70.1-5; and Proverbs 12.4

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: Could it all be said as simply as this: Love the Lord your God? That's the reason for keeping his commandments...which he lovingly provided, after he redeemed us from slavery, so that we, with our slave mentality, might know how free people live fully the life God intends for all? This world is a lovely place...and there are so many things...and people...to love in it. It will be easy to lose the forest Maker for the trees. So Moses reminds the people who are about to experience the beauty and bounty of the Promised Land 'Be careful or you will be enticed to turn away from God and worship others gods...other things...instead of the One who is the source of your life...the only Source. Moses urges God's people to memorize and fix forever these words in their hearts and minds, even to the point of binding them written on their foreheads using phylacteries, so the Word won't be forgotten. God's people are to teach the Word to their children: at home and when they walk together, when they first get up and when they go to bed at night. The Word is to be the focus of life...so they can love the One who reveals himself and the way of life through his words. With the Word at the center, and loving the God who speaks, you will find the life you long for. No enemy will overcome you. The choice is ours; the choice belongs to each and every person- blessing or curse, life or death.

Questions: 1. How alive is my love for God? What special things do I do to keep my personal relationship with God alive and afresh, as I would the other important relationships I value most in my life? 2. Do I begin and end the day with time with God, or spend other quality times with God in God's Word and prayer? 3. What key verses of scripture will I memorize to keep God and my love for him alive in my mind and heart, as well as my actions, every day?

Luke: Wave after wave. Will the storm never stop? Not the physical storm. That's the easiest to deal with. It's the human storm that's hard. 'Don't you care, Jesus?' These are his disciples talking. Not strangers. These are the people he called personally, people who'd walked with him for many months and seen him do wondrous things, inexplicable things. He rebukes the wind and the raging waters, and they grow silent. Calm comes. Then he rebukes the disciples: 'Where is your faith?' They reach the safety of land, but the storm continues. He's barely out of the boat before the demon possessed man is on him. He looked like the locale he lived in, warmed-over death; for he lived among the tombs, the dark place of tears, not in a house with light and laughter. 'What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?' Strangely, even demons know better than the disciples who Jesus is. 'Come out of him' Jesus commands, with the same Word of power that stilled the violent forces of nature. Even though there be a legion, a whole army of demons, they must obey this Word. Even the demons know Jesus—the compassionate one. 'Send us not to the abyss where we deserve to be, but into the herd of pigs grazing nearby.' Jesus, Son of the Most High God, permits them. The pigs are destroyed by the violation the demons wreak upon them. How strong God has made humans to bear such violation and still not be undone, not be destroyed. This man manages until...deliverance comes...Jesus comes....the Son of the Most High God. The amazed townspeople, on

finding the misfortunate man now clothed again, in his right mind finally, and seated at Jesus' feet, do what any people would do, who have seen and heard inexplicable things far beyond understanding: they beg Jesus to leave! Get out! They are afraid. The endless storm continues, the storm that will see Jesus' body broken on the cross, like a shipwreck on the shore. Questions: 1. How has knowing Jesus Christ personally changed my way of looking at life—helped me to be in my “right mind” like the man in today's Bible story? 2. In what ways do I, like the townspeople, ask Jesus to leave—to stay out of parts of my life I don't want him to have Lordship over or change? 3. Do I really believe Jesus is the Son of God, with all the power and wisdom of God; or like the disciples, do I doubt whether he cares whether I perish or whether he has the power to help? 4. Do I, like the demoniac who was healed, sit at Jesus' feet—that is, eagerly seek to listen to him and learn from him? Why or why not? How can I do this better?

Prayer: In the storms of life, Lord, I often feel like you've left me all alone. Like you are asleep...unconcerned...even uncaring. The winds and the wild waves—now they seem all to real...all too powerful. And there are the demons. They seek to turn my life into death, my home and workplace and community into a tomb. They would drag us all down into the depths. But you are the Son of the Most High God...the only true, living God. All power is yours. All wisdom is yours. All compassion is yours. And so I will trust you totally...though the waves rise high and the demons howl like a banshee wind. Though you seem to be asleep and are silent, yet will I trust you alone. For only in you will I truly live and be in my right mind. I will sit silent at your feet, waiting for your powerful Word that sets me on solid ground again. Amen..

