

Order of Worship for October 9, 2022 (8:30 AM)

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: “*How Firm a Foundation*” – Hymn #728

R: In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man’s name was Elimelek, his wife’s name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. Now Elimelek, Naomi’s husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

P: Lord we may not face the tragedy of Naomi, losing her husband and both of her sons, but each of us faces difficulties—lost jobs, aging parents, tough professors, rude neighbors, nagging pains,

C: Lord, have mercy on us!

P: But do we see the pains other people suffer?

C: Lord, it is so easy for us to think only we have it bad and fail to see what goes wrong on other peoples’ lives.

R: When Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of His people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back, each of you, to your mother’s home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.” Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud and said to her, “We will go back with you to your people.” But Naomi said, “Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD’s hand has turned against me!” At this they wept aloud again.

R: Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. “Look,” said Naomi, “your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.” But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so

severely, if even death separates you and me.” When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem.

P: Ruth stayed with Naomi, out of love for her, but beyond that because she looked to the God of Naomi.

C: But are we looking to You, O God, or do we only look when we want and You don't give it to us?

All: LORD, forgive us for not looking in faith to You.

R: So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, “Is this Naomi?” She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?” So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

P: Ruth stayed with Naomi even though her future as an old widow was bleak. In this way God provided for Naomi, as He provides for us. In his Son, Christ Jesus, God has provided for us. He turns us from “Mara,” which means “bitter,” to “Naomi,” “she rejoices!” Jesus came to take bitterness of our sin on the cross so that we can be filled with the joy of God's presence. In Jesus' name Your sins are forgiven!

C: Thanks be to God!

P: Move us now, Lord, to be Ruth to others, so that we do not leave thee alone in suffering.

C: Grant us the courage to risk suffering with other people. Amen.

Entrance Psalm:

P: Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised

C: in the city of our God.

P: My soul makes its boast in the LORD;

C: let the humble hear and be glad.

P: Oh, magnify the LORD with me,

C: and let us exalt His name together!

P: I sought the LORD, and He answered me

C: and delivered me from all my fears.

P: When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears

C: and delivers them out of all their troubles.

All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: Your testimonies are righteous forever;

C: give me understanding that I may live.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray. Almighty God, You show mercy to Your people in all their troubles. Grant us always to recognize Your goodness, give thanks for Your compassion, and praise Your holy name; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

Hymn of Praise: *“Voices Raised to You We Offer”* - **Hymn #795**

Holy Gospel – Luke 17:11-19

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 17th chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: Now on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As He was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy[a] met Him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” When He saw them, He said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked Him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” Then He said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C. Praise to You, O Christ.

Children’s Message (8:30 AM)

Sermon Hymn: *“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”* – **Hymn 790**

Sermon: *At God’s Direction* – **Ruth 1:1-19**

While we think of the Bible as one book, it’s actually a collection of different writings. It contains different styles of writing, different genres of writing, written over 1500 years or so. There are the poetry books, like Psalms. There are the epistles, the letters of Paul and others, where we have to keep in mind that we’re reading other peoples’ mail. There are the historical books, like Kings and Chronicles. There are the prophetic writings, the words of prophets not written on subway walls, but on scrolls for our instruction.

Then there’s Ruth. It somewhat fits in the historical books, but can look at first glance like a romantic comedy or fairy tale. Commentators have referred to it as a short story or novella. It seems like a light story with a happy ending in the midst of books that are full of more death and destruction.

Ruth is unique in several ways. It’s one of two books in the Old Testament named after a woman, with the other being Esther. Those two books are also among the few books of the

Bible that don't show us God at work directly. That doesn't mean God isn't present. It means that behind the scenes God is at work, orchestrating events that would lead to salvation and liberation and joy. These books show things working at God's direction.

Stories begin before they begin, and so the book of Ruth begins by setting the scene for us. The story takes place in the time when the judges ruled, in a time after the Israelites had been brought by God into the Promised Land but before King David. It could be a libertarian paradise with no centralized authority, but it also meant that "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). There had been famine in the land that was supposed to be flowing with milk and honey, and Bethlehem, which means "house of bread," had no bread, so Naomi and her husband left home to look for greener pastures, in one of the neighboring nations that the Israelites were not supposed to associate with.

