Ruth 1:16c Your people will be my people and your God my God.

It is a moving story isn’t it? This story of Elimelech and his wife Naomi with their two sons. As you heard in our reading, they left the land of Israel for the country of Moab because of a famine. It appears that even once the famine was over they determined to stay in the land. And then it appears that tragedy upon tragedy befalls this family.

The first tragedy was when Elimelech died. Don’t know what he died from but the bottom line is that he left behind his wife and two sons. At a time and day when the husband was the mainstay and bread winner of the family the loss of this husband no doubt brought some hard times on this family. But that wasn’t all.

Eventually the next thing happened. The two boys married Moabite women! I know, that doesn’t sound all that bad, but you have to understand this was something absolutely contrary to the law of God for God’s people. So clearly, in the absence of their father, without the guidance, the spiritual guidance of their father, the boys seem to easily cast aside the tenants of their faith. That, Dear people, is a tragedy too. Maybe it is just a religious or spiritual tragedy, but nevertheless souls are affected and hurt.

And then we are told that after about ten years the two boys died. What is interesting to note is that at this point the text tells us that Naomi is now aware of the fact that the famine in Bethlehem is over so Naomi determines that she will go home. That makes sense. Perhaps Naomi’s father or mother were still alive or perhaps she had a brother or two that she felt would take care of her. That’s the way it was then. She probably has the house that was initially left behind. It is clear that Naomi desires to return to her home town and there live out her days.

So off Naomi goes. Please note that at first her two daughters-in-law travel with her. From the knowledge we have of the times such a thing would have been a normal way to do things. It would have been normal for the two girls to accompany their mother-in-law on a part of the journey in order to say good-bye. And that’s what happens. Along the way, Naomi stops and bids farewell to both girls, urging them to return to their families with the hopes that in doing so, they might once again marry and be happy. By the way, did you notice that there are no children involved here? Had there been children, I believe the circumstances and this history would be entirely different. No way would Naomi leave her grandchildren and no way would the families of the Moabite women have let their descendants go off to another country. I mention that because it is one of the subtle ways that you begin to realize that God is at work here.

So here are Naomi and the two women and good-byes are being said. Naomi encourages them to stay behind, really to stay with their families. Naomi’s words are gracious. It is clear she loves these women as she speaks very kindly and positively about them and their roles as wives to her sons. It is clear that Naomi is asking God’s blessing upon them for the kindnesses they have shown in their lives. Note that Orpah is going to return home and that Ruth insists on staying with Naomi. It is here that we wish to dig a bit deeper and come to a greater understanding of this history of the Lord. Our theme will be: **THE FAITH OF RUTH. 1st. It is selfless. 2nd. It is about God. 3rd. It is blessed of God.**

I hope you paid attention to this opening history of Ruth, well okay, of Naomi but recognize that this history is really about Ruth. I think the first thing you see about Ruth is important. Although Naomi gives Ruth the chance to go home and be comfortable in what she knows, Moabite culture, yet Ruth determines, desires to stay with Naomi. Every wonder why? I believe it is because Ruth is shown to be a rather selfless person and I believe that selflessness is the result of the faith in the true God that Ruth has acquired.

Did you catch some other important things in this text? First, did you hear how when it was discovered the famine was over, Naomi gives credit and glory to God. The text said, **“When she heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people…”** Clearly Naomi is a woman of faith, a woman who sees the hand of God in what is going on. And even as Naomi is saying good-bye to her daughter-in-laws, note that she uses the Lord’s name to wish blessing and goodness upon them. So clearly Naomi and her family have been role models in sharing the faith of Israel with those around them. But did you notice that Naomi’s faith has a problem toward the end? When she is saying good-bye Naomi makes a few startling statements. First she says she is “too old” to get remarried but that is also an admission that she is perhaps too old to take care of herself. Next Naomi makes this startling statement, **“It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord’s hand has gone out against me!”**

I have always found that one of the saddest confessions there is in Scripture. It is really a statement of despair. Naomi believes the Lord is against her. I can understand why. She has lost her husband, and then in the next ten years she loses her two sons. Now she considers herself too old to be able to take care of herself and if you understand this culture right you would grasp that Naomi is going home to kind of throw herself at the mercy of whatever extended family she has left because that is the only way she really has to provide for herself. It is clear, Naomi is in distress. Not just physical, but she is in spiritual distress and needs help. That’s where Ruth’s faith and selflessness truly shines forth.

