

Matriarchs of Christ: Ruth

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael –August 17 2025

10th Sunday after Pentecost

Readings: Ruth 3:1-13, 4:13, 18-22; Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 1:26-33 NRSVUE

Reflection: Psalm 143

Call to Worship: With the loyal you show yourself loyal and with the blameless you show yourself blameless, O Lord. With the pure you show yourself pure and with the crooked you show yourself shrewd. For you deliver a humble people, but the proud you would bring down. It is you who light my lamp. The Lord, my God, lights up my darkness. (Psalm 18)

Prayer: O God, our Guide and Guardian, you have led us apart from the busy world into the quiet of your house. Grant us grace to worship you in Spirit and in truth, to the comfort of our souls and the upbuilding of every good purpose and holy desire. Enable us to do the work that you have called us to do, and that we may love one another in your name. Help us to live by the examples that you have given us, especially those from Scripture that teach us how to have faith, hope, justice, and peace. Let the examples of your faithful servants help us to learn and to grow in understanding and wisdom. Let us worship you this hour, not just by the words of our lips and the songs with our voice, but in word and deed all the days of our lives. May you shelter us in the storm, strengthen us by your steadfast love and faithfulness, and guide us in the paths of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 143

¹ Listen to my prayer, Lord! Because of your faithfulness, hear my requests for mercy! Because of your righteousness, answer me! ² Please don't bring your servant to judgment, because no living thing is righteous before you. ⁸ Tell me all about your faithful love come morning time, because I trust you. Show me the way I should go, because I offer my life up to you. ⁹ Deliver me from my enemies, Lord! I seek protection from you. ¹⁰ Teach me to do what pleases you, because you are my God. Guide me by your good spirit into good land. ¹¹ Make me live again, Lord, for your name's sake. Bring me out of distress because of your righteousness. (Psalm 143:1-2, 8-11 CEB+)

We read the words of Psalm 143, and we hear of God's mercy and grace. We hear about the faithfulness and trust we find with the Lord. That we turn to God for salvation because we know that he hears our prayers for mercy. That the Lord helps us in times of need. Do you reach out to God when you are worried about the future? Do you lift others in prayer when you are worried about them? How can you reach out and help a neighbor in need this week? How can we all share the kindness and grace of Christ with others? How can we do more to love our neighbor this week?

Prayer: O God, we turn to you in prayer, knowing that you are always listening. We come before you with our joys and our concerns, bringing all things to place before you. We ask that you listen to the troubles that we name out loud and that you hear the difficulties that we hold silently within. We ask that you hear our thanks for the causes we have to celebrate, both the

personal triumphs we are thankful for and also the celebrations we share together as a community. We come to you because of the good, the bad, and the unknown, lifting up all that we have and all that we are to you. May you guide us and lead us in this life. May you grant us wisdom, courage, and understanding. Bless us in our laughter and in our tears. Show us grace in our mourning and our celebrations. May we walk by faith, following you in the path of love. May you be with us all the days of our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible Updated Edition. Our first reading is from Ruth chapter 3, verses 1 through 13 and chapter 4 verses 13 and 18 through 22.

¹ Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. ² Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. ³ 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. ⁴ 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." ⁵ She said to her, "All that you say I will do." ⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her. ⁷ When Boaz had eaten and drunk and was in a contented mood, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came stealthily and uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸ At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and there, lying at his feet, was a woman! ⁹ He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you are next-of-kin." ¹⁰ He said, "May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter; this last instance of your loyalty is better than the first; you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, do not be afraid, I will do for you all that you ask, for all the assembly of my people know that you are a worthy woman. ¹² But now, though it is true that I am a near kinsman, there is another kinsman more closely related than I. ¹³ Remain this night, and in the morning, if he will act as next-of-kin for you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to act as next-of-kin for you, then, as the Lord lives, I will act as next-of-kin for you. Lie down until the morning." ¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. When they came together, the Lord made her conceive, and she bore a son. ¹⁸ Now these are the descendants of Perez: Perez became the father of Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron of Ram, Ram of Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab of Nahshon, Nahshon of Salmon, ²¹ Salmon of Boaz, Boaz of Obed, ²² Obed of Jesse, and Jesse of David. (Ruth 3:1-13, 4:13, 18-22 NRSVUE)*

Our next reading is from Isaiah chapter 11, verses 1 through 10.