Then tragedy strikes Elimelech dies before he ever sees any grandchildren, even before he sees his sons married off. And then, the sons die too. We don't know what happened, but maybe they just finally lived up to their names, which meant sick and wasting away. Naomi resolves to return to Israel, to Bethlehem, but wants her Moabite daughters in law to stay. Orpah agrees to stay, but Ruth doesn't. She promises to stay with her mother-in-law, even though it means leaving all that she knows behind.

God isn't obviously present, but God's fingerprints are present throughout the story. Once they make it back to Bethlehem, Naomi and Ruth are forced to live off of the kindnesses of strangers. It just so happens that Ruth finds a farmer who still keeps God's commands to not harvest all the way to the edge of the fields, but who lets the poor harvest from the leftovers of his field. The farmer also just happens to be an honorable man who doesn't take advantage of the exotically beautiful Ruth. The farmer also just happens to be a relative of Elimelech, who is fairly well to do. And Ruth catches his eye, not just because of her exotic looks, but also because of how she had taken care of Naomi. Word had gotten around town of how faithful she'd been to Naomi, even when she had no reason to do so. And so Boaz, the farmer, gives special orders to his workers to make sure she gets all that she needs, and to make sure that they don't harass her.

After Ruth comes home and tells all that happened that day, Naomi sees the opportunity that has presented itself. She sends Ruth to Boaz, and Boaz ends up taking on the role of the kinsman-redeemer, a position described in the book of Leviticus for just such a situation, to redeem the debts and provide for the welfare of the family being redeemed. Ruth and Boaz end up marrying, and they live happily ever after. We're not directly told it, but we're led to assume, led to believe that all of this happened at God's direction.

That's often the way we see God at work in our lives. We don't get a voice booming from heaven or a burning bush. We don't get a giant arrow in the clouds telling us where to go. We just trust that God is with us, and see as we look back how he was guiding us all along.

For years, one of the most popular broadcasts on the radio was the commentary of Paul Harvey.

The segment he was most famous for was *The Rest of the Story*. He would begin by recounting a tale of a poor child, or a struggling young adult. Often, only first names would be used, and the audience would be lulled into a sort of complacency. The segment always ended with Paul revealing that the story was actually about some famous person, like W.C. Fields or Doc Holliday or John Wilkes Booth. He would then give his famous tagline; “Now you know the rest of the story.”

The story of Ruth is full of those connections. It is a story full of twists and turns, of struggle and joy. At first glance, it seems like a simple story of boy meets girl, of a happily ever after that starts with us wondering how they could ever be happy. When we look deeper, though, when we know the rest of the story, we see things happening at God’s direction. We see God at work in ways we never expected.

The book of Ruth concludes with a brief genealogy, that her son was named Obed, who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David. And in the Old Testament, that’s where it ends. But in the beginning of the New Testament, the beginning of the Gospel according to Matthew, that genealogy continues until “Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ” (Matthew 1:16). Through Boaz and through his son, God provided a kinsman-redeemer for Naomi and Ruth. But through them, in that great list of how God had worked in the lives of ordinary people from Abraham to Joseph and Mary, God provided a redeemer for us all. A redeemer who does more than provide for the earthly needs of widows. A redeemer who has redeemed us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Not by agreeing to take responsibility for us, not with silver or gold, but with His holy, precious blood, and his innocent suffering and death.

And that’s the rest of the story. Because of that redemption, because of what Jesus, the Son of David, has done for us, we are not bitter, but full of delight. The delight that we, who once had nothing and no one to depend on, now have been saved and given more than we could imagine, more than we could ever deserve or earn on our own. And like Naomi, we can look back on our lives, and see things that happened at God’s direction. We see that God has been with us all along.

Apostle’s Creed (inside back cover of hymnal)

Stewardship Message

Sharing Our Ministry

Prayers

R: So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves

you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.” Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

P: Lord God, You restored Naomi through Ruth and your kinsman Boaz, who took Ruth to be His wife.

C: You have restored us through Your Son, Jesus Christ who became our kinsman and redeemed us by His death on the cross.

Lord’s Prayer

Closing Prayer:

P: Almighty God, source of every blessing, Your generous goodness comes to us anew every day. By the work of Your Holy Spirit lead us to acknowledge Your goodness, give thanks for Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing: (Pastor)

C: Amen.

**Closing Hymn: “O God,
Our Help in Ages Past” –
Hymn #733**

Postlude:

