



Advent Reflection: December 6, 2018

"But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. Then Naomi started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab..." Ruth 1.3-6a

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

Ruth begins with the naming of a significant challenge: there is "famine in the land. The family moves in order to find food to survive, to thrive, to Moab, a foreign land, and they "remained there". A new challenge: Elimelech dies. Ruth still has her two sons. They settle in and marry Moabite women, but after 'about ten years' Mahlon and Chilion die. The family has gone from four with three men, to three with two men, to five with two men, to three with no men. A new challenge: there are no men in the family to provide for the women.

Naomi hears that there is once again food in Judah, and she decides to return, to make her way back in her home country. The ensuing story is a familiar one, as initially Orpah and Ruth set out with her until Orpah turns back, leaving Naomi and Ruth to continue.

Naomi chooses to act: the storyteller shares enough for us to learn that Naomi, after discerning, decides that she has a better chance at making a way—her way—back in Judah. Whether or not she had the option of staying in Moab with either Orpah or Ruth, Naomi risks moving back home after living more than ten years in Moab. Naomi adapts, embodying a characteristic of an organism: adjusting to the reality at hand even amidst her grief.

Many of us feel there is a need to "move" metaphorically if not literally. What "deaths" have occurred in our midst that both need to be grieved and examined for opportunities God is presenting to us? What are hopes that we have held that need to be reimagined given the present circumstances? What exists in the present to help us understand God's preferred future for us as a community of faith? How might God be inviting us to 'return' to an aspect of our past in order to be faithful in the present and into the future?

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...

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