

5/10/09

### THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

(In Unison) Almighty God, our heavenly Father, you set the solitary in families.

We

commend to your care all the homes where your people live. Fill them with faith, virtue, knowledge, moderation, patience, and godliness. Knit together in

enduring

affection those who have become one in marriage. Let children and parents have

full respect for one another; and light the fire of love in your family the church, that

we may show love for one another as you have loved us; through Jesus Christ, your

Son our Lord. Amen.

### THE FIRST TESTAMENT LESSON Ruth 1:1-18

*(Naomi and Ruth, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, are bound together by faith and love.)*

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. 2 The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

3 Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

6 When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. 7 With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. 9 May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them and they wept aloud 10 and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

11 But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? 12 Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me-- even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons-- 13 would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me!" 14 At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her.

15 "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her

gods. Go back with her." **16 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me."**

18 When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

**THE EPISTLE LESSON** 1 John 4:7-11

*(The strength to love one another is the love God has shown us in Jesus.)*

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

**THE GOSPEL LESSON** John 13:34-35

*(Jesus calls for love in the Christian family.)*

[On the night he was betrayed, Jesus said] 34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

**THE SERMON**

**"Uncommon Love . . . for Families" Ruth 1**

INTRO – I read a story this week from Pastor Ken Klaus, the Lutheran hour speaker. He told the story of twenty-six-year-old Ashley Swendsen who is going to have a baby. That's good news! Ashley is doing her best to stay healthy for the birth of her child. That's also good news. Of course, it is a rare day when anyone gets nothing but good news. About 2 weeks ago, Ashley was on a hiking trail in northwestern Colorado Springs. Ashley thought she was all alone. She wasn't. Ashley was being followed by a black bear. That's the bad news. Ashley picked up her pace; the bear did the same. Eventually, Ashley scrambled up an embankment to get away from the trailing bear. It was a smart move; it would have been a successful move if Ashley hadn't, at the top of her climb, been clobbered by a car. Talk about facing challenges and dangers in life.

I. On this Mothers' Day 2009 Christians and their families are challenged today.

A. We may not be pursued by bears, but we face dangers from outside and from inside.

1. The culture around us calls Christians to materialism, to self-indulgence, and to a lack of God's values.

2. Christians themselves in America today are so busy that families have trouble spending time together to grow in faith and love.

3. It is difficult today to live and grow in Christian faith and love. Many households, and many churches - God's families - are struggling in this stress.

B. If you want to see a challenged family, look at the family of Naomi.

1. Death stalked this family and the Father died, the 2 son in laws died. There were no men left in this family.

2. There was a considered external threat. This Jewish family was living

in the

non-Jewish country of Moab. Ruth and Orpah were Moabites, not Jews.

3. The biggest challenge may have been internal. Naomi was Ruth's

mother in

law. You know the stories and reputation of mother in laws. Adults,

what would

you do if your spouse died, and only your mother in law was left. Would

you

take her into your home or tell her to take care of herself? In some

cases the

answer is no.

II. The best way to deal with life's difficulties, is actually the same way we deal with life, with faith in God and love for others. This is not only God's plan, but a blessing to us.

A. God's idea of love is that Love is an action not a feeling

1. Love is not so much how I feel about you. Love is how I treat you.

2. Look at Ruth's actions, toward, believe it or not, her mother in law.

Naomi.

A. **Where you go I will go.** Her actions included going with

that

B. **where you stay I will stay** -she stayed with her, even though

meant leaving others.

she didn't

**C. Your people will be my people** Ruth agreed to love people  
know.

**D. your God [will be] my God.** Ruth's love for Naomi included  
worship and faith.

B. The faith and love shown by Ruth would be a blessing to our families, to our  
churches, to our lives.

III. Who do you know that has faced life's challenges and has continued living with  
faith and

love and so blessed you? Maybe you would say a friend, a teacher, a pastor. But, I  
bet among all the answers many would have said mothers. Where do we get this kind  
of love?

A. Ruth had come to know the God of Elimilech and Naomi.

1. **Your God will be my God.**

2. Knowing God and His love helped Ruth to reach out, to her mother in  
law,  
with acts of uncommon love.

3. This love was so uncommon that it was repeated in the family. Great  
grand  
son David, and Great great grand son Solomon helped to write about  
Ruth, her  
faith and love.

B. Jesus lives and shows God's uncommon love.

1. Where you go I will go. Jesus left heaven and says to come to us,

2. Where you stay, I will stay. Jesus did n't just make a short visit,  
Jesus says, I  
am with you always to the end of the age.

3. Your people will be my people. God brings all believers into His  
family the  
church, where we are told, "**Love one another as I have loved you.**"

We are  
told, "**Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of  
God.**"

4. Your God shall be my God. The God who loves us like this, who laid  
his life  
down for us, is Jesus, the Lord of the universe.

**CONCLUSION** Lest you think we forgot Ashley, she is all right and the baby is fine, too.  
On the other hand, the bear didn't fare so well. Please remember, the Lord was with  
Ashley. He was with Ashley when she became pregnant. He watched over her when a  
bear was chasing her. He was watching over her when a car hit her. In fact there was  
never a time when Ashley and her child were not under the protection of the Lord.

God watches over you. His love empowers you to believe, to love, to bless your

family. God has cared for us in his Sacrificial love in Jesus. We can thank God that His love has touched our mothers and mothers' in laws, that they have sacrificially shown His love and their love in our families. Let God lead you in faith and love as a blessing for you and your family.

An older woman went to the funeral director. "I'd like to pre-arrange my funeral," she said. "We can do that," the director answered. "I'd like to be cremated," she said. "No problem," was the reply. "I'd like my ashes spread around the entrance of Wal-Mart." "OK," said the surprised funeral director. "But may I ask why?" "That way I know that my children will finally come to visit me." ( I got that story from Dale Meyer, and I believe I used previously.)