

10/10/10

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Almighty God, You show mercy and love to Your people in all their troubles. As you loved Ruth and the lepers, help us to receive your love in Jesus and to share Jesus throughout the world; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Ruth 1:1-19a

(Ruth shows unexpected love and loyalty.)

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. 19 So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?"

THE GOSPEL LESSON Luke 17:11-19

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(Jesus reaches out in love and compassion to cleanse ten lepers, including a foreigner.)

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" 14 When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. 15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. 17 Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19 Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

THE SERMON “Love in Action – Ruth’s call to life as a child of God” Ruth 1

INTRO - Look around you today. Aren't these quilts wonderful? The quilting ladies do a wonderful job, and I love this Sunday every year, not only because it is LWML Sunday, but because our sanctuary is decorated with these quilts. But, now that you have looked at them, please take a moment to do more than that. Wrap one around you, if you can. Close your eyes.

Fell how warm it is. FEEL how soft. As you are enjoying the quilts we have decorating our sanctuary, quilts that will be sent this week to Lutheran World Relief, think of what went in to making these. People took fabric from their home and donated the fabric to the church. Women spent time away from home, away from other duties, to cut the fabric, sew them together into tops, and quilt them together. It took time and skill, as well as resources. When these quilts are sent the people receiving them, whether in Iraq, or Africa, or Anchorage, the people receiving them are receiving more than just a piece of fabric, they are receiving the time, the skill, the dedication of the women who put them together. In a very real way, when someone receives one of these gifts, they are receiving the gift of the women who made them.

I. This month is a month that we focus on discipleship. How do we live as God's children as committed followers of our Lord Jesus? Last week we discussed the faith that marks a child of God. Today, we want to consider the gift of love.

A. Love is like these quilts.

1. Love is not really a feeling, or only a feeling to a small part. The good feeling someone gives me is really something that is selfish, something I want for myself.

2. Love is like these quilts. Love gives. Love sacrifices. Love gives oneself for another in one of many myriad ways.

B. Perhaps one of the greatest examples of sacrificial giving, of committed godly love, is the object of today's Old Testament Lesson. Our assigned lesson for today is Ruth 1. What better reading for Lutheran Women's Missionary League Sunday

1. Look at verses 16=17 and how Ruth treated Naomi, her mother in law.

2. After Naomi's husband died, and her sons, including Ruth's husband died, she was going back to Israel. She told her daughters to stay in this foreign land, in Moab, with their families. But Ruth other plans. **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."

3. Ruth gave up her family, her home, her country, her religion. She sacrificed and gave to love Naomi.

C. Sacrificial giving is no surprise to Christians.

1. The most well known of all Bible verses, John 3:16 says, 16 "For God so **loved** the world that he **gave** his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

2. The mark of a Christian who knows this great love is not a lot of words about it, but actions that reflect God's love in their sacrificial giving.

3. John 13:34 says, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

4. A disciple is marked by actions of sacrificial giving, love reflecting that of Jesus.

II. Last night the family was at our home for the celebration of Tim's birthday. All 3 grand children were there and it was interesting to watch them interact. I had bought some fire trucks for the kids to play with. Jacob, the oldest at 2 ½ was there first and playing with the fire trucks. He had been told to share, and when his cousin Jackson came it he immediately GAVE Jackson a fire truck. That is pretty good for a 2 ½ year old, a real act of love. But later, I saw Jacob pull them away when Jackson wanted them. There was a sharing, but there was also some selfishness fed by a fear of losing these new trucks.

A. Love is giving, and we know the call of God to love. But fear can get in our way of loving

1. We can fear not having enough.

2. We can fear giving away and not having for ourself.

3. This fear creates selfishness that gets in the way of loving.

III. So look with me at another verse about God's love. Romans 8:31-32 says, 31 **What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son (SACRIFICE), but gave him up for us all (GIVING)-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?**

A. We may fear losing what we want, or what we need.

1. That fear can get in the way of our sacrificial giving.

2. That fear can get in the way of our love.

B. But, we can't outgive God.

1. God sacrificially gave His Son, Jesus,

2. Jesus gave up Heaven to come save us. He gave up His life to save us. God has called us to His grace by offering forgiveness for our selfish sin, and eternal life for death, to all who trust in God's gift.

3. But, as this verse says, God does so much more. **32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?**

4. If God loves us enough to give His Son, would He actually withhold anything we need?

C. So when God's children know and grow in the knowledge of the gift of Jesus, we are

moved to share with others.

1. God loved us sacrificially, we want to respond and serve God by sharing with others.
2. No matter how much we sacrificially give our time, our resources, our love to others, God gives us all things.
3. In fact, loving, sacrificial giving, does not deplete our resources, but as Christians give, love grows and multiplies.

CONCLUSION - These quilts, they are just the tip of the iceberg. For years the Lutheran Women's Missionary League has been giving to others, loving others because God loved first. But has their giving depleted their work? Do you at St. John both Dustin Kunkel and I are here in part because of gifts from the LWML. Our building is built partially on a \$75,000 grant we received in 1975. The AMC has benefitted from 3 large grants. Their sacrificial giving has not diminished their work, it has multiplied.

A mark of a disciple of Jesus is love like that of Ruth, sacrificial giving.