



Advent Reflection: November 29, 2018

"In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. 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."
Ruth 1.1-2

Friends and Colleagues serving together in God's mission within the Presbytery of Riverside, greetings;

We've begun a new year in the Church both universal and specific, global and local: Advent; the time of preparing for the annual celebration of Jesus' birth, when God took the risk of taking on flesh: "... the Word became flesh and lived among us..." (John 1.14a)

One of the challenges of being the Body of Christ is to embrace both the necessity and the opportunity of risk taking. More often than not, the church embodies the perspective of being an organization to be preserved than an organism to be nurtured. Organisms have the ability to adapt, to adjust. They embody an inner sense of what is needed not only to survive but also to thrive. One important question regarding whether we as a church—the Presbyterian Church in this case—can survive/thrive is whether we will accept the Triune God's invitation in the person of Jesus through the passion and purpose of the Holy Spirit to embrace risk. The Book of Ruth illustrates how God sustains those who embrace risk.

Ruth begins with the naming of a significant challenge: there is "famine in the land". Apparently the famine is serious enough that life as usual in Bethlehem in Judah is not sustainable, and the family chooses to move in order to find food to survive, to thrive. They moved to a foreign land and "remained there". Many of us feel like we now find ourselves in a foreign land when it comes to understanding the challenges we face as communities of faith. In addition to the despair we feel, what opportunity is God offering to be present to us and through us? What is the equivalent of "famine" for us? What are "moves" we could make/need to make? What is the extent of the risk—the equivalent of moving to a foreign land—we would need to embrace? Or if are we already in the "foreign land", what risk(s) do we embody to not only survive but to potentially thrive?

For the next four weeks I'll be inviting us to reflect on such questions stimulated by this love story named Ruth as we prepare to celebrate God's ultimate Love story: Jesus. Thank you for your commitment to God's Gospel in the person of Jesus through the passion and purpose of the Holy Spirit and for your commitment to thriving as well as surviving.

Be Well...

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