

Through The Bible In One Year

The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

Daily Devotional Companion

Week 14

Day 92. Read Deuteronomy 21.1-22.30; Luke 9.51-10.12;
Psalm 74.1-23; and Proverbs 12.11.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: It reads like the morning paper or the evening news, or maybe the tabloid found at the supermarket checkout counter. A murder victim found in a field. A beautiful woman captured during war. Lovelessness and favoritism in marriage and parenting. A man executed by hanging. Men wearing women's clothing, and women wearing men's. A house must have a railing around the top to keep people from falling off. False engagement and extra-marital relations. The world is not the way God intends it to be—not the way it would be were God's ways followed. So God provides directions for dealing with the brokenness. Stern ways, often times. But beneath, and above, and beyond it all, is a loving God who wants people to have life and have it abundantly...not as one philosopher would call it - "dirty, nasty and short." Even the body of the executed criminal must be treated with respect and compassion. The captive has rights. The unloved must be cared for. The balance of nature must be carefully maintained, so the mother bird may not be seized along with her eggs or young. This is God's way. This is the way of God's people. Questions: 1. Which of the scenarios in today's reading surprises or shocks me the most? Why? What is God telling me? 2. When it says 'cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree,' what does it mean that Jesus consented to be crucified (hung on a tree) for me? 3. What am I doing to show active caring for my neighbors and the environment? What will I do this week?

Luke: The goal is Jerusalem. Nothing will defer or deflect him. A whole town turns its back on him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. He, too, experienced racial and religious persecution—because he was headed to the capital of his country and faith...which the townspeople hated. Angry disciples want to call down the punishment of heaven on the town, but Jesus rebukes them. They don't get it...don't understand. He is headed to Jerusalem to provide a way out of such hatred. Some wannabe followers turn away...and some he invites find excuses...because he is headed toward Jerusalem...and a cross. He has nowhere to lay his head...except a borrowed tomb. He chooses and sends out seventy-two. Not just twelve. The task is too immense...too crucial...to keep it to so few. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest, like lambs among wolves. Keep

moving. Proclaim the good news to those who will hear and to those who won't—the Kingdom has come near and is available. Shake off the dust from your feet as a sign to them, and keep moving...keep moving...keep moving...to Jerusalem. **Questions:** 1. When have I ever experienced rejection or persecution? For believing in Jesus Christ? Did I want revenge, or accept it as an honor because of following Christ and sharing his suffering? 2. What do I expect from following Jesus? A payoff now (like a comfortable life)? 3. To what 'town' (group of people) is Jesus sending me? What is the good news I have to share with them, and how will I do it?

Prayer: O God, broken and breaking...everybody is broken...and breaking. Hurt and hurting. It is too much. Won't you do something about it? When will you do something about it? Oh...he set his face for Jerusalem...where he would be hung on a tree. Cursed. So blessing might come to the people who have been beaten up...and to the ones who do the beating. Jerusalem. City of peace. True peace. Bring it on, Lord! What? Pray for workers in the harvest? Bring them on, Lord! What? You want me...to be the answer to the prayer I pray...to be sent into the harvest? Very well, I will go to all to whom you send me. Turn my face to yours, and let me follow you...to Jerusalem. Amen.

Day 93. Read Deuteronomy 23.1–25.19; Luke 10.13-37;
Psalm 75.1-10; and Proverbs 12.12-14.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: What if it was just an accident? Or he was wounded in warfare? How can one who has crushed body parts be excluded from the assembly of God's people? How can it be that not just the one who reveled in illicit love, but the child, grandchild, descendants down to the tenth generation cannot enter the assembly of the Lord? No one from two enemy nations or any of their descendants may ever enter the assembly of the Lord? But two other nations, one blood relations of Israel and the other once their slave-owners, may become part of the assembly? If a slave takes refuge with you, don't hand him back over to his master. Whatever your lips utter, be sure to do. Divorce must be done in a certain way. If a man is recently married, he must not be sent to war for at least one year. If you take a poor man's cloak as pledge to repay a loan, you must return it to him each night so he can sleep in it...and never take a widow's cloak as such a pledge. Use true weights in business. What is this hodgepodge, laundry list of miscellaneous behaviors all about? Remember...you were enslaved, and your God redeemed you. Live like God, always doing justice...always acting...perfectly. There must be no straying. Jesus will say, 'You must be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect.' And Jesus will provide the only way to fulfilling the law perfectly - the forgiving love of God, given by his body broken on the cross, when even an officer of the foreign, occupying army will say, 'Truly this was the Son of God' and become part of the people of God. **Questions:** 1. How does it comfort and strengthen me in faith to know that I am accepted among God's people, despite all my

shortcomings and the wounds life has scarred me with, because of Christ's cross? 2. How does it change the way I look at the broken people around me? 3. Who is 'enslaved' and seeking to be free that I should help, so he or she won't be 'returned to their slavemaster?'

