

**First Fifteen: October 25-29**  
**Scripture for Sunday October 31 – Ruth 3:1-5 & 4:13-17**

**Monday: Psalm 32:1-5**

**Going Deeper:** *“Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be – you get a fresh start, your slate’s wiped clean.”* (Ps 32:1-The Message) The first 5 verses of this Psalm speak deeply into the release we experience when we know we have come clean and told the truth... regardless of the outcome! The truth is always liberating, but how much more so when we know we have been heard and forgiven. We begin this week with words of hope found within the restorative love of God. The Psalmist speaks of the blessedness they have discovered as they risked trusting God by sharing their inner fears, doubt, and sin... and in doing so they discovered God’s amazing grace released them. I suspect you know this to be true as well, but if you are like me, while God’s memory is short, ours tends to hold on to our failures allowing them to continue to haunt us. When we do this the weight and pressure the Psalmist speaks of returns. This week as we move toward a deeper understanding of God’s boundless love, I encourage you to let go of any failures, doubts or fears knowing God has already forgiven you... and trust God’s restorative and healing grace!

**Prayer:** “Amazing Grace how sweet the Sound!” Lord of love I give my self into your love for me. As this new week begins help me know my slate is clean. Help me trust your grace has been given and I can rest in your loving presence. Help me to be attentive and aware this day of how I can share your boundless love with others and help restore them when they have taken a misstep or have stumbled. Amen.

**Tuesday: Romans 5:6-8**

**Going Deeper:** Does one of these three verses stand out more than any other? All three are loaded with meaning and quite possibly cause questions to rise in our mind and heart. But I wonder if one comes off the pages more clearly for you. I read these verses in this moment verse 7 spoke more loudly within my spirit. Paul describes for us in these three short verses the magnitude of God’s love for us. He tells us how far God was and still is willing to go to reach us, and to communicate to each one of us just how important and valued we are to God. This is the foundational truth of our faith... and yet what drew me in as I was reading these verses was Paul’s comments about our willingness to lay aside our desires to help, or care for another. His comment raises the question of how far someone might go to help another; are they willing to sacrifice themselves so another might find what they need. God’s love for us is made clear through Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice, but I wonder if you and I can follow Jesus’ example by choosing today to be open to holding our own ideas, priorities and felt needs more loosely, allowing us to let them go to help another succeed even if it means we make not get what we want or hoped for?

**Prayer:** Our God of wonder, love, and sacrifice... Thank you for your love and how far you went to make sure I knew how important I am and each one of us is to you. Help me to not take your

love and Jesus' sacrifice for granted. Help me to hold what I need more loosely so I can lay my needs aside to lift another up. Help me to be available to others and not solely focused on what I want so I can respond to your leading to love and help another. Thank you, my God of wonder, love, and grace, for this day and all the opportunities you will give me to serve you by serving others. Amen.

### **Wednesday: Luke 15:11-24**

**Going Deeper:** This is a familiar story. It is often referred to as the "Prodigal or Lost Son." Although I wonder if we might also consider the story from the father's side, it then becomes a story about an extravagantly gracious father! It is not possible to separate the father from the son in this story, their lives and their relationship are the story. More than likely you have heard more than one sermon on this parable. You may have also been part of a study group that spent time with it, but I wonder now if you will simply read it again, maybe from a different translation than you typically use. As you do listen for what catches your attention. Is there a word or phrase you did not notice before, or something that raises a new question about the son or the father and their relationship? This parable is one of the foundational teachings on God's restorative grace. The father's extravagance is hard to accept, the son's complete disregard and respect may get under your skin. If it does stay with that and ask yourself what that is about. Although the story does not explicitly say this, it appears the father was waiting and watching in the hope his wayward child would come home. From this I hear an underlying message of patience in this parable as well.

**Prayer:** God, your grace is often hard for me to understand and yet I am so thankful for it. Then when I consider your patience, it makes your grace even more amazing. As I go about the business of this day give me both grace and patience with those around me. Help me to consider your desire is to find all who are lost or reach all who have strayed. Help me remember I have been both one who has lost my way and you waited for me, and I have also been the one who strayed, and you embraced me when I came home. Amen.

### **Thursday: Luke 15:25-32**

**Going Deeper:** Yesterday we considered only half this parable. As I said, you may feel a gnawing anger at both the father's extravagant grace and the younger son's disregard and disrespect. The older son is unable to rejoice in his younger brother's return. He will not join the celebration or even attempt to embrace and understand his father's joy. All he can see is his loss, wondering where is his reward, asking his father why haven't you celebrated with me? But that is not exactly what he asked is it? He wondered why he wasn't given a party with his friends, which is not really the same is it? Where are you in this story? Are you part of the celebration, or are you outside looking in feeling as if the balance of grace just isn't fair? As you read the conclusion of Jesus' parable of the "lost son" have you ever considered which son was lost?

**Prayer:** God of love and mercy, is your grace fair? Is your mercy given to all you ask? What about my efforts, and the work I do for you? Do they not count for something? Lord as I listen

to this parable help me simply receive your grace knowing I have not earned it. Grace is always a gift given, not something to earn. Help me hear the message Jesus sought to teach through both sons and their father whose love simply would not let either of them go. Help me trust you are always with me, and every moment of my life is lived within your presence. Amen.

**Friday: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10**

**Going Deeper:** As I read these words from Paul's letter to these followers of Jesus at Thessalonica my heart is lifted, and my imagination soars. What he is telling them is exactly what I would hope could be said of any of us... That our lives share our faith. Words are no longer needed, the way we interact and respond have become so focused on how we represent Jesus that people experience our faith. It is as if all we do has become infused with God's love, where no matter what we face, challenges, hardship, disappointment, or loss we still live with hope, and our faith leads us to joy! What you and I need to hear is how I believe this happened in this church. I believe their faith was based within their community. In other words, they realized they were not alone, and they created connections to help and support one another. They did not live in isolation, but in deep connections of love and trust with one another. I also believe their lives and their faith were formed from their trust in God's love and grace and God's love and grace had become so real and present for them it changed the way they understood their lives, as well as the lives of their neighbors. I want to echo Paul's words for each of you... *"It is clear to us (me), friends, that God not only loves you very much but also has put his hand on you for something special."* (1 Thessalonians 1:4 – The Message)

**Prayer:** Loving God, my prayer is that my life is becoming a reflection of my faith in you. I ask that this day that your love and grace will be evident in the choices I make, my responses to people and how I interact with them. I ask for grace when I stumble, and the courage to go back and say I am sorry. Help me throughout this day remember I am not alone. Help me to see and create life giving connections with other members of our community of faith so each of us grows stronger and our faith more vibrant. Amen.