¹ A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. ² The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. ³ His delight shall be in

the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see or decide by what his ears hear, ⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge for the poor and decide with equity for the oppressed of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist and faithfulness the belt around his loins. ⁶ The wolf shall live with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion will feed together, and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. ⁹ They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰ On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious. (Isaiah 11:1-10 NRSVUE)*

Our final reading is from Luke chapter 1, verses 26 through 33.

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:26-33 NRSVUE)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

The next entry in our Matriarchs of Christ series is Ruth. Ruth is the only one in this series that has a book of the Bible named after her. Ruth ends up with her own story. I think it's because of the way that her story goes and the way that it ties in so close to the story of David. Ruth is another outsider that we see in the genealogy from Matthew. I think that the role of outsider is one that is played up a lot because, as we have discussed, the Gospels speak a lot to the way that Christ came for all people. It helps us to fully flesh out this idea of who God's people are. And Ruth's story is one of loyalty and one of accepting change. It's one that ties in very much to the future of Israel. Part of that is just the way that Ruth ties into the overall story of David and of Christ.

Now, I could not include all of Ruth's story here. Because for that you would have to read all of the book of Ruth. It is not terribly long, and I highly recommend sitting down and reading all of it. It is a fascinating story. But I will give a brief overview because Ruth's loyalty is a big part of the story. The part that I did not include in the readings for today that I want to do summarize is that Ruth is the daughter-in-law of Naomi. Naomi goes into the land of Moab in the days of the judges with her husband because of a famine. While there, they have two sons and they both get married. All of the men die, leaving three widows. Naomi goes to send her two daughters-in-law back to their families so they can be taken care of because there's nothing she personally feels she can do for them. Naomi is going to return to Israel. One of the daughters turns back, but the other, Ruth, declares that she will go with Naomi wherever she goes. This means that Ruth leaves her home. And as we talked about last week, being an

Israelite is more than just a nation. It is a full identity. But Ruth says she will follow Naomi and let her people be her own people and her God be her own God. Ruth trusts Naomi completely. When they go back, Naomi knows about close family that could take care of them and that would be able to take Ruth in. She gives Ruth instructions to go into Boaz's field and to work there.

Where we pick up is Naomi trying to secure a future and gives Ruth instructions to go and find Boaz. Now, there's layers to this and I recommend you come find me if you want to know about all the euphemisms and the different expressions. But for our story, the important part is that Ruth is faithful and trustworthy, and she listens to Naomi and does exactly what she says. All of these acts impress Boaz. Boaz is impressed by her loyalty. That she has gone to find a kinsman, that she has come to him and she has been loyal, and that she has been trustworthy, and that she has done exactly what she needed to do. She is reliable. And so, Boaz lets her know he is not actually the closest next of kin, but he will go to them and if they refuse, he will act as next of kin, meaning that he will marry her. And so, Boaz goes and asks and he takes on the responsibility and Ruth and Boaz marry. Naomi is now taken care of because Ruth was loyal to her and followed her. And Ruth and Boaz have a son. This is where we tie into the larger picture of Israel and of Christianity. Because they have Obed. And Obed is the father of Jesse. And Jesse is the father of David. And if we remember last week, Boaz's mother was Rahab. And so, we see how this ties into the overall genealogy that we have been working with.