Luke: How can I inherit life the way it's meant to be...eternal life? Love God with every bit of my being—body, mind, spirit. And love my neighbor as myself. Simple. Easy to say, but so difficult to do. What are the limits? There have to be limits, Lord. The need is too immense. My means are too limited. A Samaritan is the model? A hated foreigner, with his half-breed religion, completely compromised with the religions around him...is the poster child you put before us? He went to the wounded man and bandaged his wounds. He took him to an inn and kept vigil all night, and next morning gave the innkeeper money to take care of him and more importantly- a promise to return...with a blank check for whatever the man needed to live. The question really is not 'who is my neighbor,' but 'who will I be a neighbor to?' In God's grammar, neighboring is a verb...an action word. And to neighbor someone is to...live...live the life that is truly living...live like God himself...eternal life. Seventy two are sent out. Seventy two return with joy, amazed that even the demons submitted to them. Nothing can withstand the love of God...or the word of Jesus. And Jesus says to those he sends out, like Samaritans along the alleyways and byways of daily existence, 'Whoever hears you, hears me.' Our actions, like our words, become his, whenever we accept his calling and consent to be sent. Questions: 1. Why do I shy away from going to others who are hurting? 2. Whom do I know who needs my help right now? What do they need most? What will I do to help them experience healing? 3. How does it affect me and my actions to know that whenever I act in Christ's name and follow his way, no demonic, destructive power can withstand Christ's kingdom work through me?

Prayer: Can it really be, Lord, that whoever hears me, hears you? Sure, 'actions speak louder...' But can it be that my actions might actually shout aloud your love and care for people around me who are hurting and harassed and helpless against the demons that seek to destroy them? I want to pass by on the other side... to look the other way. I am harassed myself. My days are full of important business I must be about. I want—I need- someone to come and comfort and care for me. I know. You did just that. You healed my brokenness and gave me life when I was dying. Let me walk every day...every path you lead me on...looking for someone the way you looked for me. Tomorrow...no, today...and tomorrow...let me go to the one you bring me to...and bring your healing love. Amen.

Day 94. Read Deuteronomy 26.1-27.26; Luke 10.38-11.13;
Psalm 76.1-12; and Proverbs 12.15-17.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: Identity is strengthened and passed on by telling and retelling the story that is at the center of our being. The memories are crucial and must be intentionally

passed on. So Moses commands the people that when they enter the promised land, they must declare before the altar of the Lord, as they offer the firstfruits of their land each year, "A wandering Aramean was my father..." Abraham's following God from the certainty of life among his kindred in Haran, bitter slavery in Egypt, crying out to God and receiving deliverance by God's mighty acts and miraculous signs, and receiving the land flowing with milk and honey are all part of the story. The response is praise and becoming more like God himself in giving. 'And now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you have given me, O Lord.' The first tithe in the new land is to be given to the tabernacle servants, the alien, the fatherless and widow, 'so they may eat and be satisfied.' The hungry are to be fed not just a survival subsistence, but until they are satisfied. Moses commands setting up huge stones, coated with plaster and written upon with all God's words on them as a memorial. The whole people are to take part in a ritual of blessing and cursing. Divided into two parts, with one standing on one mountain and the other on the mountain opposite, they are to repeat back and forth the promised blessings and threatened warnings of the consequences of not following God's word. We must remember what God has done and what God has said is the way of life. **Questions:** 1. How does repeatedly worshipping God through the seasons of the church year, reliving and celebrating Christ's birth at Christmas, the crucifixion on Good Friday, his resurrection on Easter, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and more, help ingrain our identity as the people of God today? 2. What is my personal statement of faith telling what God has done for me? What will I tell anyone who asks me what God has done for me (and everyone)? 3. Why is it important for me to have a community of faith to help confirm and strengthen my identity as God's redeemed child?

