

13 July 2016
Pentecost 8 Midweek
Commemoration of Ruth

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Greenspring Village, Springfield, VA

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“Our Great Redeemer”

Text: Ruth 2:-13, 8-11; 4:13-17; Matthew 22:41-46

God does not look at people as we do. He does not judge value or worth as we do. In fact, we all look the same to Him: sinners. But sinners for whom He sent His Son to be Saviour.

And so it is with Ruth. Ruth *the Moabite*. You may not know who the people of Moab were, so I shall tell you. Moab was the name of a son of Lot, the nephew of Abraham. But not just any son. Moab was the son of Lot and his elder daughter, conceived after they fled the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. His daughters thought there would be no husbands for them - they all got killed in the fire and brimstone, after all. So they got their father drunk to have children by him, and hence Moab was born.

So imagine what the Jews thought of the Moabites. A nation of people that started with incest. Great sinners. Impure and unworthy.

But it was exactly a Moabite that God chose to be an ancestor of His Son. Incestuous, Moabite blood would flow through Jesus' veins. For Ruth was the mother of Obed, who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David. Yes, that David. King of Israel, from whom would come Christ Jesus. David's Lord become David's son. True God become true man.

But that is the point. Jesus didn't come to be above sinners or avoid sinners, but to become a sinner. To take our sinful blood, our sinful flesh, into Himself, and pay the price for it all. And not just the little sins and little sinners, but the really big ones, like incest. And He's not just descended from Jews for Jews, but from Jews, Moabites, and all sorts of people, to save all people.

Which means no matter who you are, where you're from, or what you've done, you're in Jesus and Jesus puts Himself in you. For in addition to taking our sinful flesh and blood into Himself, He gives His perfect flesh and righteous blood to you, in His Supper. He becomes the sinner, that we become sons. He becomes the outcast, the foreigner, that we become citizens of heaven. The story of Ruth teaches us how great a Saviour we have.

But there's another person in this story that we heard tonight - a man named Boaz. He was an Israelite, of the clan of Elimelech, from the tribe of Judah. He became Ruth's

redeemer - meaning a male relative who had the privilege or responsibility to act on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, danger, or need. And Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi *were* in trouble, danger, and need. They were widows with no means of support. And even though Ruth was a Moabitess, Boaz takes care of her, takes her in, and takes her as his wife. For, he tells her, word of all that she has done for Naomi has gotten around.

And Boaz, as a redeemer, gives us a picture of Jesus, *our* redeemer. But he is a mere shadow of Jesus, who is a much greater redeemer. For while we are foreigners like Ruth, word of all that we have done has gotten around also. But all that we have done is not good. There is nothing in us that would make Jesus choose us, redeem us. It is what is in Jesus that makes Him choose us - His love, His mercy, and His compassion. He sees us who are in trouble, danger, and need because of sin, death, and the devil, and He redeems us. He pays the price for us, for our forgiveness, and takes us to be His Bride. Brides of a Redeemer who conquered death and cannot die again, and so Brides who will never be widows. *Til death us do part* doesn't apply here. For not even death can separate Christ and His Bride, the Church.

So now Jesus, who is ascended and at the right hand of the Father, is waiting, as we are, for the marriage feast which will have no end. When all enemies will be put under His feet, the dead will be raised, and we will live with Him forever. When that day will come we know not. But we know that it is coming. As sure as the sun rises and sets, as sure as the seasons come and go, so is Jesus coming back for His Bride. For you.

Until then, maybe we can be like the third person in the story of Ruth that we heard tonight - Naomi. When the child was born to Boaz and Ruth, she ***took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse***. And we can do the same for others. Having been taken care of, protected, and provided for by our Redeemer, we can now do the same for others. We can lift them up, hold them up, and provide for them. In joy.

For just as this child was God's gift to Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi, so the people in our lives are God's gifts to us. They may not always feel like it or seem like it, but faith says yes. For all that God does is good, and all that He gives is good. Naomi and Ruth had been through a lot, but in the end it led to great joy and to a Saviour. You may have been through a lot - maybe are in deep right now. That's okay. Do not despair. You have a Redeemer, a Saviour, who has joined Himself to you and is not letting go.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.