

St. Luke Ev.

Lutheran Church

Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz

December 11, 2013 Advent Vesper #2.

Ruth 1:16,17 NIV 2011



¹⁶ But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.”

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

Today God’s Word reminds us that Jesus came to save people from all nations, tribes, languages and peoples! When you are a little person – you learn about different countries – different races. When I was in 3rd grade – we moved from near Peoria to West Chicago. One of my three best friends was Gary Kiiskilia. K-i-i-s-k-i-l-i-a. Gary Kiiskilia is Finnish – from Finland! My best friend Gary Kiiskilia came from a country of tough people. That Olympic event – the biathlon – where you ski – and then shoot a bolt action sniper rifle and then ski some more – was invented by the Finns. When during World War II – the Nazis with their Blitz Krieg – their lightning warfare – were pounding just about everyone – the Finns were pounding the Nazis! My best friend Gary Kiiskilia was tough. He even had a tough cat named Snuffles! My best friend Gary Kiiskilia was Finnish. Well – actually he was adopted! That’s the coolest thing in the whole wide world – to be adopted. His parents pick him – chose him – adopted him – gave him their family name – gave them his Finnish heritage. Jesus adopted you and me. He picked us – chose us – by grace alone and gave us an inheritance in Heaven. That’s what Advent and Christmas are all about. Jesus was born to save us. Today we are going to look at the example of Ruth to be reminded:

The Savior Was To Be Savior Of All Nations!

- 1. People come from different backgrounds**
- 2. Jesus came to forgive us all!**

Context! To understand the part of God we are concentrating on – we need to understand the time of the Judges. If you read the letter to the Hebrews – chapter 11 – the Heroes of Faith chapter it says, “**And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah...**” These are just some of the Judges. Have you read Judges? Have you read about an enemy of God’s people – named Adoni-Bezek. Adoni-Bezek was a cruel man. He defeated some 70 kings and cut off their thumbs and big toes – and had then pick up scraps from under his table. Cut off thumbs and big toes. What’s the point of that? Think it through. Back in the day before TV and smart phones and the Internet – you had to make your own entertainment. So – if you had 70 kings – you could tie them up so their arms were tight by their sides. Then you line them up – just close enough – say 5 feet apart. Then you take the first guy and throw a big rock to him. He tries to catch it – but he can’t – so he drops it on his foot – and stumbles – because he doesn’t have big toes – to dig in – to keep him from falling – and he falls

into the next guy – who tries mightily – but he can't keep his balance either – so he falls down – and bumps the next king – and if you do it just right – you could knock over all 70 of them. And then – you could have them all picked up – dusted off – and you could do it again! Sometimes we think we live in a time of rudeness and crudeness and coarseness the likes of which has seldom been seen. And still the words of Solomon still ring true. “There is nothing new under the sun.” And again, “Meaningless! Meaningless! Utterly meaningless. Everything is meaningless!” Put yourself back in time – back in Bethlehem--some 150 years before the shepherd King David lived. There was a man named Elimelech who was married to Naomi. They were blessed with two sons – named Mahlon and Kilion. There was a cycle that repeated again and again – in the days of the judges. The people sinned – wandered and strayed – because of temptation and because of weakness – the people sinned. Moses said, “ Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, “Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. Deuteronomy 30:11f When the people strayed after false gods – fertility cult worship and all sorts of physical and spiritual adultery – the LORD would send famine – to call them to repentance. And then he would send a Judge to lead them back to faithfulness.

In the days of Naomi and Elimelech – and their sons Mahlon and Kilion there was a famine in Judah – the south of Israel – so the family moved to Moab. Moab was across the Jordan River. Moabites – were cousins of the children of Israel – descendants of Lot! Moabites didn't really love their cousins – the Israelites. And what's far worse – Moabites worshiped false gods. Back in Bible times names often had meaning and significance. Elimelech means God is my King! That sounds pretty good. Naomi means lovely and pleasant. That sounds pretty good, too. Mahlon and Kilion mean wimpy and sickly. That's not so good – the original wimpy kid?! And Ruth means a rose. That's sweet, too!

Elimelech died. His sons Wimpy and Sickly married local girls – Moabite girls – and then without leaving any children – any heirs – they too died. Thus Naomi and her daughters-in-law were left alone! Now what? Naomi – lovely and pleasant “heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, ‘Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.’ Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud and said to her, “We will go back with you to your people.” Naomi – lovely and pleasant said, “No – just go back to your moms’.

