



Advent Reflection: December 13, 2018

Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go, my daughter." So she went. She came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. As it happened she came to the part of the field belong to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech...Boaz said to Ruth, "Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women...I have ordered the young men not to bother you.... Selected verses from Ruth 2.2-9

Friends and Colleagues in ministry in God's mission within Riverside Presbytery greetings;

Advent is the season 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). In this season Ruth shares insights into risk taking God is inviting us to embrace.

Having gone from a family of four with three men, to three with two, to five with two, to three with none, to two with none, Naomi and Ruth need to find their own way. Ruth offers to go and glean to provide food for both of them, as the barley harvest has begun.

Jewish law required farmers to leave a part of their harvest for gleaning by the poor (Lev. 19.9-10; 23.22; Deut. 24.19-22), and Naomi and Ruth qualify as "poor". Ruth finds her way to a field belonging to Boaz who learns who she is from the laborers working his land.

Once again, we know the story. Boaz is of the family of Elimelech and thus related to Naomi. The storyteller shares with us that Boaz admires Ruth and her fidelity to her mother in law and as chapter two advances he orders his workers to be extra kind and generous to Ruth and thus to Naomi. The storyteller also shares with us, subtly, how there is risk involved for a single young woman in the midst of the fields at harvest time and how Boaz offers her additional protection throughout the season of harvest. Ruth continues to receive this protection through both the barley harvest and the wheat harvest (2.23).

Ruth finds herself in a new neighborhood as a foreigner (she is often referred to as 'Ruth the Moabite') but it is now the neighborhood in which she lives with Naomi. How are we strangers in the neighborhoods where our congregations exist? What work with others is God offering to us in the neighborhoods within which our congregations exist? How would we know? What are the 'risks' that need to be identified and accepted as we move out into these neighborhoods? Can we trust God to provide us 'favor'? How would we know?

Thank you for reflecting on these questions as you prepare to celebrate God's great risk in the presence and presents of Jesus. May you find them helpful amidst your commitment to thriving as well as surviving as children of God.

Be Well...

Timm