

Let's Renew Our Life

Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17

When we have to choose between two things, the standards that we establish for selecting the right one is very important. The selection may depend on things such as whether it would be convenient for me or whether there are any profits to be made for myself and for others. As a Christian though, the selection would depend on whether we choose to follow God's will or whether to live by our own thoughts and desires. Additionally, as Christians we should be prepared to endure any sufferings that may come our way in order to keep our conscience clean as we live in this evil and dark world. Moreover, if you want to live by God's Word then you have to be ready when called on to sacrifice. Courageous selections and well thought out decisions are needed for a good Christian life. I want to encourage all of you so that we keep our faith alive and to not throw away our faith conscience due to glory and benefits of this world.

Today's sermon is from the Old Testament. We know that the Old Testament tells us some of the things that happened before Jesus came to earth. A family from Bethlehem in the country of Judah went to live in Moab. Moab was east of Judah. The two sons in the family married women from Moab. Then the sons, as well as their father, died. Their mother Naomi returned home to Bethlehem and one of the wivers went with her. The wife's name was Ruth. Ruth and her mother-in-law came to Bethlehem at the time when the farmers were harvesting barley from the fields. God had told the people of Israel to leave some barley in the field for the poor to harvest. So, Ruth went out into the fields to gather some. She worked in the field where Boaz was the farmer. He followed God's instructions and had also told his men to leave some extra barley for Ruth. One night, Ruth's mother-in-law sent her to where Boaz was working. Naomi told Ruth what she was to do when she arrived. Ruth hid while Boaz worked. Then he went to sleep, but he woke up in the middle of the night. Surprisingly, he found Ruth by his feet. Ruth asked him to marry her. Boaz said that he would answer her in the morning. The next day Boaz agreed to marry her. They later had a baby boy. The baby's name was Obed, who we know as the grandfather of the great King David!

When we think of Ruth, she made the right choice. We think this because the end result turned out very good. However, the decision that Ruth had to make was very difficult in that era. The decision was not made with a lot of forethought as she had no idea of what the future would hold. Ruth thought of the situation that her mother-in-law was in rather than the situation in which she found herself. That's why she made the choice that she did. Naomi already knew what kind of person Ruth was. Because of that, Naomi was always thinking, 'what can I do for Ruth?' She came up with a plan for Boaz and Ruth to get married. Naomi made a very precise plan for Ruth's to find another husband to marry. As Naomi told her idea to Ruth, Ruth obeyed by answering, "I will do whatever you say."

Ruth absolutely trusted her mother-in-law. That's why she obeyed Naomi without any complaints of whatever it was that she was told to do. Because Ruth gave up everything and sacrificed her life for Naomi, they were happy with each other. Finally, Ruth gave birth to a son. Do you know what a neighbor said to Naomi when she was celebrating the birth of her grandson? They said, "He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age." Another Bible version translates it, "He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age." Do

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you know why that is? The reason is that they said, “Your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.” To put it another way, the grandson will also understand and take care of grandmother just as his mother sacrificed herself in caring for others.

This couldn't be truer. The more that we have people with greater regard for the feelings of others, the more that our community and our society will surely be renewed in every manner. If we have greater regard for the feelings of others, everybody will be renewed in their life. To that end we should follow the example that Ruth set. Since Ruth was more concerned with the condition of her mother-in-law more than whatever she faced, she was willing to give up everything for her. The final result was that Ruth made Naomi happy as well as others around her. Because she was such a great daughter-in-law, Ruth received a tremendous amount of recognition from others.

Not only was King David one of her descendants, but so was our savior Jesus Christ. What does giving birth to a baby mean? One thought is that it carries on the family blood line. But more importantly, it carries on the family's spiritual faith line. And for us in this time, those who give birth through the Gospel make God happier. Paul used the Gospel to give birth to Timothy and Onesimus. ‘To Timothy my true son in the faith...’ (1 Timothy 1:2) ‘I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains.’ (Philemon 1:10) Beloved sisters and brothers, we are born of the Gospel through Jesus Christ. We are His disciples. A disciple is one who follows the example of their teacher. Simply put, we follow the example of Jesus. What are the examples of Jesus that we should follow?

