

SERMON NOTES – RUTH #2: WEIGHTY WORDS!

Ruth 1:8-10,14-18

But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law,
*“May the LORD show grace to you,
as you have been gracious to the dead and me.
May the LORD grant that you may find rest,
each of you in the home of a new husband!”*

Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept...

So Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her so Naomi said,
*“See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people
and to her gods. Return after your sister-in-law.”*

But Ruth said,
*“Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go
I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people shall be my people, and
your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the
LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”*

And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

WEIGHTY WORDS?

Sadness, love, loss! Old Naomi has lost her husband and two sons. Now she speaks to her dead son's wives – newly widowed Ruth and Orpah. She's setting them free to go home and remarry. It's easy to be drawn to the words of Ruth at the end. She vows to leave her homeland for her mother-in-law, but she finishes by literally cursing herself with what is called a 'contingent curse' (if I don't may God kill me). This is not a right or healthy way to use God's name. Jesus specifically said we should never do this! (Matt 6:34) But the most weighty words are what Naomi's says to the two girls at the start:

*“May the LORD show grace to you, as you have been gracious to the dead and me.
May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the home of a new husband!”*

These words call on the name of the LORD in the right way. When you see LORD written in capitals in a Bible it's the name of God: Yahweh, which means "I Am". Notice also that these words seem prophetic: they create or predict coming events. The words of Ruth are SWEAR, but Naomi's words are PRAYER!

This is the first of six prayers in the book of Ruth (see 1:8-9, 2:12, 2:20, 3:10, 4:11-12, 4:14-15 and perhaps 2:4). But these six prayers are all of a special kind...

BLESSINGS ARE WEIGHTY WORDS

Blessings are a key to the book of Ruth. They mostly start with God's name and in English they often use a word like "may". This is because blessings speak to God and also for God!

BLESSING IS:

Speaking God's grace directly into a person's ears and life!

Notice that the blessing starts with "grace". The Old Testament version of grace is the Hebrew word HESED which means: kindness, generosity, commitment, promise, dependability, grace and love. Naomi is firstly calling on God's grace and goodness for these girls. But she also speaks it specifically into their lives for new husbands. So blessing often starts with "I". "I bless you..."

WHAT IF OUR CALL IS TO BLESS THOSE AROUND US?

Roy Godwin was called to serve a broken down and almost closed prayer retreat in Wales called Ffald y Brenin where he learned to bless people... *“Because we're in an agricultural community, we bless the flocks and herds. We bless the grass so that it will be nutritious in winter when it wouldn't normally be. We bless supportive networks of friendship that run through the community, because they're a sign of God's kingdom. We bless the students of our rural school and ask God to aid their learning. We bless the teachers and pray that school may be a safe and wholesome place...”* - Roy Godwin, "The Grace Outpouring"

WE CAN BLESS PEOPLE NOT FROM OUR OWN RESOURCES OR POWER, BUT FROM GOD'S ABUNDANT GRACE.

You can bless too. In Jesus you have the authority to do this. God's gift of grace to you means that not only is God's love yours, but it's yours to give. A great way to start is to learn and use Aaron's blessing printed below. Write it on a card for your wallet!

“May the Lord bless you and keep you, May the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look on you with favour and give you peace. Amen.” - Numbers 6:24-25

“I bless you in the name of Jesus, I bless you to know God's purpose for your life. Amen.”

“I bless you that the Holy Spirit strengthen your inner being. May Christ live in your heart. May you be grounded in the Father's love. May you grasp how wide and long and high and deep God's love. Amen.” - Ephesians 3.

“God in your speaking, God in your thinking. God in your sleeping, God in your waking, God in your working, God in your resting. God on your lips, God in your heart. Amen.”
- An Old Celtic Blessing

We stand in the Name of Jesus and bless this place, that all who live/work/rest/learn here might prosper. We bless this place that justice and mercy might take their proper place here. We bless this place that the God's grace and peace might rest upon all who come here. We bless the poor that they might be lifted up. We bless this place that the knowledge of Jesus might come here like a flood. We bless the people in this place, that they would become a blessing to the world. We bless the people of God of this place for strength for the journey, that the joy of the Lord might be their strength. Amen.
- From a prayer from Ffald-y-Brenin