

Sin & Grace

Monday, 9/21/09 – Read Hosea 11:1-9

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: This week we focus on the heart of the gospel -- the Good News of God’s grace, God’s loving kindness (as the Hebrew scriptures phrase it) -- and on our participation in the process of forgiveness. ... Today’s reading is one of the tenderest and most touching passages in all the Bible. It graphically portrays the tender yearning of God for the people. God is pictured as a parent picking up a small child and holding the child against his cheek. Read through this passage slowly. Read it with your heart and let the tender feelings touch you. How does it feel to you to see God pictured this way? Can you feel God’s tender yearning for you?

Tuesday, 9/22/09 – Read Psalm 32

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: PRETENDING is one of the great enemies of spiritual living. It is only when we are fully honest with ourselves and with our God that God’s forgiving and healing work can bind up our broken hearts. ... Focus on verses 1-5 of this Psalm. Is this your experience? What happens inside us when we don’t tell the truth -- even to ourselves? What do you make of the phrase in verse 3: “my body wasted away through my groaning all day long”? ... Do you think the Psalm is right -- that “confession” is a part of experiencing forgiveness?

Wednesday, 9/23/09 – Read Isaiah 49:13-16

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Like the reading on Monday this week from Hosea, today’s reading from Isaiah 49 portrays God as the loving and long-suffering parent -- as one who can not and will not forget his child. ... Read this passage again -- with your heart. Don’t miss verse 16! God has written your name on the palms of his hands. Let that realization wash over you. Let yourself feel the significance of God’s commitment to you! ... Jot down some notes on your reaction.

Thursday, 9/24/09 – Read Luke 7:36-50

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Jesus makes an astounding assertion in verse 47 of today’s reading: there is some relationship between the experience of being forgiven and the capacity to love. ... What do you think? Has your experience of being forgiven made you a more loving person? Can you be specific about how this has happened in your life?

Friday, 9/25/09 – Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: When we approach the God’s Good News only with our logical minds, when we try to think it through with our normal ways of thinking, the gospel can seem like so much nonsense. The Apostle Paul claimed that God chose to be known most profoundly through weakness and vulnerability, through the death of Jesus. ... Look into your own experience. Look deeply. Have you ever been profoundly moved, have you ever been changed by vulnerability? This can sometimes happen in our close personal relationships where the suffering of someone we love touches us more deeply than we can express in words. Now

imagine that the vulnerable one is not another human but the God of all creation. How does that change your image of God? How might that change your relationship with God?

Saturday, 9/26/09 – Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: According to the Bible, there is an enormous rift, a split, in God's good creation. Humans are alienated and separated from each other. We humans are even split within ourselves. We often do not experience ourselves as unified persons but as bundles of inner conflicts. And in our attempt to be in control of things ourselves, we are split off from the God who made us and who still loves us. God is like a parent with a tantrum-throwing two-year old. The parent holds the child in his or her arms until the kid's anger is spent and the relationship is restored. That's what God is always doing, embracing us, holding us to himself until we are willing to accept the divine love. God reconciles us to himself. ... In your own life, where do you experience the separation most painfully? In your own life, how do you feel God embracing you and restoring you to relationship?

Sunday, 9/27/09 – Read Ephesians 2:4-10

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: God restores us to relationship with himself. This is a gift, a freely-given act of extravagant love. That's what is meant by the word GRACE. All we have to do is accept it and trust it. Will you trust the grace of God -- God's extravagant, freely-given love? Will you trust it today?

My Faith Journal, September 20, 2009
You Asked for It #3
Nails, Thorns & Tears

What do I hear God saying to me today?

What action do I intend to take this week?

Each day this week, take a few minutes. Begin with PRAYER. Then READ through the Bible passage indicated on the inside of this guide. WRITE down your own thoughts, reactions, observations. ANSWER THE QUESTION to begin connecting the Bible with your life. Use additional paper or your own notebook if you need more space to write.