Day 89. Read Deuteronomy 13.1–15.23; Luke 8.40–9.6;
Psalm 71.1-24; and Proverbs 12.5-7.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: What do you do about false prophets? What about wonder-workers not sent by God? To say, ‘You must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer,’ doesn't help much Lord. How can we know? Do what God says - Follow God's Word. And to do that, you must know God's Word...and know God. First, and finally, and foremost all the times in between, know God and his Word. Even those closest to us—sibling or child or spouse or best friend—might mislead us to seek life somewhere else than from a relationship with God; we must be ruthless. Put the false prophet to ‘death.’ Let your hand be the first to ‘stone’ them. If a whole community were to go over to falsehood and death, ‘destroy’ it completely. Have nothing to do with them. Of all the people on earth, God has chosen you to be his treasured possession. We are children of the Lord our God. Why would we ever want to lose the inheritance that is ours as God's true children? So live like our Father - give back a tithe to God for his service of the blessings he has showered upon you; rejoice and celebrate with other believers in worship, and give

generously to those in need. Remember, you were enslaved; and God has set you free. Why would I want any other God? **Questions:** 1. What false prophets are active today? 2. How well-prepared am I in God's Word to resist false teaching? 3. Who among my family, friends, fellow workers, and acquaintances either knowingly or unknowingly weakens my relationship with God? How can I continue to love them and serve them for God without succumbing to falling away from God?

Luke: How does Jesus—and God's agenda—fit in my agenda? Jairus' agenda is healing for his dying daughter. He falls at Jesus' feet and pleads with him, "Come with me." The crowd's agenda is to get close enough to Jesus to figure out who he really is, and what he can do for them. Even the disciples have their own agenda - surround their master to protect him. A woman with a seemingly interminable flow of blood has her own: wholeness. She won't trouble him much...maybe just touch the hem of his garment. That's close enough contact. Don't want to get too close. That's risky. Jesus senses that power went out from him. 'Someone touched me.' 'Oh really?' the distracted disciples respond. Can't blame them for their sarcasm. Everybody has the agenda. Everyone has needs—or wants— they hope Jesus will fulfill. Jesus' agenda is different. He stops his journey to save a dying girl. He waits until someone will tell him who touched him, who received the power of God from him for new life. She steps forward and confesses her agenda, frightened. He speaks his agenda - faith. 'Your faith has healed you'...because faith connects us with God, it is his agenda for us...so go in peace...be about God's agenda for you and others, which can be summed in one word - peace. Is Jairus' daughter dead now? Be about God's agenda, Jairus. 'Don't be afraid;' Jesus says, 'only believe, and she will be healed.' When he comes to the dead girl, he simply takes her by the hand and says, 'Arise.' Get up. Go about God's agenda for you. The disciples are sent out to fulfill God's agenda: proclaiming the good news, driving the demonic out of people's lives, and healing. Whenever someone is about God's agenda, God will provide for them. Have faith. **Questions:** 1. What is my agenda for God? What do I want or expect God to do for me? How am I if God doesn't fulfill my agenda when I want or the way I want? Do I respond with faith? 2. What's God's agenda for me? Why am I here at this time and this place among these people, with all their conflicting and competing agendas, just like Jesus in the crowd that day? What or whom does God want me to dedicate time and attention to? What does he want me to disregard that I am attending to because of my wants and needs, instead of his will? 3. In the spiritual triage I am called upon to decide every day, who is most near to spiritual death or most ready to receive the new life of Christ through my words and actions?

Prayer: Everywhere around is the chaos of conflicting agendas. Every day I am besieged by a constant barrage of claims upon my time and attention. Swirling through them all, a steady undercurrent, are my own wants and needs...my own agenda. Lord, you know it. You know everyone's agenda, including my own most secret one. I don't know yours. Sometimes I want to, but most often I am afraid to know your agenda. Then I would be exposed, for preferring my own. Lord Jesus, why did you call me? You know my agenda so often conflicts with yours, even when I would most surrender myself to

you. And why, having called me, would you send me forth to fulfill your agenda? Oh. Because the very ones to whom you send me also have their own. Because they...and I...share this trait of preferring our own agendas to yours. I can talk to them about that, if I will be honest with them. All right. Send me. Amen.

Day 90. Read Deuteronomy 16.1-17-20; Luke 9.7-27; Psalms 72.1-20; and Proverbs 12.8-9

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: High festivals throughout the year...not equally spaced...but following another order, another timetable...attuned truly to the human spirit and need. The feast of deliverance...Passover...first. It can't be celebrated anytime...or anywhere. It must be when God decides, and where - in the city he will choose as the dwelling place of his name. Then the Feast of Weeks, seven weeks to the day after beginning the harvest, when everyone must return an offering from the blessings God first gave them, again in the place God appoints. Finally, the feast of Tabernacles, when everyone must live in tents for seven days, when the harvest is fully finished. Freedom...fruitbearing...finality...all in God's way and time. But for those who don't follow God's way? What of the person who leads people contrary to God's Word and way? This person must be taken to the city gate—outside the community—and executed to keep the contagion from spreading. Even the one who shows contempt for the priests or judge stands condemned. Care has to be taken to avoid being led astray. The king they choose must be from their own people, not a foreigner with other customs and beliefs. Unlike the rulers of this world, he must not multiply military power—horses to pull chariots or carry cavalry-. He must not accumulate large quantities of money or have too many intimate relationships ('wives' in that ancient time). When a king is chosen, he is to write for himself a copy of God's Word. He is to read it every day, all his life, so he may revere God in a deep relationship and follow carefully his Words. The Leader is to be solidly based in God's Word and following God's way. Questions: 1. How faithfully do I worship God at the important times of the year appointed to celebrate God's saving acts in history, like Easter, Christmas, and Pentecost? 2. What influences me to go a different way than God's way? 3. In the leadership roles I have in my family, workplace, community and faith organization, do I lead according to God's will as know through his Word? How regular am I in reading and hearing and studying God's Word?

Luke: Everyone wants to see Jesus. Even King Herod. He is driven, like everyone else, out of self-interest, to see who Jesus is and what he can do for them...or to them, in Herod's case. Jesus takes the excited, but exhausted disciples, freshly returned from their successful but still taxing assignment, to a remote place, far away from the crowds. Nice try. The crowds follow...and find him. Welcome! The Kingdom of God is yours, simply for the asking! Be healed and find wholeness! Enough already. All good things must come to an

end, even all this talk about the Kingdom. It's not very practical, of course. The hours still pass, and darkness will still descend. The stomach will grow hungry, and even the most spiritual talk will not satisfy that. Send them home, the disciples say. The disciples' excitement has faded like the failing daylight around them. 'You give them something to eat!' Jesus smiles. How? With just these meager resources, five loaves and two fish? He took these slim resources, looked to heaven, blessed them and gave them to the disciples to give to the people. And all are fed. And all are filled. 'Who do you say I am?' Jesus asks. And he invites, "If any want to follow me, deny yourself, and take up your cross daily and follow me." This is what he offers anyone...everyone - nothing less than a cross...and himself...and Life.

Prayer: Is this the only way, God? The cross? Can't you just give me life another way...the way I imagine it...the way I imagine it might come to me. Oh, I expected it cost something. Only...I thought it might be available at a better..bargain...than that. The cross? Die? *Daily?* Follow you and lay down my life every day like you lay down yours in service to others for God? Serve people obsessed with their own agendas? With their own hungers they want to slake in their own ways? And all I have to offer...all I have to give..is you...concealed and hidden in my own meager words and questionable actions, just as you come hidden to me in the tiny morsel of bread and sip of wine that is your true body and blood in your Supper? Ah. I see. Your body broken, your blood poured out...for me. I am filled full to overflowing with your love and life from the meal you made for me. All right.. I will pour myself out like the wine, and give myself to be broken like the bread, if you will lead me. So lead me, O Servant Son of God, to stoop and serve, and in so doing, carry the cross. Amen.

