



Newsletter from the Bury St Edmunds Circuit
for Sunday 5th July 2020

Sunday Service

You can access the videoed service at
<http://trinitymethodistchurch.org.uk/worshipthisweek.htm>
or if you would like to join a Zoom Sunday service then please contact
Rev Rita or Rev Debbie for the link.

Dear Friends,

During the month of July we will be exploring the Book of Ruth as we follow the material for Bible Month. You may like to sit down and read it from beginning to end to get the full picture. Each week we will be reading a chapter of the book and focussing on one character from the story.

5 th July	Chapter 1	Orpah
12 th July	Chapter 2	Boaz
19 th July	Chapter 3	Ruth
26 th July	Chapter 4	Naomi

Through focussing on a single biblical book, we can gain a greater sense of its literary and historical context, whilst seeing how it applies to our lives today. Please find below a short introduction to Ruth to give you some background which I hope will give you more understanding to this book.

So I hope, like me, you enjoy reading the Book of Ruth as we explore together. *God Bless, Rita, Debbie and Ruth.*

This beautiful short story revolves around relationships. The theme of the story can be found in chapter 2: 12 “whoever seeks shelter with God of Israel will be rewarded”. It is about the movement from emptiness to fulfilment which is expressed on two planes, the agricultural and the personal. Perhaps to see part of the purpose of the book of Ruth we need to turn to chapter 4:18 – 22, the family tree, and Matthew 1: 5-6 the genealogy of Jesus, where we see the importance of Boaz and Obed.

We do not know who wrote Ruth, nor it's dating, however we do know that it was written during the gap between the judges and the kings and is set in the rule of the judges. At the height of the time was the identity of ethnic boundaries during the period of the Persian rule. This is all the more interesting when we realise that Elimelech and his family were from Bethlehem and are in the foreign land of Moab.

In the Jewish Bible, Ruth forms part of the five scrolls and is read in the synagogue on Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks. The events told in Ruth span a period somewhat equivalent to that of Passover to Shavuot, that is, the seven week period from the beginning of the barley harvest to the end of the wheat harvest. King David was traditionally thought to have been born and died on Shavuot.

It is a story that is destined to go wrong very quickly which is depicted by the names in our opening verses:-

Bethlehem = the house of bread, therefore a pun on the famine

Ephrathites = another name for Bethlehem

Elimelech = My God is King, and yet this is the era of the Judges

Naomi = pleasant

Mahlon = sickness

Chilion = consumptive

Orpah = back of the neck

Ruth = friend/companion

Ruth and Orpah can be linked to water,

Ruth = satisfied/saturated and Orpah = cloud

Boaz = in him is strength

Obed = servant

These traits describe to some degree, the role or the fate of the character within the story. Combined with the pun in v.1, the symbolic nature of these names suggests that Ruth should not be read as a historical text.

The story portrays Ruth, Naomi and Boaz as models of hesed, that is, of loyalty and commitment that goes beyond the bounds of law or duty. Related to the motif of hesed is the role of God. God is mentioned numerous times by the three main characters, but the actions of the story are never explicitly mentioned as deriving from God. This is a story of redemption - God redeems us - and how we can work to help redemption for us, for others and for those we do not yet know.

If you wish to find out more you may enjoy the lecture by Dr Rachel Starr
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLJTH-Zx1Vc&feature=youtu.be> part 1, and part 2 automatically follows on

Some information from the Jewish Study Bible Tanakh Translation and Bible month 30 days with Ruth