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Peace Like a River, by Leif Enger, Grove Press, 2001

Richard McGowan

Butler University, rmcgowan@butler.edu

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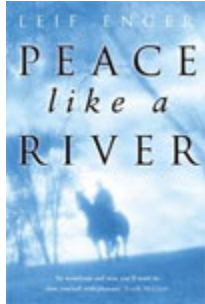
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Recommended Readings



Peace Like a River

by Leif Enger, Grove Press, 2001

Reviewed by Richard J. McGowan

Award-winning *Peace Like a River* is leisurely storytelling at its best. Reuben Land, an asthmatic eleven year-old, recounts his midwestern family and bears witness to faithful love.

Reuben's account of the land is a thing of beauty. No wonder: Leif Enger grew up in Osakis, Minnesota and still lives in Minnesota. Accuracy and affection come natural for the places of his heart.

Those places, as folks with any lick of sense know, are not always geographical. Enger wrote to entertain his family; he gave Reuben asthma to encourage his own asthmatic son. Fittingly, the Lands live in the "timeless arena of family love," as one reviewer said.

Yet, they suffer misfortune. Reuben's mom has abandoned her husband, Jeremiah, and her children. The family endures hateful acts and suffers injustice. Jeremiah loses his job. Reuben and his younger sister assume adult responsibility. The problem of evil also appears in the villainous characters of Jape Waltzer and Valdez.

Other characters demonstrate that it is good to "Love your enemy," putting faith to the test.

Nonetheless, Jeremiah's faith remains steadfast. And what faith it is: Reuben witnesses his father's miraculous acts-mending torn leather of a saddle, walking on air while praying, healing the man who fired him. Reuben's role as witness is the central theme, yet Reuben cannot 'press belief.' The book's last line: "Make of it what you will."

Peace Like a River meanders tenderly and engages the heart. Enger understands the everyday miracle of love.

- Richard McGowan is Instructor of Business Ethics at Butler University.