

Daily Devotional, September 1, 2020 Growing in the Faith & Love of Ruth

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.” Ruth 1:16-17 (NIV)

The Biblical story of Ruth is a beautiful story of kindness and love. The book is named for Ruth, but it begins and ends with Naomi, a woman from Bethlehem. The story begins with Naomi and her small family traveling to Moab to escape famine in the land of Israel. While they are there, her two sons marry women from Moab. But then Naomi’s husband dies and shortly after, her two sons die as well. After this, Naomi decides that she will return home to Bethlehem and urges her daughters-in-law to remarry and begin their lives again in Moab, which is their own home. But one of the daughters-in-law, Ruth, insists on going with her.

Naomi found herself making many changes in her life. She faced many hardships and had to make decisions based on the situations that happened beyond her control. Her family first left their home because of a famine. Then there was the loss of her husband and sons, and finally a decision to return home alone. But then, Ruth makes sacrifices her own good to offer her support to Naomi and go with her. Both of these women had faced loss and grief, and the kindness of Ruth stepping forward to walk this journey with her mother-in-law, by making this deep commitment, is one that we admire.

We might think this would be the sense of hope that Naomi might need in this time of deep loss. But when they arrive in Bethlehem and the women of the town come to greet them, she responds by saying, ***“Don’t call me Naomi,” she told them. “Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty.” Ruth 1:20-21 (NIV)***

Naomi has suffered and continues to find herself in a deep place of hurt and grief. Naomi didn’t desire for her life to have all the changes it did. We sympathize with Naomi and might even relate to her honesty for the feelings she has about all that she has lost. There are times when we may also face times such as these in which we are angry with our own circumstances and a new way of life that we did not ask for. But as your life continues, and as we see as this story continues, God is always with us. God never leaves us or abandons us, even when we may be angry and blame God for our bad luck, just as Naomi did.

Throughout the rest of this story, we see how Ruth is able to acquire food for them and meets Boaz, a respected relative of their family. He was a man of worth and honor. Through the customs of those times, he loves and marries Ruth, as the kinsman redeemer. The book ends with Ruth giving birth to a son, named Obed, who was the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David. Through this Moab women who accepts the faith in the one true God through her mother-in law, Naomi, a great nation will be born as a result of the actions of this faithful pair of inseparable women.

The final scene of the story is this baby boy in the arms of Naomi with the neighborhood women referring to the child as Naomi’s. This symbolizes how Naomi has gained something new, even when she lost so much. This story truly moves from emptiness to fullness and from death to life. And along the way, we can see how the kindness and support of others, and the faithfulness of God, helped Naomi as her emotions shift from bitterness and anger to fullness and joy. We may not be able to change the past, but with the help of God, we can move forward into the future and find strength and hope in Him.

I encourage you all to read the book of Ruth. It is only four short chapters, but such a powerful story of love and faith. How often do you feel that your thoughts and questions about God should be left out of a close relationship? How often do you share your unedited thoughts about God with your family or friends? Sharing openly about our relationship with God can bring depth and intimacy to our relationship with others.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, what a comfort to know that You are our never-failing help in times of trouble. Thank You for the book of Ruth and the many lessons it teaches us. I pray that I may remain in the center of Your perfect will for my life, but that when things begin to turn against me, I would quickly call to You in those times of trouble. Thank You that nothing in life is so terrible that You do not have an answer and I pray that my faith would continue to grow and mature and to seek you in all things. This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.