Luke: Oh, bother! So much to do, so little time to do it. It's all God pleasing stuff—serving the real needs of others. Hospitality. Welcoming strangers and feeding them. Someone should help...especially my own kin. Why does she just sit at Jesus' feet? Doesn't she see there is serving to do—good things, necessary things? Don't you care that she's left me to serve alone, Jesus? Aren't you outraged by her double insensitivity—to the needs of others, and to my needs? What? Only one thing is really necessary? Just one thing? What do you mean? To sit at your feet—to rest attentively in your presence—and hear your Word. You do care. You care for me so much that you even speak a gentle, loving word of correction—more like an invitation than criticism. You call me back to you, the source of peace, yourself. You really do care. **Questions:** 1. How often during a day do I make time to 'sit at Jesus feet' and be peacefully present to the presence of Christ in his Word, prayer, meditation, etc.? 2. Is my serving characterized by a spirit of self-pity and sorrow or energetic joy? 3. How can I keep in contact with Jesus and the peace he alone gives while going about my busy days?

Prayer: Let me remember you always and what you have done for me. My memory falters. Don't ever let it fail. I am so easily distracted and deflected from you. Let me sit at your feet and listen to you speak even—and especially—when I am flying through my daily round of duties and obligations and...my own busyness. Only then will I truly be myself, by being yours. Only then will I be always ready to tell someone else about the One who loves me—

and them—more than anyone can imagine. Only then will I be able to invite them to come and sit at your feet with me. When I am busiest, even then speak to me and let me sit at your feet, as I fly through my day. Amen.

Day 95. Read Deuteronomy 28.1-68; Luke 11.14-36;
Psalm 77.1-20; and Proverbs 12.18.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: Blessing or curse? The choice is like day and night, life and death. Keep in close, loving relationship with God by following the Word that he speaks, and blessing beyond belief will result. No enemy will stand against you. All the people around you will see that you belong to God and are called by his name. Sever the relationship God has established and disaster will follow. The same disasters that Egypt experienced when they would not listen to God and let their slaves be free. Even the earth—the environment—will suffer, the sky becoming like bronze and the soil hard as iron. Every enemy will find you easy prey. Families will be broken apart. You will not enjoy the fruit of your labors, but someone else will. ‘You will have nothing but cruel oppression all the days of your life.’ Yogi Berra is reported to have said, ‘When you come to the fork in the road, take it.’ Take which fork? Which will you choose? God says, ‘Choose life with me.’ Questions: 1. When I am ‘in the groove’ with God and everything is flowing along fine, what causes it all to come apart, so that in a matter of moments, everything is upsetting and frustrating? Who or what changes—me, my circumstances, God? 2. Am I conscious that and really believe that every moment presents a choice to me, to follow God and experience blessing, or to go my own or others’ way and find trouble? Do I believe I am responsible for my own attitude and choice, which is the deciding factor every moment, since God never changes?

Luke: They asked him for a sign...from heaven. They needed to be sure. Where does Jesus’ amazing and mysterious power come from? Where do these mighty acts and miracles originate? They are so powerful and persuasive! It must be demonic. And yet...he casts out demons! He must do so by the most powerful of demons then, the Prince of darkness himself. Jesus must be in league with Lucifer himself. Jesus knew the thoughts of these right, religious folk. And he knew the demonic. ‘If Satan is divided against himself—casting out demons by other demons—then his kingdom is ruined and will fall...and if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.’ He does...destroy the demonic. It has come...the kingdom of God. In Jesus. Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey...him. People need certainty, and so they seek signs. Only one unmistakable, irrefutable sign will be given—the sign of Jonah. Three days in the darkness of death and then...alive again. To see—and accept—what God is doing in Jesus...that is to be full of light. All else is darkness. The deepest kind of darkness, self-delusion. **Questions:** 1. Do I consciously or unconsciously demand signs from God, or do I trust and rest in faith that God loves me and protects me when disastrous or difficult

things occur? Why? 2. What 'demonic' or negative character traits or aspects of my life has Jesus broken the power of? What areas or character traits do I still need Christ's supernatural power to overcome and transform to his kingdom qualities? 3. How much reality does the resurrection of Christ have for me? How much power and confidence do I receive from the fact that God is more powerful than death, or the devil, or the world, or anything else in the universe?

