

**Harringay United Church-Baptist
Sunday August 7, 2011.**

Loyalty pays

Ruth 1-2; 4:13-17

Introduction:

In the pursuit of learning from the great women of the Old Testament, we will look at a unique woman who was outside the camp but got herself in the camp and not only that, she was the centre of the camp because through her generations God redeemed the whole world unto Himself.

She was not a Jewess but a Moabitess; she was a widow who came home with the widow mother in-law and an alien in Bethlehem. So all her credentials are nothing to write home about.

But she was a woman who was deeply in love even though her husband had died, she still love everything that he stood for, his mother, his land and his God. She was a woman who stood by her marriage vows, for better for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health till death do us part. She even went beyond death do them part, she did not allow death to part them; she followed her widowed mother in-law.

With a serious look at her situation, what would Naomi offer her? Absolutely nothing and Naomi realised this when she said in Ruth 1:12-13 "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 gone out against me!"

This is truly a realistic human thought and feeling but with God all things are possible, nothing is impossible with God. Where there is no way he will make a highway, from the desert he will make springs of wells. That is our God.

Ruth was very loyal to her husband, his family and his God and she was rewarded for her loyalty. Whatever situation you may find yourself today, I believe God wants you to see Him with the eyes of Ruth who saw something unique out of nothing; I believe that He wants you to take the steps of Ruth to go to where others would not want to go and stick with what people will not accept.

Let us see the ingredients of Ruth action.

1. Living by faith:

They arrived in Bethlehem at the Barley harvest which is around March/April. Ruth took the initiative to go and glean from the farm. She must have known that the law permits people like her to glean from any farm (Lev. 19:-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-22). Definitely she was not an idle woman and God will always bless people who work hard. A Latin proverb says, 'providence assists not the idle' or 'heaven helps those who help themselves'. You cannot be idle and ask the blessing of God, you must get up and find something to do.

Living by faith means to take God at His word and then act on it. Faith without works is dead. Ruth believed the God of her husband that He is Jehovah Jireh, she acted on that, got out of the comfort of her home and the Lord directed her path.

The righteous shall live by faith so the Bible says Romans 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38.

Few weeks ago as I was standing in front of my office, a young Christian lad came to me and ask if I can find him a job. I asked him what did he read, he said business or so and I ask what kind of job and he replied anything. My heart was moved and prayed that the Lord will provide for him as I cannot help him. I like his spirit and I believe God will reward him.

You may be in dare straight like Ruth, you may be a stranger like her, but your name is permanently engraved in God's palm, He will not forget you, neither will He forsake you nor leave you.

2. Living by the grace of God

When she left home she was looking for a field of someone who will show her grace (unmerited favour). As a woman, poor, widow and an alien, she could not have claims on anyone because she was the lowest of the social ladder of her time and no one would associate with her.

But because she was hardworking, had faith in God and was living in the grace of God, God directed her to Boaz who happened to be a relative of her late husband and who is a kinsman redeemer. That was not a chance or accident but a divine ordering of her steps (Pro. 16:9) God's providential working in our lives is not on wonderful, it is a delight and a mystery.

Boaz whose name means 'in him is strength' was a man of good standing, rich and respectable in Bethlehem. He was the God's provision to turn Ruth and Naomi's situation around.

Boaz was the channel of Ruth's blessing. So also each and every one of us has a channel by which God blesses us. All what we should ask is that God to direct us to the channel of blessing He has marked for us.

I pray that God will lead you to the place and people who will turn your situation around; whom God will use to bring your misery to an end; whom God will use to bring your mourning into joy and your sorrow into dancing. This can only be possible if we live by faith in the God of miracles.

Ruth's first day glean was about 30lbs which is about 16kg which will last both of them for almost 2 weeks, what a wonderful turn around.

There's no doubt that she would be nervous to work with strangers and more nervous when she realised that the owner of the farm arrived but God caused her to find favour first with Boaz's workers, then from the master himself.