¹⁶ But Ruth replied, “Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Ruth – the Moabite – the descendant from Lot – from a land and people who worshiped false gods – fertility gods – was going to come back to Judah – to Bethlehem – with Naomi. This was all part of God's gracious saving plan! Ruth – the Moabite – from a different nation and

different people would be part of Jesus' family tree. Ruth would end up being King David's great-grandma! How wonderful would that be?

¹⁶ But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." Your people my people – and most important by eternally far – your God my God! We have brothers and sisters in Christ – literally around the world! When you get to Heaven you will meet a Pastor from Nigeria named Simon. I would say you would recognize him from his big smile – but I imagine everyone will be smiling in Heaven. Simon has this big wonderful smile. To see him you would never guess he was robbed. Someone burst through the colored – brightly colored bed sheet that was his front door. The robber had a shotgun. Simon ran out the back door – and the robber shot him – in the back with his shotgun. Simon had 23 bbs in his shoulder. He said, "I thank Jesus I was shot in the back!" Would you say that? "I thank Jesus I was shot in the back?" I think in a moment of weakness I would say, "Where was my guardian angel? How come I got shot in the back?!" Simon said, "I thank Jesus I was shot in the back." He said, "I have big strong shoulders! I am thankful I was not shot in the face – was not shot so that I lost my sight – or shot so that my mouth and my teeth and my throat were hurt! I thank Jesus that 20 bbs are out and only 3 left inside for now!" There won't be any bbs left when you meet Simon in Heaven! **Your people will be my people!**

¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." We had a wedding just 4 days ago. Lucas and Nicole promised to be husband and wife. They promised to love, honor and cherish each other – and keep with you this body of wedlock – holy and unbroken – till death do us part! We always so that last phrase slowly – till death do us part. Think about that. In the middle of one of the most happy events in your whole life – death intrudes. Again and again – on the altar at a wedding – a bouquet of flowers – many times roses – one for each grandma and grandpa or aunt or uncle or sometimes even sibling – that went to Heaven – and on this wedding day they are sorely missed! A young man in college – a college named Word Incarnate – God's Word made flesh – that would be Jesus. This young man – they say – was driving erratically. It could be he had been drinking. When he was stopped he struggled with the campus police officer and was shot 3 times and died. He died – barely 2 weeks before Christmas! How sad is that?

Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. When I can – I watch for the mail lady. You never ever know what will come in the mail. The most wonderful surprises come in the mail! This last week we got a postcard – a huge post card – some 10" x 6". It's from Northwestern Publishing House – Lenten Resources for Lent 2014. I thought of one of my favorite Garrison Keillor quotes, "If you're from the Midwest and Lutheran it's always Lent!" It is! Don't get me wrong – I love Advent and I love Christmas and New Year's and Epiphany. But Lent! Lent is the best! This year Ash Wednesday is March 5th. This year the 2014 Lenten Series is entitled From Garden to Glory – From Garden to Glory. That makes immediate sense – doesn't it? From the Garden of Eden to the Garden of Gethsemane to Christ's garden – Joseph's garden where Jesus rose from the dead – then Paradise – the Garden of Heaven. The texts are from Genesis, the Gospels and the Revelation to St. John! The practice sermons are by Pastor Werre from Peace in Sun Prairie! It's entirely appropriate that just before Christmas – we remember Christmas is all about getting ready for Lent – for Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and Easter. Advent is about Jesus' ultimate sacrifice to redeem us!

Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Family, relatives and friends – sometimes they are near you and some times they move away and then sometimes they come back again. I think of people like Prof. Eickmann. I had Prof. Eickmann for Hebrew back in 1971, that sounds like a very long time ago – 1971 through 1975. I even played pool one time – with Prof. Eickmann in Dr. Lehmann’s basement. Prof. Eickmann was always exceedingly precise. I remember one time he made a particularly difficult pool shot that afternoon. He thought about the shot. Put chalk on the end of his pool cue – line up the shot very precisely – hit the cue ball which very slowly and carefully hit the ball it was supposed to hit – which preceded very slowly across the pool table until it fell very precisely into the corner pocket. I said, “Wow! That was a very good shot. You could almost fall asleep between when that shot started and when it finished!” Without missing a beat – Prof. Eickmann said, “Almost like waiting for an answer in class some days!” That was pretty good. I miss Prof. Eickmann whose last word to me in the hospital was **שלום**. The day is surely coming – when I will see Prof. Eickmann and Prof. Scharf and Prof. Sellnow and Dr. Lehmann. The day is surely coming when we will see our brothers and sisters in Heaven because Jesus is their God and your God and my God. Soon we will see Jesus face to face by grace alone. Amen!