Prayer: Three days in deep darkness. Dying...and then dead...and then defeating death! Praise to you, my Risen King! Now let your kingdom come to me. Cast out the demonic in my life, breaking all the powers of death that seek to bind and hold me. You rule over every thought, every word, every deed of mine, so they are not mine, but yours. Even when the cords of doubt and death surround me and seek to drag me down into despair, let the light of your resurrection lift me up again. Let my whole body—my whole being—be light, reflecting your Light, my Lord. Shine on the darkness around me, through this life transformed from darkness and death to your life and light. Amen.

Day 96. Read Deuteronomy 29.1-30.20; Luke 11.37-12.7;
Psalm 78.1-31; and Proverbs 12.19-20.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: Farewell words are important, especially when the occasion is the death of the leader. Moses reminds God's people of all that the eyewitnesses had seen—how God delivered them from slavery through his mighty acts and miracles, how for forty years journeying through a wilderness God had provided for their every true need, all so they would know personally and firsthand- 'I am the LORD your God. Solemnly, Moses reminds them of the covenant—the faithful relationship God established with them. All of them—each person—stand before God as they renew the covenant. And it is not for themselves alone. It is for all who come after. One life touches many lives—the children who follow after us, and even 'foreigners' who will see the faithfulness or unfaithfulness, and the consequences that surely follow. But if...no, when..they fail to be faithful to the covenant and go their own way, turning away from God's word and way, God will still be faithful. If they turn back to God, he will 'circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants so that you may love God with all your hearts and with all your soul and live!' Moses, like a true leader, with true caring and compassion for his people, lays the options plainly before them, saying simply, "I set before you today life and well-being, death and destruction.' And like the good leader he is, he says, 'Choose life!' Questions: 1. Who is your most trusted spiritual counselor and guide? Who tells you what you need to hear about your spiritual life and walk with God, not necessarily what you want to hear? 2. Who have been the main spiritual influences in my life? Have I thanked them—and

thanked God for them? 3. Who needs spiritual guidance or encouragement from me? What keeps me from speaking words of encouragement or guidance to them?

Luke: I invited him to my home and my meal fellowship, but it wasn't really kindness. I wanted to test him... and he failed. My first clue? He didn't wash his hands. That was the giveaway...the 'dead' giveaway, since I knew then for sure he was not of God. Then, to defend himself, he went on the offensive. Imagine that-*he* attacked me! 'You clean the outside of the cup, but inside you are foul. Give what is inside to the poor, and you will be clean.' Whatever does that mean? He really went off on us: woe...woe...woe. We tithe...even down to spices...but forget justice. We seek the best seats; everyone does. He even called us unmarked graves...meaning that we make others unfit for God's presence without their even being aware of it. He even gored the scribes' ox. They built monuments to the very prophets their ancestors and predecessors killed. He's gone too far this time. There is no going back now. We will oppose him openly and test him mercilessly, both scribe and Pharisee. You wait and see. We will trip him up, and watch him fall. Is he mad?! He is even worried. He even warns the people to watch out for our 'yeast'—the subtle ways we influence others, as if we were the danger. And then he says about us, 'Don't worry about the ones who can kill the body...but take care to be with God, who rules over both body and spirit, life and death.' The common people are like lustful sparrows really, flitting here and there, scrambling and scraping for life. And he seems to care for them...saying that God knows every sparrow...and they are worth more than sparrows to God. This man means trouble. **Questions:** 1. Who in my experience and life lives with 'unwashed hands'—or is someone who is out of step with polite society or even looked down upon by others for their questionable behavior? If there is not anyone like that, why not? Am I keeping myself apart intentionally or unconsciously? 2. Are there areas of my life or situations which I tend to be more concerned about maintaining appearance of propriety than having the genuine reality of it inside my character? 3. What does it mean for me that 'God knows every sparrow?' Do I believe that God really cares for me and watches over me, down to the least detail of my life? Whom do I tend to overlook?

Prayer: Every sparrow? Each and every one? Whether a feather is out of place, or when they finally fall? Such knowledge is too much for me. I go through life mostly oblivious to the people right in front of me. The more they are a part of my life, the more I am apt to take them for granted. The ones closest to me, I treat with less respect and kindness than total strangers. You are right to upbraid me, Lord. You are right to challenge me and remind me that even in the one who least looks or acts like you, I meet you. Because the unwashed are forgotten and forsaken, you went unwashed. Yet you washed me...clean with your blood...newborn, by the baptism you gave me. Let me live with justice and truth. Let me live like you, with compassion and caring, for all around me. Amen.

