

## Ruth

Did you know that the Book of Ruth has been called the most important book in the Bible? I wonder why!

Is Ruth in the Old or the New Testament? So that means it is in the front or the back of the Bible?

How many chapters are in the Book of Ruth?

What else do you know about the Book of Ruth...that was, after all your homework some weeks ago!

What regions did this take place in? They (Elimelech and Naomi left Bethlehem and went to Moab to escape the famine.) They travelled to Moab.

Husband and wife were Elimelech and Naomi.

Elimelech died.

They had two sons who married Orpah and Ruth.

The sons died, leaving Naomi with her daughters in law.

Naomi started the return journey to Bethlehem in Judea. Her daughters in law Ruth and Orpah began the trip, to go with Naomi to her home country. But Naomi insisted that they go back to their own land, their mothers' homes – to their own gods – to their own culture. Orpah took Naomi's advice. But Ruth refused. She refused to leave her mother in law Naomi by herself.

Do you know what the famous line from the Book of Ruth is? "Where you go, I will go. Where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God."

Think about Naomi for a minute. She had had a wonderful husband. She had raised two handsome, wonderful sons. She had left her home, her country, her culture. She lost it all. Her husband, both of her sons, her security, her identity.

Naomi's daughter in law Ruth makes the unselfish choice. Ruth chooses loyalty. Ruth chooses the ministry of presence. We soon forget about Orpah. We never forget about Ruth.

So Ruth is with Naomi and it is harvest time. Ruth goes out, not to harvest, but to pick up the scraps, the left overs, after the harvesters have picked the best of the crop. She goes behind the women who do the harvesting to collect what they missed.

Boaz, a man of some prominence notices her and asks about her. It just so happens that Boaz was a relative of Elimilech, the father of Naomi's sons, and Ruth's father in law. Boaz was drawn to Ruth and took steps to ensure her safety and well being. He showed her where to get drinking water, he gave her something to eat, he showed her where she should go to be safe, and then he even invited her to harvest from the best part of the field, not to be restricted to the scraps!

It is not too difficult to understand what happens next.

Boaz and Ruth fall in love. Eventually they marry and have a family. The lovely Naomi, Ruth's mother in law stays as a close member of the family and becomes Ruth's help mate.

Here are some words that come to mind when we think of the story of Ruth:

Brave, faithful, loyal, humble, servant. Ruth was a woman and in that culture at that time we can assume the worst. Ruth was not from royalty. She was not famous. She was a person of wonderful character and her legacy lives on.

Now, this is what I want us all to do –

I want us all to put a mirror up to our lives. I want us to consider ourselves as I re-read these qualities of Ruth. What words apply? What areas of our life need some attention. Ready???

Faithful brave loyal humble servant a person of wonderful character leaving a legacy of worth

This is the last Sunday before we enter into the season of Advent.

Advent is a time of reflection and a time of preparation. It seems to me that some degree of self-examination might be helpful as we wait for Love to be born anew.

In this Study group we have just concluded called **Space for God**, when it comes to realizing who we are and who we are called to be. It talks about the fact that we are made in the image of God and we are in turn God's imagers! We are changed into God's likeness, transformed into God's character. We are God's reflectors, reflecting, mirroring as the moon reflects the sun.

Imagine that....reflecting goodness, patience, kindness, humility, generosity, forgiveness, support, the heart of a servant....As we prepare to enter this season of Advent, which of these words help to define you? Which of these words represent areas of your life where you need to do a bit of work?

There is much we can learn from Ruth. God bless you on the journey!

Amen