

Bible Study for All Saints' Sunday Nov 3, 2024

Our texts for this Sunday are:

- Ruth 1:1-18
- Revelation 21:1-6a

Opening Question: We, as Lutherans, believe that this faith that we have has been gifted to us by the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is the faith-seed planter in your life, who has helped to tend that seed into the faith that you have today?

Ruth 1:1-18 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. ²The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. ³But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, ⁵both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. ⁶Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had considered his people and given them food. ⁷So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. ⁸But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. ¹⁰They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." ¹¹But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? ¹²Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, ¹³would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me." ¹⁴Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." ¹⁶But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; Where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die, I will die— there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!" ¹⁸When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

What questions do you have for this text? Are you familiar with the story of Ruth? Why (do you think) this story is in the Bible?

Look up Judges 21:25. What does it say? In our culture today, how common is it for people to do what seems right in *their own eyes* (Judges 21:25 and Ruth 1:1)? What (if anything) influences the choices you make in your life?

Read Joshua 24:14-24 and Judges 2:8-12. It took only one generation before the Israelites forgot their God. Do you think this happened suddenly or little by little. How can you guard against the subtleties that can erode your focus and connection to God?

Think about a time that you wanted to choose to walk away from God, your family or church; what were the factors that you weighed in your decision?

Elimelech took his family to Moab because of the famine. The text does not make it clear whether this was an act of wisdom and obedience, or a demonstration of a weak faith. How do you react to the *famines* you face in your life? Do you let them move you away from God? Do you seek a close friend or community to help you strengthen your focus and connection with God?

Re-read Ruth's promise in Ruth 1:16-18. Remind you of anything? Read what God says in Exodus 6:6-8, Leviticus 26:9-12 & Jeremiah 30:20-22. So, what does Ruth's promise really represent here? Why is this such a pivotal change of direction in the story?

If you could choose a family member, what would you look for in an ideal family member? How about a church-family member?

What does it mean that we are "our brother's keeper" (Genesis 4:9)? Who should the modern-day believer view as a brother or sister? What person in your circle of influence are you resistant to treat as a brother or a sister? What fear, justification, or sinful attitude holds you back? What steps can you take, by the grace of God, to change that?

Who in your life (present or past) has helped you *see* someone or something differently? How did they do that? Through any particular actions or by the way they lived their (whole) lives?

Revelation 21:1-6 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; 4he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." 5And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

Other than seeing Jesus, what about Heaven are you most looking forward to? What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of Heaven?

What does this text tell us about the new Heaven and new earth? What stands out to you about this description here?

How are these final chapters in Revelation a culmination to the rest of the Bible and the Redemption story? What difference does it make to know the ending of this story? How do you live your life differently because you know the end of this story?

What do you think of the statement, "he is so Heavenly-minded that he is of no earthly good"? Is it possible to be too Heavenly-minded?

What is one thing about your life that can be changed to be more *Heavenly minded* to be more effective for God's *earthly good*? Or how might you and your actions be better *faith-seed tenders* for someone else (opening question)?