

SERMON NOTES: MAR. 2ND

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Ruth 1: 1-5, 11-22, Luke 6: 27-36

The Beautiful Teacher...our last class in the SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS, the insights we glean from experience: LOVE. Its lessons are beautiful, but they can also be painful. Consider Naomi/Elimelech, a couple who are forced by a famine in Israel to move to Moab. It was a pagan culture, a land of strange people/customs, whom Moses told them to avoid. Ten years pass; their 2 sons marry Moabite women, Orpah/Ruth, a clear violation of Torah. Far from home, surrounded by people with whom she had little in common, Naomi kept saying, “things could be worse”. Then, they got worse. Her husband died, and then later 2 sons died.

THE LONG WALK HOME...Naomi is stranded with 2 daughters-in-law, three women linked by tragedy, trying to survive, with no SOCIAL SECURITY to aid penniless widows. It wasn't the life she imagined. Her only option: to go home to Bethlehem and sponge off relatives. She urges Orpah/Ruth to stay in Moab, but Ruth refuses to leave her. She clings to her...

Don't press me to leave you. Where you go, I'll go; where you lodge I'll lodge; your people will be my people; your God will be my God"

Where did Ruth discover faith in a pagan culture? What little she knew of God, she observed in Naomi. Ruth didn't know what the future held. At Naomi's advanced age, her vow to stay with Naomi wasn't an idle promise. They take the LONG WALK down the same road Naomi traveled 10 years before. Instead of family reunions, grandkids, and memories happy home, all Naomi had was misery. She wanted to scream but who would listen. If life doesn't go as planned, we have a choice: we can get cynical and look for people to blame or we can let God lead us.

AT THE END OF OUR WITS...she came home screaming. If, like Naomi, you have reached the end of your wits, you'll find God there. Her love story took many turns. She'd lost everything in life that she held dear. God wasn't finished with her. It is wise not to CONFUSE GOD WITH LIFE. Book of Ruth isn't a ROMANCE NOVEL/SOAP OPERA; it is part of a LARGER LOVE STORY being played out in the bible: the saga of God/his unconditional love for his people. It has no angels, voices from heaven. God works behind the scenes in mysterious ways. Love had one LAST LESSON to teach Naomi. Ruth meets a man named Boaz. Naomi plays matchmaker, hatches a plan to move him past attraction to romance. Her friends rally around Naomi. They embrace Ruth as part of community. Love may run late but never too late.