Notes on Lectionary Readings - AUGUST 23-29, 2021.

**Tending the Soil of Your Heart for the Fruit of Your Life.
[Extract from Disciplines 2021: Upper Room]

Read Song of Solomon 2:8-13.
Situation** - The poetry of Song of Solomon is thick with romantic imagery, and most scholars agree that these lines mean what they say on the surface; they are written from the author to the beloved.
**Question** - The narrative poetry of Song of Solomon invites us into scripture in a different way than other texts. How does God speak to you through this poetry?
**Prayer** - Lord help me to pay attention to the soil of my heart that I would feed it with the nutrients of Your word so that my own words and actions would grow from that Foundation. Amen.
 **Read Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9.
Situation** - Psalm 45 echoes the refrain of admiration and desire. Such desire is not wrong if it is awakened at the proper time, as the author of Song of Solomon says elsewhere.
**Question** - How do your relationships honour the gift of love?
**Prayer** - God make my tongue like a ready writer. May I be thoughtful with my words choosing to speak life and love into this world. Amen.
 **Read James 1:17-27.
Situation** - James argues that ethical living is living not in word but in deed. True religion is not putting on a show but displaying mercy and controlling the tongue.
**Questions** - When do you find yourself as merely a "bearer" of the word and not a "doer"? What motivates you to act on God's word?
**Prayer** - Lord make me quick to listen to day to you and to the people I encounter throughout the day. Sharpen my ears to hear Your words and grant me an obedient and humble heart, to let Your words do their work in me. Amen.
 **Read Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23.
Situation** - In Mark's Gospel, Jesus rebukes some of the religious leaders on this very account because they talk of obedience to God but do not live it out. What we say and what we do should match. **Questions** - What human traditions or rituals do you tend to make too important?
**Prayer** – Holy Spirit teach me how to search my heart with honesty before you. Help me learn how to cultivate a heart from which true life flows in my words and actions. Amen.

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