

Worship at Home November 3rd, 2024, with Mary Winchcombe

A gathering prayer

Lord, you welcome us into your family,
no matter who we are or where we are from.
We come from scattered lives and separate
places.

We come as your children.

We come as forgiven sinners.

We come, loved and treasured,
to worship you, **the God of us all.**

STF 611 Brother, sister let me serve you

(There is a good video from UCPC Upper Clyde Parish Church)

1. Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

2. We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

3. I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

4. I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh, I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow,
till we've seen this journey through.

5. When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

6. Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

Readings: Ruth 1:1-18. Mark 12:28-34

Reflection:

Most people like a good love story and the book of Ruth has got all the ingredients- young girl meets young man and they marry; tragedy strikes- the young man, his father and his brother all die; but eventually there's happiness (aided and abetted by a scheming mother-in-law!!)

But it must be more than a good story to have been included in Scripture. There must be an important message for its readers too.

In this reflection I have gone beyond our reading into Chapter 2.

Israel experienced a famine and Elimelech and Naomi, who were living in Bethlehem decided to move to the neighbouring country of Moab, a country steeped in heathen practices, together with their 2 sons. The boys eventually married girls from Moab, Orpah and Ruth.

But disaster struck - first Elimelech died and later both his sons died too, leaving Naomi, a widow in a foreign land. She hears that things have improved in her homeland and decides to return.

She encourages her daughters-in-law to stay in their homeland and find themselves new husbands. Being a widow was a vulnerable situation to be in, but both girls decide to go with Naomi, Orpah eventually stayed in Moab, but Ruth was adamant she wanted to be with Naomi and put her faith in Naomi's God. Her words have become famous "Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God."

They returned to Israel, poor with no means of support and no husbands to care for and protect them. Ruth was also a foreigner from a land which had once been at war with Israel. Starvation was a real possibility.

But, under the religious laws of the Israelite people, anyone who had fallen on hard times had to be provided for. There was a law that reapers in the fields should leave a portion of the crop to be collected by the needy, if they missed a bit, they were not to go back to it.

It was Harvest time and Ruth was able to glean a little food from the fields.

And this is the first message of the story – concern for the poor and underprivileged is shown to be part of the nature of God.

Before long the field's owner Boaz noticed Ruth. He sent for her and told her, "I've heard of the marvellous things you've done for your mother-in-law" (2:11). But Boaz knew it was worthless wishing someone well, and doing nothing about it, so he told his foreman to make sure that bundles of corn were "accidentally" left behind for her to glean.

This is the second message of the story – simply that God expects us to translate our good intentions into action, expressed by the giving of our talents, time and possessions to those less fortunate than ourselves.

Boaz demonstrates this by going far beyond what the law required of him in his generosity. For us too God's provision often comes through the generosity of others. We in our turn are to bless others by our generosity – we have a responsibility to keep the momentum of love going. Naomi told Ruth not to stray from the field owned by Boaz. She was quick to recognize Boaz as a close relative of her dead husband. A close relative was expected to marry a widow and provide for her on behalf of the deceased husband, thereby redeeming her from poverty.

This brings me to the final message in the story. It points forward in time to the greatest ever redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus died on the cross, he redeemed us. He bought back we who were lost; not just by paying money or giving possessions, but literally by paying with his life. He made it possible for those in sin's slavery to be freed and returned to God's family. Jesus is the supreme example of a redeemer. Just as Ruth was brought into her new family, by the generous act of a relative, so we too are set free and adopted into God's family. How great is that?

There is one final twist in the story, and I had not known this.

Ruth was the great-grandmother of King David. And Jesus was of David's line which means she was a direct ancestor of Jesus. Isn't that marvellous.

Prayers:

Gracious God we bring to you our broken world, so full of injustice and exploitation, suffering and sorrow, hatred and division. We pray for all who work for change; all who strive to bring help and healing, hope and wholeness.

Loving God bring healing and renewal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

The Lord's prayer

Hymn: Go Forth and Tell

1. Go forth and tell! O church of God, awake!
God's saving news to all the nations take:
proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour, Lord and King,
that all the world his worthy praise may sing.

2. Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;
he will in grace respond to all who call;
how shall they call if they have never heard
the gracious invitation of his word?

3. Go forth and tell! where still the darkness
lies;
in wealth or want, the sinner surely dies:
give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,
a love like yours which cares for all mankind.

4. Go forth and tell! the doors are open wide;
share God's good gifts, let no one be denied;
live out your life as Christ your Lord shall
choose,
your ransomed powers for his sole glory use.

5. Go forth and tell! O church of God, arise!
Go in the strength which Christ your Lord
supplies;
go till all nations his great name adore and
serve him, Lord and King for evermore!

Blessing:

Lord, send us out in your name to serve the world and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Send us out in faith and hope that we may be channels of your grace to all. **Amen**