



One Page Sermon

By Rev. Robb McCoy

December 8, 2024

We can't go alone

Recap of sermon from December 8, 2024

Scripture: Ruth 1

Ruth is not typically a story we read in Advent (although we did last year during our “Grandmothers” sermon series because Ruth is mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew as one of four women in the genealogy of Jesus). While we call it the story of Ruth, the first chapter is really the story of Naomi, and Naomi’s story is full of so much grief. Most of our thoughts and attention regarding the book of Ruth focus on their incredible friendship, on Ruth’s meet-cute with Boaz, and the intrigue around their romance. It is easy to pass over Naomi without much consideration and focus on Ruth the Moabite who saves herself and becomes grandmother to King David.

Naomi however, is a Job-like character. Like Job, her world falls apart in swift and dramatic fashion. Like Job, she has friends who enter the story. But Job’s story is a long argument over why these terrible things happened to him. Naomi’s story is one of survival, action, and loyalty.

In the opening verses Naomi is forced to be a refugee. She and her husband have to flee Bethlehem (literally the “houses of bread”) because of a famine. Settling in a foreign land, her two sons take wives from Moab. Then in quick succession her husband and her two sons die. We are left with three widows, one from Bethlehem and two from Moab.

It is a devastating story and Naomi is left in an extremely vulnerable state. A widow with no sons, no family, in a foreign land was in grave danger, and it is here that I want to pause and reflect. It is important that, in this story of love and friendship, we make room for the fear, grief, and danger that Naomi faced.

It is important that, in this season leading up to Christmas, we make room for fear and grief as well. It is not often that we make room for these things. We make room for parties and shopping lists, and special baked goods, and presents, and decorations, but we often move too fast for the financial burdens, the family anxieties, the social upheaval to catch up.

If we slow down too much, the anxiety will have a chance to catch us. But if we stop and wait, allow ourselves to breathe, we may find that something else is pursuing us in this hectic season.



“Binding Braids” by Nicolette Penarenda, sanctifiedart.org

Naomi faced unimaginable loss. She lost her husband, her sons, her home—twice. She lost any semblance of stability or a hope for the future. But what she didn’t lose was Ruth. She had a friend. She had a companion, and it was revealed that she did not have to face any of it alone.

This, my friends, is the story of Christmas. You don’t have to go alone. Far too often we try. We think we can fight our way through it. We avoid asking for directions. We think we can figure it out, but let the story of Ruth and Naomi remind us that we don’t have to go alone. Ruth and Naomi also remind us that traditional pairings aren’t the only way to go through life. This is not a romantic comedy—Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan aren’t the stars of the show.

Friendship, loyalty, community can come in many forms. Eventually Ruth and Naomi make their way together back to Bethlehem, and the story unfolds as they find more community. In the meantime, we can be a church of Ruth and Naomis.

We can build a place where people find friendship. We can create a space for the grief and anxiety of life to breathe, but not overpower us. We can create a space where we sing and dance, cry and shout, celebrate and eat. We can hold each other’s babies, eat each other’s food, and share in the joy of the journey. In this journey toward the manger that we call Advent, please remember: “You are a blessing,” and “We can’t go alone.”

**Next Week: Third Sunday of Advent
Luke 3, John the Baptist**