



7th June 2020 – TRINITY SUNDAY - Bible Month : Ruth 1

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**'I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh'
COME, HOLY SPIRIT**

A prayer

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us;
may the words of our mouths
and the thoughts of our hearts
be acceptable in Your sight
O Lord, our God. AMEN

Hymn

Read StF 398 / H&P 326– There's a spirit in the air

As we prepare to read the story of Ruth, deep in the Old Testament, dwell on the words:
'When a stranger's not alone, where the homeless find a home, praise the love that Christ revealed, living, working in our world.'

Ruth 1

Naomi Loses Her Husband and Sons

1 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. **2** 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.

3 Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. **4** They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, **5** both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband....

Naomi and Ruth Return to Bethlehem

6 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. **7** 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.

8 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. **9** 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 **10** and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

11 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?"

12 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— **13** 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!"

14 At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

15 "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

16 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

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people and your God my God. ¹⁷ 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.” ¹⁸ When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

¹⁹ So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, “Can this be Naomi?”

²⁰ “Don’t call me Naomi,^[b]” she told them. “Call me Mara,^[c] because the Almighty^[d] has made my life very bitter. ²¹ I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted^[e] me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.”

²² So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

Thought

In a week when we’ve seen some lockdown restrictions lifted, and we’re still seeing hundreds dying of Covid-19 each day, and many thousands still being infected, we can share a concern about how severe this virus is, and how vulnerable we all are. We remember especially, all those, like NAOMI in the story, who’ve lost husbands / wives / grandparents / children during this pandemic – we pray God would be close to all who are grieving, and all who suffer or serve today.

In a week when we’ve seen thousands protesting peacefully across USA for racial equality and justice for all (and some, in the minority, let their built-up anger spill over into violence), we speak, pray and act for peace, equality and justice, and wonder at how ELIMELECK and the family were accepted, or otherwise, in Moab, or how RUTH might be accepted back in Bethlehem, and we pray for all refugees and asylum seekers, many of whom make treacherous

journeys in the hope of a better life, and arrive having lost loved ones along the way.

I am inspired by RUTH’s commitment to NAOMI, and to Naomi’s God and people. It is a commitment of faith, too, fully adhering to the God of Israel, and to the Israelites in Bethlehem. Surely Ruth has experienced God through the family she has married into. Her words are like a marriage vow, or like our Methodist Covenant prayer – and although Naomi is feeling so embittered towards God and her circumstances, yet Ruth pledges the whole of her future to seeing things work out for them both.

‘This, this is the God we adore – our faithful, unchangeable friend.

Whose LOVE is as strong as His power - and neither knows measure nor end’.

Quietly consider the beauty, majesty, humility, emotion and commitment of Ruth’s words to Naomi, then pray:

We are no longer our own, Lord.

We are Yours and You are ours.

We are no longer our own, Lord.

We belong to one another, and together we are one.

We are no longer our own, Lord.

We are created and re-created by You, Father

We are saved, healed, restored by You, Jesus

We are filled, refreshed, equipped by You, Spirit

I am no longer my own

but Yours. AMEN.

A prayer for others

O God, our Creator,

Your loving kindness goes on and on,

bring peace, unity and justice to the streets and

communities across America and in every place on earth.

Your kingdom come – Your will be done.

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O Jesus, our Redeemer,
Your loving kindness goes on and on,
bring healing, restoration and hope to all who are
unwell in body, mind and spirit, today.
Your kingdom come – Your will be done.

O Spirit, our Helper,
Your loving kindness goes on and on,
guide all in government and leadership,
lead all across the life of our churches,
show us Your truth – the truth that sets us free.
Your kingdom come – Your will be done.

Father, Son, Spirit, three-in-one, Holy Trinity
Your loving kindness goes on and on,
bless all our relationships
family, friends, neighbours, church family,
with the same strength of love, equality and grace
which You model for us,
and which You enable us to experience.
Your kingdom come – Your will be done -
here and everywhere
now and always.
AMEN.

Offering

If you're unable to give directly through your bank
(Standing Order), please consider placing to one side
your usual offering to be made as a full offering when
we can once again join together to worship.

Hymn

Read StF 51 / H&P 66 – Great is Thy Faithfulness

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above...

*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see
All I have needed Thy hand has provided.
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

Closing Prayer

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you
wherever He may send you
May He guide you through the wilderness
protect you through the storm
May He bring you home rejoicing
In the wonders He has shown you
May He bring you home rejoicing
once again into our doors.



Naomi and Ruth, and Orpah

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