

“Thanks To The Little People”

Presented by Pastor Scott Walters on 11-11-18
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Waunakee, WI

A new college graduate with his new journalism degree in hand actually got hired for a newspaper. That's the good news. The bad news is that his job was to handle the obituaries. This was in the day when there was actually a person to receive edit, and even on occasion help write obits.

And I'm not talking about an obituary that a paper would carry if the governor of a state dies, which become a full-fledged article and retrospective on the life and legacy of a person.

No, I'm talking about a person who makes sure, usually in conjunction with a funeral director, that items are correct in the listings on the obituary page. That what was put in an obit is actually intended. Nowadays, fewer and fewer newspapers can afford a person to even do these minor edits.

But this new graduate got his foot in the door. He got a job. And you know that many times, obituaries are written by the family or by the funeral director, using a template.

But what can I say. He got a job – at an actual newspaper. When talking to mom and dad about the job and what he did, he said he managed sonnets for “regular people.”

I would maintain that the Bible is filled with sonnets for “regular people.” And the story of Ruth is one of those sonnets for “regular People.” Ruth was from Moab. For Jews reading this, she was a foreigner. As far as a Jew was concerned, she was without status or importance because she was a hated Moabite.

Naomi, her husband and their two sons are Jews. They move to Moab during a famine. That happened a lot in those days. That was how the Jews got into Egypt – if you remember the story of Joseph and his brothers.

Even today, millions of people, all over this world, are on the move for a better life – or in order to survive.

Naomi and her family cross the border into Moab to find a better life. The sons marry Moabite women named Orpah and Ruth. Then tragedy hits and Naomi's husband dies. Then her two sons die. Naomi is left grieving, with two grieving daughters-in-law. Naomi decides that it's time for her to head back home.

Her daughters-in-law say that they will go with her. Naomi says, “There is no obligation for you to do this. You may stay here with your own families. Besides, I can't provide you anymore sons for you to marry.” That convinces Orpah, and she stays in Moab. But Ruth says these amazing words of faithfulness:

*Where you go I will go,
And where you dwell I will dwell;
Your people shall be my people,
And your God my God.*

That's what Ruth did. She demonstrated what faithfulness looks like and it is in the Bible as a sonnet to a “regular person.”

Those words have been put to music and sung at weddings, which is kind of funny since they are the words that a woman sings to her mother-in-law. (I like to point that out to couples.)

What's remarkable is that the Book of Ruth is in the Bible at all. It refuted a stereotype that the Jews never included outsiders – that human tendency to be exclusive and slip into tribalism. Christians are no exception to that. Christians even separate themselves from other Christians.

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In the Bible we see that God is bigger than we are. God is bigger than the boundaries that separate us into nations, races, or any other classification.

In the New Testament, Jesus is always lifting up the oddest people as examples. There is a Roman Centurion, a hated occupier, lifted up as an example of faith. There is a Samaritan, a despised race, lifted up to be the example of what the love of neighbor looks like.

Ruth is lifted up as an example to show us what faithfulness to a covenant looks like by telling the story of a woman who was not even included in the covenant. A Moabite woman named Ruth is the one who shows what faithfulness looks like.

I'm guessing that in the eyes of the world, most of the people of Crossroads Church are who that young journalist would call, “regular people.” These are people who were – and are – great saints of Crossroads. They knew what it was to love God and love their neighbor. They received showers of blessings in their lives and gave thanks and tried to pass along blessings to others through the mission and ministry of this Body of Christ.

Consider those saints who have expressed their faith through this Church.

When St. Paul talks about the church, he uses the analogy of the body, saying that “we are the Body of Christ.” Which means when people see the church, they ought to see Christ at work in this world. And conversely, people are only going to see Christ in this world when they see you and me, serving others.

And the health of the Body of Christ – the health of the Church – is dependent on each person doing their part – using the gifts that God has given them

The history of the church, the Body of Christ, is the story of men and women and children who were showered with blessings and who chose to give their lives for Christ and for others. Most of them, like Ruth, were “regular people” but for us they are great saints.