

Ruth's commitment

Reverend Rob Lamerton

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Ruth 3: 1-5. 4: 13-17; Psalm 127; Hebrews 9: (19-22) 23-28; Mark 12: 38-44

Ruth: the story describes the mysterious ways of God, "illustrating how God works" in the lives of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz.

Today's reading tells how Ruth of Moabite background becomes the mother of Obed who became the father of Jesse the father of David.

And of course, Ruth is only here because she married an Israelite and was widowed but remained loyal to Naomi. It was through Naomi that she met Boaz

It is through this round about way that God's purpose is continued — Describes how God is not limited by religion or nationality but works through those who are faithful.

The story is neatly located in the Bible before the books of Samuel which describe the rise to power of David and it seems that it is there to give a wider view of God's purpose. Interestingly enough modern Jews trace their ancestry through their mother. Mother must be a Jew... the story of God using an outsider recalls for me the uproar surrounding the awarding of the Sydney Peace Prize to Dr Hanan Ashrawi — a Palestinian Christian (and I believe an Anglican)

It would not have been possible to choose someone from either side of the Palestinian/Israeli divide without some degree of disapproval, and although yes there may have been more worthy recipients, the judges made their choice with as much information as necessary. I think they are to be commended for their courage in choosing someone from whichever side in that ongoing conflict! At the very least, the awarding of the prize and the visit and speech by Dr Ashwari again serves to highlight the difficulty and stupidity of the conflict. The difficulty for the organizers of the Peace Prize will be to avoid handing the next award to an Israeli just to be seen to be balanced.

back to Ruth:...

The picture we have of Ruth is one of whole hearted commitment to
her new found faith
her mother in law Naomi

Whole hearted commitment! rather than religious purity or appropriate breeding are what God is looking for — and it is found in Ruth. Note the wonderful way in which Naomi sends Ruth to seduce Boaz. //sex scene// and this is all seen as part of God's purpose.

And the house or dynasty which is begun is affirmed as God's by the psalm. In the gospel reading the scribes are those with all the religious purity and learning as well as having the right breeding and background. BUT they use their position in wholehearted commitment to their own schemes and to their own self aggrandisement. They promote their own needs over those they are to serve. Quite a different picture to Ruth's devotion.

Then:

in observing the wealthy putting in large sums, Jesus might have said how generous they were but the widow is really the example of sacrifice because the widow gave all she had to live on. She held nothing back! Like Ruth who was also a widow; hers too was total commitment.

Our continuing story takes a turn this week as Jesus teaches IN Jerusalem. Jesus has been trying to get his disciples to understand what is required. Now he has the opportunity in the form of a living parable to ask for wholehearted commitment — no holding back!

The model for total reckless wholehearted giving of oneself is found of course in Christ — it is by that self giving that Christ enters heaven as the letter to the Hebrews says.

I say that Christ is the model — Ruth in her story and the widow follows the same path of sacrifice.

But how does it relate to us?

Ruth tells us that the answers are mostly not immediate and that the path is often long and takes many turns before the answer becomes clear. In the story of Ruth, God's providence is revealed over time and through many ups and downs. (or in Ruth's case downs and ups!) There is also the manoeuvring of the situation setting up the "sex scene" by Naomi and Ruth — even this is incorporated into God's purpose! What appears to be a real case of entrapment by these two women is also the way of God's provision. What I am saying is discerning the path of God and staying on it is never simple and easy. There is as they say no simple single solution — no silver bullet.

Recently I was approached by a parent anxious about the direction/behaviour/and friends of a child. I would like to have said here's the recipe, do this, this and this and all will be well — but it doesn't work that way.

Discerning the right approach / words / attitudes

Requires thought prayer and commitment.

I do believe in belonging to the Church
hearing the bible read
nourished by the Holy Communion
prayer
supportive community
helpful counselling

is the way for Christians to find the way through the joys and sorrows to a wholehearted approach to faith and life.