

Hands Together through Sisterhood

Ruth 2:1-21



Naomi and Ruth were more than mother-in-law and daughter-in-law; there was a love and devotion between them as mother and daughter that can inspire us to a loyal devotion to our sisters in Christ, but even greater than that inspire us to remain faithful to God, His truth and His Church.

As they lived in Moab, Naomi must have shared with her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, about God. Ruth's determination to stay with Naomi after she decided to return to her homeland, Bethlehem and was testimony to the sterling example Naomi must have set for her daughter-in-law.

As they traveled the dusty road maybe Naomi questioned herself, "What was I thinking to let Ruth come on the journey?" She tried to turn her back but it did no good. Ruth might have replied, "How often have I heard you say the Lord watches over those who love Him. If we dwell on all the things that could go wrong, we'll be afraid to take another step. Tell me about the Lord again, Mother. Tell me how He feed thousands of people in the desert; how He brought water from the rock." How can we reach out to someone who needs an encouraging word or just some one to be with them? Sometimes we forget and think about what we have lost, instead of thinking about what we have; first we have Jesus Christ, and next we have each other to rely on and depend upon to be loyal sisters and believers in Christ.

All that Ruth did was done in love for Naomi and her love for Naomi's God. She made a promise on a dusty road between Moab and Bethlehem that she was determined to keep. Ruth had no way of knowing that her way of blessing Naomi would eventually become a blessing in her own life. Ruth gave up everything, expecting nothing, and God honored her.

God delights in seeing us love and bless others. He turns that love and blessing back to us double measure. "Be generous, and you will be prosperous. Help others, and you will be helped." (Proverbs 11:25). "Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them! Happy are the pure in heart; they will see God!" (Matthew 5:7-8).

It was in faith that Naomi returned to Bethlehem with her Moabite daughter-in-law just as the barley harvest was in full swing. Although Ruth couldn't know it then, her future blessing would spring from these afflictions.

Ruth requested permission from Naomi to go into the fields to gather left over grain; "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find, favor." Naomi replied to Ruth: "Go my daughter."

Ruth went and gleaned in the fields; and not just any field, though, but the one belonging to Boaz, kinsman to Naomi's late husband. Was this by accident? No, God had a plan. Ruth went forth with her mother's blessing, under the care of her Naomi's God. Her every step was guided by God. Little did she know that amid the sheaves she would find a husband; that he should

make her the joint owner of all those broad acres; and that she, a poor foreigner, should become one of the progenitors of the great Messiah.

Check out Matthew 1:5 and you will find that Boaz is the son of the prostitute Rahab. Ruth was a despised foreigner married to the son of a prostitute – but she was an ancestor of Jesus Christ. These kinds of things happen in the Bible. And we should be blessed that they do. We have the Master-weaver that has a place in His plan for each of us. God is very good to those who trust in him and He blesses us each and every day. Little do we know what may happen to us today or tomorrow, but as believers in Jesus Christ we can see His hand in everything. So don't let the trivial events in your life get you down; let them "roll off your back like water rolls off a duck's back." Be good to each other. Christ says we are to love everyone - share a smile, a kind word, a hug, a gentle touch, hold their hand.

Boaz reached out to Ruth giving her permission to glean in the field and protected her. Boaz was there and it was enough for Ruth. Ruth was humble gleaner. This story teaches us to be spiritual gleaners; with our Heavenly Father as the great Husbandman. What kind of gleaner are we? Are we among the sheaves and the bushes? Are we working together hand in hand? As we plough the soil and sow the seeds, do we remember that God alone gives the increase? It is God who sends the clouds and the sunshine, directs the winds and the rain. Therefore, God is to receive our praise and all the glory. God, as the great spiritual Husbandman, has many fields and they are all fertile. There is always an abundant harvest to be reaped in them. Ruth was a gleaner, and she serves as an illustration of what every believer needs to be about in the fields of God.