Ruth determines to go with her mother-in-law. I can tell you Ruth grasps the implications here. She is going to be the one to take care of this woman. She is the one who will need to provide and help her mother-in-law in everything. And if you know the history of Ruth as it unfolds in this wonderful book, then you know that what I have just told you is true. Ruth ends up going out to the fields to glean what was dropped and left over to provide food. Again that’s the way it was done. The poor in Israel could go out to the fields and pick up what was dropped or left over in order to provide for themselves and it is clear that is exactly what Ruth is doing. So it is clear, that Ruth in total selflessness, determines to go with Naomi because she grasps that Naomi needs her at this crucial time. Ruth is selfless in her faith.

Of course, I can say that doesn’t surprise me. If you look at the speech that Ruth gave for staying with Naomi, don’t miss the central reason for it all….**”Your God will be my God!”** Here is this Moabite woman who has been brought to faith and she was not going to abandon that faith or that God. Why?

I think Ruth has a wonderful and a great faith. Again we can grasp that the family, her mother-in-law and her husband helped her to understand the God of Israel. No doubt they spoke of how the Lord God has made such wonderful promises and how their faith always pointed to the promised Messiah who would come and be the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. Ruth heard these truths and it is clear she believed these truths so much, that she does not want to return to her Moabite roots and the false religion they practiced. She wants to be a part of God’s family. She wants to be a part of Israel and the grace of God she has learned to know. So here is the next thing to know about Ruth. She acts and moves out of faith in the true and only God.

And what a faith it was. You see, I believe Ruth had a better grasp of the grace and mercy of God than Naomi did. Even though Ruth had lost her husband, she doesn’t look at this event in the sense that God is against her, after all, such a view would have caused her to stay in Moab. I believe Ruth has complete confidence in God. I believe Ruth knows that God will bless her and be with her. I believe Ruth understands that God, in his grace, acts and moves in our lives for our eternal good and salvation. I believe Ruth, though she knew going with Naomi would be hard work and struggle, she trusted God to work all things out for good. What an example of faith!

That’s why Ruth can be so selfless for Naomi’s sake. I think in her mind she knew that if she stayed in Moab she would lose this truth of the Lord’s love and grace. Her faith in God and his grace leads her to go with Naomi for it is in Israel that this true God and his awe is fully and wonderfully proclaimed. Let that sink in. Ruth grasped the need for fellowship, that is, for having those of faith around you to keep your faith healthy and whole. God had revealed His truth, His grace, His promises to Israel and that’s where you go to keep faith alive and well. If I were to make an application of this to our lives it would be found in the fact that God wants us in church to keep encouraging each other in our faith. That’s one of the reasons God has given church, that we might gather together for worship and praise and to encourage each other in the grace and goodness of the Lord. Faith is rooted in the promises and grace of God but faith is practiced when we gather for the worship and praise of the Lord God!

One more thing to learn. As this history of Ruth unfolds, it is clear that God, in his grace and mercy is going to bless the faith of Ruth in a wonderful and unique way. It is how God blesses every person of faith. Let me explain.

Once Naomi and Ruth get back to Israel it is clear life is a bit tough. It is possible that Naomi and Ruth take up residence in the house that they had left behind but we don’t really know. What we do know is that in order to survive, Ruth needs to go out into the fields to glean. As a foreigner in these fields she would have stood out. It appears that most people know who she is and the circumstances of her being there. One in particular, a man named Boaz, a distant relative of Elimelech, notices Ruth. He inquires about this foreigner in his field and when he learns it is Ruth Scripture says this: **“Boaz replied, ‘I have been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.’”**

To make a long story short, it turns out Boaz is going to be the kinsman-redeemer for Ruth. That means that Boaz, as a relative of the family, has the right to purchase Elimelech’s property and take Ruth as his wife. That’s exactly what he does. It is so fascinating to see and hear how God causes all of this to happen. How God acts and moves for the sake of Ruth to grant her awesome blessings. Boaz and Ruth will get married. Remember, when Ruth was married before, for maybe ten years, she has no children. But get this…Boaz and Ruth will have a son. His name is Obed. Obed will give birth to Jesse and Jesse is the father of David, yes, King David. In other words, Ruth become a descendant of not only the great king of Israel but she is also the descendant of the greatest King of Israel, the Savior Jesus, the eternal king and ruler of the world! God has made her completely, fully and eternally family.

Such is what the Lord our God does to all who have faith in Him and his promises. He makes us completely and fully family, declaring us to be his children and heirs of eternal life. We are told in Ephesians (1:5) **“In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.”** Because of faith and because of Jesus we become the family of God. As God has shown his grace and love to Ruth, so may His grace and love be in your life. And may God count you as His family now and always. Amen.