Day 97. Read Deuteronomy 31.1-32.27; Luke 12.8-34; Psalm 78.32-55; and Proverbs 12.21-23.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified of the enemy, because the LORD your God goes with you. Moses, 120 years old, will not go with them. The leader who has led them throughout their wilderness journey, is not the one who can take them the next step. However much they complained about his leadership, now they are afraid to learn the time has come when the one so familiar will not be with them. Moses summons Joshua, the Lord's chosen person to lead Israel in their next stage—the fight for the land of promise—and in front of all the people commands him, 'Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people...' The reason he can be courageous and strong is the same as for all God's people: 'The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you.' God will never leave you nor forsake you. Therefore, though enemies surround and the way be uncertain, you may be strong and courageous. Moses ends his farewell exhortation with a warning- 'I know that after my death you are sure to turn from God, and disaster will fall upon you.' So Moses leaves them with...a song! He sings the words of covenant again, after he has spoken them and written them down...giving them one more way to remember...to choose life. Questions: 1. Who have I relied upon in my life—or do I rely upon now—who if taken away would cause me to question, doubt or fear? Am I trusting totally in God, or is something or someone else really the source of my courage and confidence in life? 2. If God were to tell me right now to be courageous and strong in some situation in life, what situation would he be talking about? Telling someone about Jesus? Some worry about health or work or a relational difficulty? 3. Who around me needs a word of encouragement right now? How can I speak to them for God so they take courage and receive strength for whatever trial they are facing?

Luke: Do not be afraid, Jesus says. Oh...I don't know. Why take the risk? I mean, to follow Jesus, publicly, and acknowledge him before the people who know me, the people who have power to affect me—that's risky. Who am I to speak to them about him, anyway? So many people are so much more intelligent than I am; so many can weave better arguments and explain things better. I am not the sharpest tool in the shed. What would I say? But Jesus promises. He promises that if I will acknowledge him before people, he will acknowledge me before the angels...in the very presence of God. Now that's a deal for you. But it's so scary. The people around me seem so much more real than God. They're real flesh and blood and God is...well, I can't see or touch or hear him. Yet, Jesus promises that even if I am suddenly set before secular authorities and the religious officials and asked to defend my love for Jesus and why I follow him, I don't need to worry about what to say. The Holy Spirit will teach me at that time. Jesus promises the presence and power of the Holy Spirit walking with me all the time. Don't be afraid Jesus says, 'for your Father has

been pleased to give you the kingdom.’ God simply gives as a gift the life we long for, if we turn to him and trust him totally. We can live without worry or concern, like flowers growing in a field. Seek first his kingdom—first of all, seek to love God with your whole heart, mind, strength and soul—and everything we need will be given us. No need to worry and strive to amass mounds of money or the things it can buy. The worst of all poverties is to be rich in things- but lacking God. That is to be empty. Store up for yourselves treasure in heaven...be a real treasure hunter...seek God as if he were a treasure that would turn your whole life around—and anyone’s life who finds him. He is. **Questions:** 1. How has loving and following Jesus changed my life, my character, and my actions? What would I say to someone who asks me to defend my love for Jesus and my following of him? 2. Who do I have trouble talking with others about God’s love and new life available through a faith relationship with Jesus Christ? Why am I reluctant to talk with them about my relationship with Jesus, and theirs? 3. Jesus says, ‘Do not be afraid,’ because he knows I still experience fear and doubt as his follower. What does it mean that Jesus knows I still struggle, and that he still accepts me even with my struggles, and wants to free me from a fear or worry- based life to a life lived in confident trust in him? How does that increase my confidence?

Prayer: Can it really be that what my eyes cannot see is more real than what I do see? You invite me to faith. You invite me to trust you. You invite me to life without fear. You offer true peace...and wholeness...courage and confidence. That is what I want. Forgive me for trying to secure myself in so many other ways. I try to line up people to like me, thinking I feel more secure the more I am liked...but I feel less secure, finally. I seek to secure myself by being needed, being competent and effective, giving people what they think they need. What will happen when I fail them? What will happen when they find out I cannot come through for them? But you...you just give me...the kingdom! You’re your good pleasure, Father—it literally tickles your heart—to give me what I long for and strive fruitlessly to secure for myself - Life. I accept the gift. I acknowledge you, the Giver. Let me live in the way that reflects your presence and power, with confidence and courage to acknowledge you as my forgiver and leader, my Lord and Savior. You are my true treasure...and you are such a Treasure, that the more I give you away, the more of you I have. Let me give you away every day, that every day I may have more of you! Amen.