Day 91. Read Deuteronomy 18.1–20.20; Luke 9.28-50; Psalm 73.1-28; and Proverbs 12.10

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: Sacrifice a son or daughter? Who would do such a thing!?! Surely, no one among the people of God! And yet...we will...if we get our own way...if we go our own way. Going our own way, instead of God's, ends in sacrificing our sons and daughters and every important relationship to our own desires, in the end. Everything serves the great god, Self. Who would think of practicing divination or sorcery or consulting mediums or having séances to contact the dead? We will, if we seek to secure our celestial Self. We will move heaven and earth in order to control our own destinies...be our own deities. So God simply says: 'You must be blameless before the Lord your God.' Because God is holy, the people of God must be holy...and God will transform them to be so, by his compassion and power alone. For we will seek to secure our celestial selves, even at the cost of others' very being. We will move boundary stones to steal their property; we will even take their

life in premeditation. So does everyone around us...if they are not transformed by the compassion and power of God. Questions: 1. How have I 'sacrificed' (harmed) others by my attempts to satisfy my Self? 2. What other things do I put my trust in, just as Israel was tempted to do through divination, mediums, séances, contacting the dead, and even sacrificing their children, like the nations around them? 3. How do I allow others to influence me away from God's way?

Luke: For a moment, glory. Glory as of the only Son of God. Radiance, like the noonday summer sun, streaming from his face. Lightning striking. This is the face of God, the human face of Jesus, transfigured. And the Voice! The Voice from the enveloping cloud attests: 'This is my Son, my chosen one. Listen...to him!' Who will listen? Down in the valley, he's just Jesus. His followers stumble... and fumble the work. 'I begged your disciples to drive out the demon from my son,' the disappointed father complains, 'but they could not!' 'How long must I be among you, unbelieving generation?' Jesus sighs. What pain must he have suffered, everywhere and in everyone to find the same sickness - unbelief. 'Bring him to me.' With a Word the demons are dispersed, and the boy experiences wholeness. And then he tells them the secret heart of his mission for God - to go to the cross. But that is hidden from them. They can't see it either. Die on a cross? How does that square with the glory of the mountaintop or the wonder of the miracle? Soon they are distracted again, arguing about who would be greatest in the kingdom. The one who is least. The one most...like Jesus, the servant, sacrificed Son of God. Questions: 1. Why are the mountaintop experiences with God so rare? Do I need them and seek them, or is hearing God's Word, having faith, and following Christ with my cross enough? 2. In what ways do I seek to be great in the kingdom as I understand greatness, rather than being 'the least' like Jesus urges? What does it mean for me to be "the least" in my home, family, circle of friends, community, faith family?

Prayer: If I could only see your face in glory, shining like the sun, I imagine, then I would truly believe. If I saw you cast out demons and cure the incurable, I would surely believe..and believe surely, I tell myself. If I could only hear the Voice audibly speak, I would know with certainty and everything would be fine. But this is the height of unbelief, to think I would believe if only I saw...and heard...myself. It is to set my Self above you, Lord, as your Judge. Let me instead be satisfied and seek to live concealed in the cloud of faith. Let my eyes be dark and my ears be muffled, and let me be cling to you in the cloud of faith. Let me trust in you totally. Let me listen to you alone. Let us walk together in the valley, all the way, until you come like dawn to shatter the darkness forever. Amen.

Through The Bible In One Year: Week 13

Sunday Worship Lessons

First Lesson (Old Testament): Deuteronomy 7.7-14

Psalm: 70.1-5

Second (New Testament) Lesson: Luke 7.36-50.

Theme: Much Loved, And Loving Much

Summary of the Sunday Worship Scriptures & Theme:

God chose the people of Israel not because they were more numerous or powerful than other people, but because of his great love and faithfulness. In the same way, God chooses people today—out of his graciousness and not our deserving. When Jesus is a guest at a banquet in a very religious person's home, a woman who had much to be forgiven for came and bathed his feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair and anointed them with costly oil, lavishing her love upon him. Jesus tells a story of two people forgiven debts, one a great debt and the other a lesser one. 'Who will love more?' Jesus asks him. He answers rightly: the one forgiven much will love much. Just so, Jesus says, the woman who was forgiven much loves much—in actions and not just words—while he had not even extended to Jesus the common hospitality of that ancient culture of water to wash his feet. Those who realize how much God loves them, not because of their deserving, but despite their undeserving—love much in return. Loved much, we love much in return.