

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

November 4, 2018



THE LESSON Ruth 1:1-18

During the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. A man with his wife and two sons went from Bethlehem of Judah to dwell in the territory of Moab. ²The name of that man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They entered the territory of Moab and settled there.

³But Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died. Then only she was left, along with her two sons. ⁴They took wives for themselves, Moabite women; the name of the first was Orpah and the name of the second was Ruth. And they lived there for about ten years.

⁵But both of the sons, Mahlon and Chilion, also died. Only the woman was left, without her two children and without her husband.

⁶Then she arose along with her daughters-in-law to return from the field of Moab, because while in the territory of Moab she had heard that the LORD had paid attention to his people by providing food for them. ⁷She left the place where she had been, and her two daughters-in-law went with her. They went along the road to return to the land of Judah.

⁸Naomi said to her daughters-in-law, "Go, turn back, each of you to the household of your mother. May the LORD deal faithfully with you,

just as you have done with the dead and with me. ⁹May the LORD provide for you so that you may find security, each woman in the household of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

¹⁰But they replied to her, "No, instead we will return with you, to your people."

¹¹Naomi replied, "Turn back, my daughters. Why would you go with me? Will there again be sons in my womb, that they would be husbands for you? ¹²Turn back, my daughters. Go. I am too old for a husband. If I were to say that I have hope, even if I had a husband tonight, and even more, if I were to bear sons—¹³would you wait until they grew up? Would you refrain from having a husband? No, my daughters. This is more bitter for me than for you, since the LORD's will has come out against me."

¹⁴Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth stayed with her. ¹⁵Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law is returning to her people and to her gods. Turn back after your sister-in-law."

¹⁶But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to abandon you, to turn back from following after you. Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. ¹⁷Wherever you die, I will

die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD do this to me and more so if even death separates me from you.”¹⁸When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her about it.

THE RESPONSE Psalm 146

Praise the LORD! Let my whole being praise the LORD!

¹I will praise the LORD with all my life; I will sing praises to my God as long as I live.

²Don't trust leaders; don't trust any human beings—there's no saving help with them!

³Their breath leaves them, then they go back to the ground.

On that very same day, their plans die too.

⁴The person whose help is the God of Jacob—the person whose hope rests on the LORD their God—is truly happy!

⁵God: the maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,

God: who is faithful forever, ⁶who gives justice to people who are oppressed, who gives bread to people who are starving!

The LORD: who frees prisoners.

⁷The LORD: who makes the blind see.

The LORD: who straightens up those who are bent low.

The LORD: who loves the righteous.

⁸The LORD: who protects immigrants, who helps orphans and widows, but who makes the way of the wicked twist and turn!

⁹The LORD will rule forever!

Zion, your God will rule from one generation to the next!

Praise the LORD!

THE EPISTLE Hebrews 9:11-14

¹¹But Christ has appeared as the high priest of the good things that have happened. He passed through the greater and more perfect meeting tent, which isn't made by human hands (that is, it's not a part of this world). ¹²He entered the holy of holies once for all by his own blood, not by the blood of goats or calves,

securing our deliverance for all time.

¹³If the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkled ashes of cows made spiritually contaminated people holy and clean, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Jesus wash our consciences clean from dead works in order to serve the living God? He offered himself to God through the eternal Spirit as a sacrifice without any flaw.

THE GOSPEL Mark 12:28-34

²⁸One of the legal experts heard their dispute and saw how well Jesus answered them. He came over and asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?”

²⁹Jesus replied, “The most important one is *Israel, listen! Our God is the one Lord,* ³⁰and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength. ³¹The second is this, *You will love your neighbor as yourself.* No other commandment is greater than these.”

³²The legal expert said to him, “Well said, Teacher. You have truthfully said that God is one and there is no other besides him. ³³And to love God with all of the heart, a full understanding, and all of one's strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more important than all kinds of entirely burned offerings and sacrifices.”

³⁴When Jesus saw that he had answered with wisdom, he said to him, “You aren't far from God's kingdom.” After that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.