I believe favour is coming your way soon. Just live in hope. Hope is a vital ingredient for victorious living, expectation is its partner. Normal Vincent Peale says 'expect the best and get it' in his book 'the power of positive thinking'. We cannot be negative and expect a positive result. No one can be faithless and receive from God and not one can live in despair and expect a bright tomorrow.

Yes God wants to bless us, He wants to change our situation around but we have a duty and an obligation to live by faith in Him; live in His grace and anticipate that He will come to our rescue.

Before He changes our situations, He wants to change our hearts. If our situations change and our hearts remain the same, then we will be worse off because that does not conform to His purpose. His purpose for you and for me is to make us conform to the image of His son (Rom. 8:29). Christlike character is the divine goal for God's children.

3. Living in hope 2:17-23

Naomi was in despair, she blamed God for her misfortune but Ruth saw her situation differently. She did not focus on her past and present circumstances but she looked ahead to the God who is Almighty and capable of doing the impossible. She was hopeful in the face of all odds, she did not despair rather she expected the best and she got it. She took the right step which was directed by God.

A poem says: 'Look at self and be distressed, Look at others and be depressed, but Look at Jesus and you will be blessed.'

And this is what most of us do. Make the right decision today, make a U turn look unto Jesus and you will be blessed

By faith Ruth looked unto God, moved in His grace and hoped that all will be well and she was rewarded. She was redeemed and blessed.

Her first day gleans was about 16kg which was enough for almost two weeks for both of them. Then Naomi's song and language changed from that of despair to hope, that of misery to blessing. Your own song too will change in the name of Jesus.

Something special about Ruth

Ruth against all odds decided to go with her mother in-law.

Against no hope, she made a gamble to trust the God of Israel.

With faith, Ruth saw beyond her circumstances she aligned herself with the God of the universe who is all knowing, all powerful and who is present everywhere. The God who can do all things and with whom nothing is impossible..

Ruth was not only loyal to Naomi her mother in-law, she was loyal to Naomi's God.

And she was not disappointed, she was rewarded and she got a full reward. Ruth 2:12

And finally Boaz married her and she bore him a son named Obed who was the great-great grand father of David the ancestor of Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the whole world. This was the reward of her loyalty. Be loyal to your God, be loyal to your spouse and be loyal to your neighbour.

Bible students have seen in Boaz a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ in His relationship to His bride, the church. Like Ruth, the lost sinner is outside the covenant family of God, bankrupt, with no claim on God's mercy. But God took the initiative and provided a way for us to enter His family through faith in Jesus Christ."

What did Boaz do?

1. He took the initiative: 2:8 - God took the initiative of coming into our situation
2. He spoke to Ruth 2:8 -
3. He promised to protect Ruth and provide for her 2:9, 14-16
4. He encouraged Ruth 2:10-13
5. He saw to it that she was satisfied 2:14,18

Conclusion:

Do you feel that you have lost something too precious? Do you feel hopeless and now way of escape? I want to assure you that favour is coming your way. I say this with high degree of confidence because of what I know about the God I am speaking on His behalf.

He has said that he will never leave us nor forsake us (Deut. 31:6, 8; Jos. 1:5 & Heb 13:5).

He also said in 2 Corinthians 1:20 "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God."

Isaiah 55:10-11 "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

I encourage you to have faith in the living God; live in His grace and hope that he will do what He promised to do and all these promises abound in the scripture some of which I have just read to you.

Be loyal to your God, to your spouse, friend, employer and neighbours because loyalty pays.

The story of Ruth started with death her husband and calamity but ended with joy, the birth of Obed. Your own story too no matter how bad it may be will also end with joy and gladness in Jesus' name.

The song that came to mind is:

My God is a miracle God x4
 He has never failed
 He will never fail
 He will do what He says He will do
 He will do what He promise to do

I can see Him working in my favour
 I can see Him bringing in my miracles
 I can see Him fighting all my battles

He will do what He says He will do
 He will do what He promise to do

FAVOUR IS COMING YOUR WAY.