First, we should follow the example of Jesus as He sacrificed Himself on the cross. As we've learned, there was a grandma called Ruth among the ancestors of Jesus. The spirit of sacrifice that Ruth displayed would be passed down to Jesus. The family of Naomi and Boaz became celebrated because of the sacrifice by Ruth. It is because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross that everyone can live a glorious life and have the freedom from the disgrace of sin. Neither the power of a gun or a sword is the tool that Jesus uses to repel the power of sin. Not even authority or power of money is the tool that Jesus uses to repel the power of sin. What does allow Jesus Christ to forever repel the power of sin is that He gave himself freely as a sacrifice offering. We read in the Book of Hebrew (9:28) that, “Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people.”

One day, I was watching a television program about the life of a thorny fish. They said that once the female fish spawns the fertilized eggs, the male fish provides oxygen for them by using his fins. He is unable to eat or sleep for the 15 days it takes for them to hatch. If a larger fish had come upon him, the male fish was resigned to death because he would never swim away from the eggs. However, an even more amazing event happens after 15 days. The male thorny fish, who had tended to the eggs, allows the hatchlings to eat him because they are unable to seek food for themselves. The male thorny fish was ending his life by giving his body to the hatchlings. Through a very small fish, we can see what pure love is. If we would like to repay Jesus, who took His cross for us, we should show in our life that we are following His examples. Anyone who hears the Word but does not put it into action is not a good Christian. We have to

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purposefully devote ourselves to God. This means that we have to show our attitude through our actions, not through hollow words like, “Thank God for His grace.”

There are two completely different types of people that we find in the closing verses of chapter 12 of the Gospel of Mark. One of them is the teachers of the law. Jesus recounts, “They are people who like to talk showing a lot of truth. They have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets too. They devour widows' houses and for a show they make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.” That is, their spiritual condition was much different on the inside than what they displayed on the outside. They were very mean and haughty. They always talked about God's grace, but the attitude in which they gave their offerings wasn't what it should have been for teachers of the law.

Then we find a person who is a complete opposite of the teachers of the law. Mark tells us, “At that time, Jesus sat down on the opposite side of the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd put their money into the temple's treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.” Then, Jesus explained to his disciples the reason. “They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on.”

This does not mean that we have to give everything that we have to God. What it does mean is that we our offering should be given to God with the thoughts of sacrifice and devotion in our mind. If you want everyone to see you giving an offering or if you want everyone to see how rich you are when you give your offering, that is not a true offering. Our attitude when we present offerings should be of the mind set that we are thanking God with all our heart for giving us His grace and love. Better yet, a life that follows the Word of God and is full of sacrifice and devotion for our neighbor and community is true thanks.

Second, we should follow the example of Jesus who has renewed our life. Due to Ruth sacrificing everything that she had and serving her mother-in-law, the house of Naomi has been changed and renewed in their life. Likewise, as we live and follow the example of the spirit of Jesus' sacrifice, we have to renew our life in an effort to make this world more pleasant to live in. One way to do this is for older people to mentor those that are younger than them. It is very easy to tell people junior in age what they should do. However, it is difficult for the junior who has to follow what the senior tells them to do. Similarly, younger people should respect and follow the advice of older folks. If we serve and obey our seniors as Ruth did, no troubling things would happen to our family.

God is the judge of all things and we have to believe His judgments are fair. Even if you have done your best, but you are distressed and feel that things are unfair, we must believe that our God is a good God and He will provide for us. So there is nothing free in this world, everything has a cost. A man reaps what he sows. We can only reap as much as we have sown. That's why we have to sow good seeds by obeying God's rules. As you recognize God's grace in your life and give Him thanks, then you need to obey His rules even more. If you fail to do so, you must understand that the blessing in your life from God will fade away. When you are sincerely

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thankful to God, you will surely have more good things to be thankful for in the future. It is a natural progression that as you sow 'thanks', 'thanks' will be reaped.

We all should be thankful to God until the end of our life. That is because even though there are billions of people in this world, He has chosen us to receive His blessings. We have been saved through His sacrifice on the cross. We are children of God and because of that we do not take advantage of others to earn more money. Rather, we devote our lives to the service of others. When we do this, we can help make this world more pleasant to live in. Each of us is charged with the mission to renew this world and make it a more pleasant to live in. In order to do that, we should live our life by following the examples of Ruth and Jesus Christ our LORD. Looking back, we can now understand how Ruth had lived her life and had been blessed by God. I pray that we become those who renew this world by following the spirit of the Cross for Jesus.