

Moravian Women's Association- Devotional Paper – May 2024

Fruits of the Spirit

But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, **faithfulness**, humility and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23a GNB)

Read Ruth 1: 1-17

This reading is the beginning of the story of a woman called Ruth. For those of you who may not be familiar with it, I will fill out the story so you are not left wondering what happened to her after she travelled with her widowed mother-in-law to Bethlehem.

When Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem as two destitute widows, Ruth goes to work in a field owned by a man called Boaz who it turns out is a relative of Naomi. When I say that Ruth goes to work in a field, she is not working for pay, she is picking up the corn that the main harvesters have dropped and left so that she can take this home to Naomi, presumably so they can make bread to eat and keep themselves alive.

Boaz takes an interest in Ruth. He sees how hard she is working and asks one of his farm workers who she is. When his farmworker tells him, Boaz realises that he knows her story and impressed with her loyalty to Naomi, he provides her with special care. He allows her to eat with the workers, he instructs his workers to leave some corn behind deliberately for Ruth to pick up and he tells her to only stay in his fields where she will be safe. This is particularly important because Ruth is a Moabite woman and the Moabites are hated by the Israelites.

Eventually, Boaz and Ruth are married and have a son together, thus ensuring the financial security of both Ruth and Naomi. Not only that but the son, named Obed is the ancestor of King David, arguably the greatest Israelite king and, also, of course the ancestor of Jesus.

The story of Ruth is a great example of faithfulness. It contains the beautiful words Ruth expressed to Naomi when she decides to go with Naomi to a foreign land, a foreign family and to worship a different God:

“Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Wherever you die, I will die, and that is where I will be buried” (Ruth 1: 16-17 GNB).

The story shows us that God is more interested in faithfulness to Him than to any label which we as humans might put on people. It also shows that God can work through anyone to bring about his plans or the world.

Things to consider

1. Can you think of any other stories, biblical or otherwise where faithfulness has been rewarded?
2. Ruth decided to change her whole life – have you ever had to make big changes in your life – how did that make you feel?
3. In the story of Ruth, everything turns out well in the end for both Naomi and Ruth. That isn't always so however. How has your faith helped you in times of trouble – when things turned out well? And even when they didn't?
4. Have you ever recognised God working through some unexpected people?