Ruth had no right to go among the sheaves to glean, but Boaz gave her the right to go there by saying, "Let her do it." For her to be allowed to go among the sheaves, in that part of the field where the wheat was not already carted, was a special favor; but to go among the sheaves, and to have handfuls of grain dropped on purpose for her, was a further proof of the kindness of Boaz. Why you may ask? One reason Boaz allowed Ruth to go and glean among the sheaves because of his love to her; and so it is with God's free grace that lets us go among his sheaves.

Go a-gleaning, spiritually. Never lose an opportunity of getting a blessing. Glean at the mercy-seat; glean in the house of God; glean in private meditation; glean in reading books; glean in associating with people; glean with your family; glean everywhere and wherever you go.

Whenever we are privileged to eat of the bread which Jesus gives, we are, like Ruth, satisfied with the full and sweet repast. When Jesus is the host, no guest goes empty from the table. Our head is satisfied with the precious truth which Christ reveals; our heart is content with Jesus, as the altogether lovely object of affection; our hope is satisfied, for whom have we in heaven but Jesus? And our desire is satiated, for what can we wish for more than to know Christ and to be found in Him?"

I will close with one last comment - we are not promised tomorrow or the next moment, so enjoy every moment. My mother spent 12 weeks in the hospital before she died and during her illness my sister and I became even closer, not knowing that in 18 months our mother would be with the Lord. After our mother died Christmas approached and my sister asked me to come and spend the holiday with her and her family, which I did. The day after Christmas we went shopping and

had the time of our lives. We didn't buy a thing, but it was a wonderful time of laughing and sharing. After we returned to her home we both said we need to do this again, but not wait until Christmas. We never got that chance. Don't put things off until tomorrow because there may not be tomorrow. Love each other and be good to each other as Ruth loved her mother Naomi.

There is a story about sisters that went around on the internet awhile back. It is located on the last page of this devotion. After you finish reading it, share with the group a special sister in your life (or husband, child, friend).

Prayer

Dear Lord, help us to be better gleaners for you and to love and be kind to each other. We give you the glory and praise. In your name we pray. Amen.

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Sisters

A young wife sat on a sofa on a hot humid day, drinking iced tea and visiting with her Mother. As they talked about life, about marriage, about the responsibilities of life and the obligations of adulthood, the mother clinked the ice cubes in her glass thoughtfully and turned a clear, sober glance upon her daughter. "Don't forget your Sisters," she advised, swirling the tea leaves to the bottom of her glass.

"They'll be more important as you get older. No matter how much you love your husband, no matter how much you love the children you may have, you are still going to need sisters." Remember that 'sisters' means ALL the women... your girlfriends, your daughters, and all the other women relatives, too. "You'll need other women. Women always do."

'What a funny piece of advice!' the young women thought. 'Haven't I just gotten married? Haven't I just joined the couple-world? I'm now a married woman, for goodness sake! A grownup! Surely my husband and the family we may start will be all I need to make my life worthwhile!'

But she listened to her Mother. She kept contact with her sisters and made more women friends each year. As the years tumbled by, one after another, she gradually came to understand that her Mom really know what she was talking about. As time and nature work their changes and their mysteries upon a woman, sisters are the mainstays of her life.

After more the 50 years of living in the world, here is what I've learned:

Time passes. Life happens. Distance separates. Children grow up. Jobs come and go. Love waxes and wanes. Men don't do what they're supposed to do. Hearts break. Parents die. Colleagues forget favors. Careers end. BUT.....

Sisters are there, no matter how much time and how many miles are between you. A girl friend is never farther away than needing her can reach. When you have to walk that lonesome valley and you have to walk it by yourself, the women in your life will be on the valley's rim, cheering you on, praying for you, pulling for you, intervening on your behalf, and waiting with open arms at the valley's end. Sometimes, they will even break the rules and walk beside you... Or come in and carry you out.

Girlfriends, daughters, granddaughters, daughters-in-law, sisters, sisters-in-law, mothers, grandmothers, aunties, nieces, cousins, and extended family, all bless our life! The world wouldn't be the same without women, and neither would I.

When we began this adventure called womanhood, we had no idea of the incredible joys or sorrows that lay ahead. Nor did we know how much we would need each other. Every day, we need each other still.