

Notes for Next Sunday

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Ruth 1:1-19a). These events took place within an 11-year period during the time of the Judges. Recorded famines were comparatively seldom in the account of Israel's history, but certainly they were not unusual. For the rains that came in the three winter months have always been uncertain and often insufficient. Ironically, in Ruth 1:1 an Israelite family is forced to leave Bethlehem ("house of bread/food"), which had no food for them, and they travel for food to the land of the Moabites, who had refused to offer food to the Israelites on their way to Canaan. Marriage with Moabites (Ruth 1:4) was not expressly forbidden in the Torah of Moses, although the stipulation that Moabite men could not be received into the congregation of Israel for ten generations would be a factor against it. Ruth's confession of faith and commitment (1:16-17) has been praised as "one of the most beautiful confessions of love in all literature, a classic expression of faithfulness and of loyalty in the Bible.

Epistle (2 Timothy 2:1-13). This is being written when Paul was awaiting execution. Paul had taught and publicly affirmed Timothy's calling as a pastor. Timothy must now to teach and affirm other men who are qualified for the pastoral office. Toward that end Paul gives three examples for Timothy to follow: (1) a soldier who wants to please his commander; (2) an athlete who follows the rules of the game; and (3) a farmer who works hard. (CSB) Paul also urges an ongoing reflection upon God's salvation story, which centers on the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Gospel (Luke 17:11-19). This takes place as Jesus in on His way to suffer, die and rise again. Luke is highlighting the fact that Jesus was deliberately going the long way to Jerusalem. He wanted to minister to as many people as possible on his way to Jerusalem. The phrase *have pity on us* is carried on in our present day (kyrie). Adopted in the Church's liturgy as a cry for salvation. (TLSB) Normally Jews did not associate with Samaritans (Jn 4:9), but leprosy broke down social barriers. The healed Samaritan received an additional blessing from Jesus, his faith has saved him for eternity.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Ruth 1:1-19a

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. ²The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. ³Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, ⁵both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. ⁶When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. ⁷With 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. ⁸Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. ⁹May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them and they wept aloud ¹⁰and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people." ¹¹But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? ¹²Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for

me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—¹³ would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD’s hand has gone out against me!”¹⁴ At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her.¹⁵ “Look,” said Naomi, “your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.”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.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 anything but death separates you and me.”¹⁸ When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.¹⁹ So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem.

To reach this area, Elimelech and his family had to journey on foot about a hundred miles from Bethlehem, going through the deep Jordan Rift around the north shore of the Dead Sea. This move put them outside of the area of both their faith and Israel’s Law, in a potentially precarious existence. Though not enjoying full rights as citizens, strangers would normally receive from their hosts essential protection. The family probably intended to stay in Moab only temporarily, without becoming integrated into the host people. (CC)

Orpah and Ruth were probably no older than teenagers, for youthful marriages were common. (CC)

The main point in Ruth is to show how God’s people, exemplified by faithful Naomi and Ruth the convert, react to adversity in dependence upon him, according to the theology of the cross.

1:6 the LORD had come to the aid of his people. God’s people see His providence in everything. God had remembered to give food, particularly to Bethlehem, “the house of bread.” (TLSB)

1:11 sons, who could become your husbands. Naomi alludes to the Israelite law (Dt 25:5–6) regarding levirate marriage which was given to protect the widow and guarantee continuance of the family line. (CSB)

1:15 her gods. Orpah had believed and worshiped as her husband did. She now renounced her faith in the God of Israel, thinking she could better care for herself than could the Lord. (TLSB)

1:19 whole town was stirred. More than 10 years had passed since Naomi had left in far better circumstances than when she returned (v 4). (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 2 Timothy 2:1-13

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.³ Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.⁴ No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer.⁵ Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules.⁶ The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.⁷ Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel,⁹ for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained.¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.¹¹ Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him;¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us;¹³ if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

2:7 *give you understanding*. Working through His Word, the Lord opens eyes (Ps 119:18) and minds (cf Lk 24:45) to understand the Scriptures. (TLSB)

2:9 *I am suffering...bound with chains*. Not merely under house arrest, as in Ac 28:30, but in a dungeon. (TLSB)

2:9 *not bound!* The living and active Word (Heb 4:12) cannot be imprisoned or chained—it accomplishes God’s desires (Is 55:11). (TLSB)

2:13 *He will remain faithful*. God remains true to himself. He is love. He will remain faithful even if we are not. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

GOSPEL – Luke 17:11-19

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” 14 When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. 15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. 17 Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” 19 Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

17:11 border between Samaria and Galilee. From this point Jesus seems to have journeyed to Perea, where he ministered on his way south to Jerusalem. (CSB)

17:12 into the village. Jesus deliberately went into this village, almost certainly because he wanted to encounter people to whom he could minister. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

17:12 they stood at a distance. According to the requirements of the Law (Lev 13:46; Num 5:2-4), these 10 lepers would have been outside of the village, and would have had to warn Jesus that they were unclean before they approached him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

17:14 show yourselves to the priests. The fact that Jesus told them to show themselves to the priest was normal procedure after a cure from leprosy. (Lev. 13 and 14) The Greek word *lepra* signifies a dreaded condition of the skin, including what is now regarded as leprosy, as well as certain other types of infectious skin diseases, resulting in a person’ being regarded as ceremonially unclean and thus excluded from normal relations with other people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

The key issue in ancient Israel was not the virulence or contagiousness of the disease, but the religious and social dimension. Those who had been diagnosed as lepers by the priest were required to separate themselves from the community. This was not for medical but for religious reasons. Biblical lepers were treated not as ill but as ritually unclean. The priest had no technique for healing lepers; he only determined whether or not they had been healed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

In cleansing lepers Jesus teaches a number of things that would be insightful for those who are catechizing Gentiles and for their Gentile catechumens. First, the miracle is a sign that the messianic era of salvation is present in Jesus (7:22). Second, the cleansing comes from Jesus, whose holy flesh reaches out in compassion and mercy to a leper. The one who is “clean” crosses over the boundary to one who is “unclean” in order to make him clean. The border between Galilee and Samaria also separated those who were “clean” (Jews) from the “unclean” (Samaritans). Third, Jesus supersedes the OT holiness code (Leviticus 12–26) with his own holiness. The cleansing of these ten lepers, however, is connected to a fourth circumstance. Jesus sends them to the priests *to be cleansed spiritually*. (CC pp. 652-653)