Day 98. Read Deuteronomy 32.28-52; Luke 12.35-59;
Psalm 78.56-64; and Proverbs 112.24.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Deuteronomy: God gives Moses a song to sing to the people before he dies, and in the song God reminds them ‘There is no god besides me.’ Moses will see the Promised Land

from a distance, but he will not set foot in it. Because he broke faith with God and did not uphold his holiness among the people, he, like the stubborn people of Israel must die in the wilderness. The people who go into the new land will be different from the ones who started the journey. Nearing the end of his long and eventful life, Moses says his farewell to the people he led for forty years in the wilderness. There is no sentimentality. He is all business. 'These are not idle words for you—they are your life. Be sure to take to heart and follow all the words God gave us. By them you will live long in the land.' Life is found in knowing God, listening to his Word, and living it. Questions: 1. What would I say to my family members, friends, fellow workers and others I know if I were about to die? What would I tell them about God? 2. Are there opportunities I've missed in life because of wrong choices that I regret now, or perhaps will later when I'm at the end of life? How does God's forgiving love help me deal with that possibility? 3. How does it change my attitude and outlook to know the Promised Land—eternal life with God—is ahead of me as my destination, since through faith I have been forgiven and made new in Christ?

Luke: He's coming. But when? Anticipate him? Be dressed and ready and keep the lights burning? How long can one stand ready? It's hard work being like servants waiting for their master to come back from a wedding banquet, ready to throw open the door instantly when he arrives at the threshold. What if he's delayed? What if it's late? Jesus says simply 'From the one who has been entrusted with much, much is expected.' When we are given a gift, the gift changes us...our use of time and energy, our priorities, every thing changes. Having received the gift of relationship with God, we are changed. And so Jesus says perhaps his strangest—and harshest—word of all, 'Don't think I came to bring peace on earth, I came to bring division.' Father against son, daughter against mother, division across the most basic human relationships. Will we live longing for him and looking for him...the One who loves us with his life...or someone or something else? He's coming. Will we be longing and looking for him? Questions: 1. What divisions has my following Jesus caused among my relationships? Where is the tension caused by loving and following Jesus first and foremost in my life? It there isn't any, why? 2. How would it change my life and actions if I lived everyday as if today might be the day he returns? What sort of urgency and excitement would that give to my days? 3. What is the 'much' that God has entrusted to me? What does Jesus hope I will do with the 'much' that has been entrusted to me?

Prayer: Come, Lord Jesus...later. There is so much I am involved with, it wouldn't be very convenient if you came right now. I have much I want to accomplish yet...things I'd like to experience. And there is so much that I want to do for you...and will do...later, when I can fit it in. That's what I mostly say to you, most of my days...if I even think of you. How my prayers must disappoint you. My prayers are about my agenda, my desires, the way I think things should work out. Won't you turn me inside out, take me out of myself, and empty me for your filling, so that I think your thoughts, do your deeds, speak your words? Form in me your new nature, create me anew in your image and likeness now, Lord. Come, Lord Jesus, in that way now, I pray, and then come when you will to bring in the end. Then...and only then...I will be ready, looking and longing for your coming...if you have already come once to make me long for your coming. Amen

Through The Bible In One Year: Week 14

Sunday Worship Lessons

First Lesson (Old Testament): Deuteronomy 29.9-18

Psalm: 78.1-8

Second (New Testament) Lesson: Luke 10.25-37.

Theme: The Covenant Community

Summary Explanation of Sunday Worship Scriptures and Theme:

God's people are a covenant people. The heart of the covenant—as for any meaningful relationship—is the mutual love that binds the two together as one. This love means giving up individual freedom for a higher, fuller unity in diversity. The covenant relationship changes both parties, because both are bound to life in unending relationship with one another. The covenant relationship extends beyond the parties involved, to include all others touched by the covenantal partners. It affects people present in time and space and all those who will be affected in the future as the covenant endures through time and space. God initiates the covenant, offering relationship with us as he finds and frees us from bondage for relationship with him and God's people. The heart of our covenant response to God is loving God with all our being, heart, mind, strength and soul. But equally crucial is our loving the people God loves. In the Gospel story, Jesus leads a seeker to discover that you cannot love God without also loving those he loves, not just in words, but in action. The question is not, 'who is my neighbor?' But, 'who will I be a neighbor to?' Neighboring is a verb, an action word; because the God with whom we are in covenant is a God who speaks and acts.