But it also shows how it ties into the story of Israel and the story of Christ. Because Jesse is a familiar name. Because it's a name we hear about from Isaiah. In Isaiah, we hear about the shoot that shall come out of the stump of Jesse. A branch shall grow from his roots. And this is common language for the prophetic texts. This is a very well-known verse from Isaiah. That Isaiah 11 has some of the best known language that we have in all of the Old Testament. Because it talks about this branch that shall come from Jesse. This line that comes from trustworthy and faithful Ruth. In the parts that you'd probably recognize more than others. We hear of wolves living with lambs, leopards lying down with kids, calves and lions feed together. It is a very moving picture of peace. And the little child will lead them. This kind of peace is what we associate with Christ. It is interesting to me that Ruth comes from Moab and yet is tied into this lineage that gives us the King that united all of Israel and these prophecies of Christ. Of the peace he will bring. That the Spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, with wisdom and understanding, counsel and might. I think that's why Ruth is included in the genealogy by name.

We see this again with this reference to David when we hear of Mary. This is a little bit of foreshadowing. In a couple of weeks, we will talk again about Mary. But Mary ties in here because they bring up the throne of David. We hear that Joseph is of the house of David. This helps to tie into the genealogies that we have. And the thing I wanted to point out from our reading from Luke is all of these things tie into what we hear from Isaiah. They bring the genealogy together. It ties into the throne of David. This is salvation for the house of Jacob, for the people of Israel. And so, when we hear the throne of David, that ties us back to Jesse and the lineage that we have that gives us King David. And that it stems from this line back to Ruth. I think that this line ties in so much because David is the king that unites the land. The man after God's own heart. It helps to give us this idea of where David came from. We have the

story of Ruth as a reminder of the way that things happen. And they are unexpected for us because it is hard to know what God is up to. But it also highlights the way that God can use unexpected people in unexpected ways.

That if we were looking for the Israelite of Israelites and the Savior of all Israel, we may not be looking for a foreigner like Ruth. We may not be looking for someone that is an outsider to the land. We may not be looking for someone whose connection to the Israelites is that she followed her mother-in-law and trusted her completely. But Ruth's faithfulness is an example to us all. She is faithful to her mother-in-law, follows her, lets her God be the God of them both, her people be the people of them both. And she listens and she finds home. She finds them a place they can both belong and in doing so reminds us of how we all have a place where we belong in Christ. And for me, that is a huge part of why Ruth is included in the genealogy. Because she is a shining example of faithfulness. Of trust. Of willingness to change. She is wise and she secures a place for both her and Naomi. If she hadn't listened, who knows what would have happened to them. If she hadn't followed Naomi's instructions, things would have gone very differently. But she shows to be wise, to be faithful, to be trustworthy. I think that all of those things coming from someone who comes from outside of Israel are meant to be a sign to us of the way that God reaches those who he needs to reach. Not because of their heritage, but because of their character.

I think that's one of the common things that we see with the women listed in the genealogy of Matthew, is it is the strength of their character that has placed them there. That though they are outsiders, though they might be the least and the last, their impact on the story of Israel cannot be overstated. And so, I encourage you to go and read all of Ruth. Maybe you've read it before, but I encourage you to read it again to see what it is that makes Ruth so special, so that we understand Christ that much better. They are listed as part of Christ's genealogy because they speak to the type of things that we see in Christ and the way that we behave when we are of Christ. And so, I pray that we will all take to heart the lessons that we learn from Ruth. To be trustworthy, to be faithful, and that we study these stories so that we may continue to grow in wisdom, understanding, in faith, and in grace. And may we walk ever closer with Jesus Christ our Lord in all that we have, and in all that we are, so that we may remember all that Christ is for us on this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Matriarchs of Christ

This series is a 5-week series for the month of August and in it we will be looking at the five women in the genealogy found in the Gospel of Matthew. Each week we will cover another woman from the line of Jesus. We will hear about Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary. Each of them is a shining example of faith and strength and teaches us about how we can live our lives today.

8/3: Tamar

8/10: Rahab

8/17: Ruth

8/24: Bathsheba

8/31: Mary

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Toledo UMC

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Worship 9:30am

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