

**Securing a Future**  
Sermon by Lisa Crismore  
November 8, 2015

Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17

Naomi her mother in-law said to Ruth, "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do. She said to her, "All that you tell me I will do."...

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together the Lord made her conceive, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him." Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. The women of the neighborhood gave him a name saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

I love the Heartland Film Festival that comes to Indianapolis every October. After missing last year, I made sure I made up for it this year. Probably one of the most moving films and one of my favorites was the opening film "Room". It is actually still playing at Keystone Arts. This is a difficult film to watch because it is about a woman who has been kidnapped and locked away in a one-room shed for 7 years. The story begins when this woman wakes up her son, Jack, to celebrate his 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that this mother must secure a future for her son. To do this, they must escape or at least her son. They devise a plan that takes risks. Through the heart bounding escape to the reunion of family, this story speaks of love, kindness, redemption and restoration.

Today Ruth is faced with securing her future. Naomi comes to her with a plan. It will involve taking risks. But, they really don't have a choice. These 2 widows don't live in today's society where Naomi could collect Social Security or Ruth could get a job to support both of them. In their social system, widows were poor. They are struggling to make ends meet. Ruth has gone into the fields to glean the leftover grain. What happens when the fields are barren? What will they do next to survive? Ruth has found favor in the eyes of old Boaz, the owner of the fields.

Naomi realizes this. So, her plan is that Ruth will get cleaned up, get in her best dress and fix her hair. She will present herself to Boaz for marriage. This presentation doesn't happen in the daylight at a cozy little corner café in Bethlehem. No, Ruth is going to Boaz in the night. She is going to his bed. It is a daring idea that will involve Ruth using her body and sexuality to get the attention of Boaz. This could have gone really bad. Boaz could have really taken advantage of the situation.

But if we read the end of chapter 3 and the beginning of 4 in scripture, Boaz is a true gentleman. He assures Ruth that all will be okay. He tells her to sleep and sends her home early in the morning so no one can see her. He gives her grain for her and Naomi.

Now, there is some business that Boaz needs to clear up. Boaz is not the closest kinsman. It is true that Boaz was Naomi's kinsman. But there was another who was closer in line in the family tree. This relative had the opportunity to purchase the property that was owned by Naomi's husband and have Ruth's hand in marriage. But when Boaz approached him, he could not go through with it. So, Boaz marries Ruth. They have a baby boy, interesting that the town names him, Obed. Naomi moves in with the new family and they all live happily ever after!

The beauty of this story is the love and kindness of God in the midst of relationships with others. This story is about the life journey of 2 amazing women who secure a future with God's help. It is true that there is no dialogue with God. There is no prophet, a messenger from God, who speaks out in the story. It is just a real life story. In the beginning of the story, Ruth declares her amazing love for Naomi by saying, "I will leave my homeland and I will follow you back to your homeland. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God!" And at the end of this story, we rejoice just like the town's people that they have found restoration by the Lord! That is all the reference that is given to God. But over and over, we see and hear God through the words and actions of the characters in this story.

God is seen in the love and kindness of Boaz. God is seen in the love and obedience of Ruth. God is seen in the love and wisdom of Naomi. God is seen in the relationships of each of them. God is seen in the restoring of family. God is seen in the securing of a future.

I don't know about you, but I struggle about how I fit into this story. Perhaps, it is the culture and times of when this story takes place. The thing that resonated with me was where God was seen in the story. Where do I see God working in my life? Where do I see God working in the life of our congregation?

In Children in Worship, the children are asked to share where they have seen and heard God throughout their week. They call them God sightings. Now, it is not that God came to them and they could see or hear God. It is not like a prophet came as God's messenger and spoke to them. But, the children are able to see God in the midst of others through their words and actions.

I thought I would share my God sightings here at John Knox this last week. Where did I see God working through other's words and actions?

- We greeted 100+ adults, youth and children a week ago at our Fall Festival. We had over 20 members of the church help run games and serve food. Not to forget all the folks who donated food and candy.
- We had a wonderful turnout for the PW Bazaar held yesterday as we welcomed our community into our building for the second time in a week. We had many people make wonderful crafts and baked goods. It was great to see our youth serving and helping as well. The church made over \$3400 which will go to support various missions in our church.

- I had a chance to sit down and talk with Jillian Charboneau who took a risk by answering a call to serve at a Kairos Women's Prison Retreat last weekend. She was amazed to see how the Holy Spirit transformed these women over 4 short days.
- 21 kids attended Discovery Time this past week. They had a chance to have large muscle activity, hear a Bible story and have one on one or two on one interaction with an adult. All in all they had a safe and fun experience at our church.
- Then, there is William, who is a homeless man that we have been helping for several years. God bless William! He has worshipped with us and helped us with fixing food. This week he needed a helping hand to get from one paycheck to the next paycheck. We were able to help through our New Beginnings Fund.

God has been seen by our words and actions at John Knox Presbyterian Church. Where have you had a God sighting? Has someone seen God in you through your words and actions? The beauty of this story is that it helps us to see God working in our midst through our relationship with others. The beauty of this story is that it helps us to see the love and kindness shown to each other.

Perhaps we can take it one step further and see if the beauty of this story can teach us about securing our future as a church. Where will we see God working in our future through our words and actions?

Next Sunday is Stewardship Sunday when we pledge our church giving for the next year. These financial pledges will be what our Finance Team will use to form our budget and our spending for next year. If you have not picked up your stewardship letter and read it, please do so. We find ourselves at a crossroads when it comes to the future of the church. Frank had shared several weeks ago that we have had to use our savings over the last two years to make our budget. It is clear that we can't continue to do this. We have much to celebrate as we have seen God working over and over in our lives. But there are challenges ahead. We are grateful to the generous people who have given to John Knox in the past and the ones who have given to the capital campaign for this beautiful sanctuary. But what risks are we willing to take to secure our future as a church?

Our session has a big decision to make on November 23. They will be deciding whether to permit or deny same gender marriage to take place on church property. The session has urged you to come and speak to them about your thoughts on this matter. It became clear from our discussion on marriage in October that our church is divided on this issue. These are numbers that could divide us as a church. My prayer is that, whatever the vote is, we can stay united. Can we love each other as deeply as Ruth loved Naomi and stay together to secure a future for our church?

Scripture goes on to tell us that Ruth has a son named Obed. Obed grows up and has a son named Jesse. Jesse grows up and has a son named David. David grows up to become one of the greatest kings in Israel. Ruth would probably never have dreamed that when she was stooping down to pick up the leftover grain in the fields that she would one day be the great grandmother of King David! Then, from the city of David, we read in scripture that a Savior is born, who is Christ the King! Who would guess that from Ruth's lineage that Jesus Christ would be born? You just never know when God's people step up and live out their faith what will happen. Thanks be to God for the faithful who live out their faith through their words and actions. Amen!