

October 9, 2016  
 Sermon for The Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost  
 St Peter Lutheran Church  
 Bowie, TX  
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
 Ruth 1:1-19a

*J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus*

Ruth 1:1–19 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. <sup>2</sup> The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. <sup>3</sup> But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. <sup>4</sup> These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, <sup>5</sup> and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. <sup>6</sup> Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food. <sup>7</sup> So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. <sup>8</sup> But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, return each of you to her mother’s house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.” <sup>9</sup> The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!” Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. <sup>10</sup> And they said to her, “No, we will return with you to your people.” <sup>11</sup> But Naomi said, “Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? <sup>12</sup> Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, <sup>13</sup> would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me.” <sup>14</sup> Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. <sup>15</sup> And she said, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” <sup>16</sup> But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. <sup>17</sup> Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.” <sup>18</sup> And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more. <sup>19</sup> So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, “Is this Naomi?”

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior,  
Jesus Christ!

Amen.

We pray these words all the time, but since your catechism days, have you really thought what they mean? “Our Father who art in heaven. . . . *What does this mean?* With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father”

(Luther’s Small Catechism, p. 19).

We might well ask what this has to do with Ruth. The answer is quite simple and clear: Ruth is God’s child too. Our heavenly Father invited Ruth to call him her dear Father, and He called her His dear child.

You might not consider this very surprising. We know that God “*desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim 2:4). Yet this was unknown in Israel.

In fact, there is great irony in the idea of Ruth calling God her Father. Ruth was a Moabite, a descendant of an incestuous union all the way back from Lot and his daughters. But now, she has a new Father, a Father in heaven.

This came about only by God’s grace. The story of Ruth is indeed, therefore, a beautiful example of how our Father in heaven gives us His grace and His bread.

Our Father in heaven gives what can only be called grace, because we do not deserve it. The names in this book reveal much about our sin and God’s grace (vv 1–5).

*Elimelech* means “my God is king.”      *Naomi* means “pleasant.”

Now when things are going well, it is easy to be pleasant and acknowledge God as king, but as we all know, that is not always the case. We have our own personal trials and problems. Some that others know about and some that only we know...those things that we don’t want to share with others, out of embarrassment or any other reason. So, this brings us to identifying with the next couple of names.

*Mahlon* and *Chilion* are names that mean “sick” and “pining.”

In verse 20 we are told that Naomi asked to be called “Mara”, which means bitter.

These names are an image of sinful nature. Somehow we seem to identify with these guys a little bit better because of our own sinful nature.

Ruth is a Moabite. This is an image of sinfulness as well, since Moabites were kept out of the kingdom of Israel to the tenth generation. So the names of these people point to you and your sin, whether you want to see it or not.

Like Mahlon and Chilion, you are sick and pining in your sin. You are dead in your trespasses. You, and the rest of mankind, go after other gods and lust for worldly things.

As they taste bitter to your mouth, you still rationalize your sins and serve yourself and your own interests rather than obey God’s precepts.

Like Ruth, you are a child of sin and corruption, you flee your Father’s discipline and You dwell in the midst of death.

Our Father has in grace visited His people and given them bread (vv 6–7). Bethlehem, from where Elimelech and Naomi fled, is the house of bread. Nothing can take that fact away, no matter how far we flee.

Despite their sin and shortcomings, the Father still loved and cared for His people. God’s grace draws Naomi to return to her heavenly Father’s home. Calling His children back while they still have that bitter taste in their mouth.

Even in the midst of all of Naomi’s loss of husband and children God, the heavenly Father provides Bread and more! Through Ruth, God has visited His people in the flesh (vv 16–19a). Naomi’s daughter-in-law accompanies her to Bethlehem and becomes the ancestor of the Babe of Bethlehem! (4:13–17).

God sent His Son to the city of Bread, Bethlehem, and our Father’s Son, our adopted Brother, Jesus, lived among us and gave the ultimate gift of grace—His life on the cross.

Now through His Son, our Father in heaven still graciously gives His people bread.

As we ask when we pray the Lord's Prayer, He gives us our daily bread. The things we need in this life, earthly and Spiritually.

He gives us the bread that is Christ's very body...Grace for the forgiveness of sins.

This house (the Church) is Bethlehem, the house of bread, where the heavenly Father feeds His children. No where else can you find the bread of life, eternal life!

Our Father's grace, not our commitment, provides everything we need. It's not within you. All grace comes from God. We come to God's table offering nothing, sometimes even worse than nothing because we had turned our backs on God, sometimes even with a curse. But God does not leave us in our sin.

The Father's grace and mercy are significant.

God is gracious and merciful apart from Ruth's commitment to her mother-in-law.

God draws Ruth, the foreigner who does not belong, into His family, just as He draws you, the stranger, the foreigner, the sinner, into His midst too. You are drawn as a sinner. God knows who and what you are and what you have done, but still, He calls you forward.

Our Father provides for you despite your sin. He is our source of hope, joy, health, and happiness.

He gives us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Furthermore, He gives us daily bread and living bread from heaven.

As we began, so we close with the explanation of Dr. Martin Luther in his Small Catechism: "Our Father who art in heaven. . . . Give us this day our daily bread. . . . And forgive us our trespasses. . . . [For] we are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace. . . . These petitions are pleasing to our Father in heaven. . . . Yes, yes, it shall be so" (Luther's Small Catechism, pp. 19–22).

Amen!

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through  
Christ Jesus.

Amen.