

07 November 2021

Ruth 3.1-5; 4.13-17

¹ One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, 'My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for. ² Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing-floor.

³ Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing-floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.'

⁵ 'I will do whatever you say,' Ruth answered.

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

¹⁴ The women said to Naomi: 'Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! ¹⁵ He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.'

¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. ¹⁷ The women living there said, 'Naomi has a son!' And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Psalm 127

¹ Unless the Lord builds the house:
their labour is but lost that build it.

² Unless the Lord keeps the city:
the watchmen watch in vain.

³ It is in vain that you rise up early and go so late to rest,
eating the bread of toil:
for the Lord bestows honour—and on those whom he loves.

⁴ Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord:
and the fruit of the womb is his gift.

⁵ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior:
are the children of one's youth.

⁶ Happy the man who has his quiver full of them:
he will not be put to shame
when he confronts his enemies at the gate.

Hebrews 9.23-28

²³ It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

²⁴ For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

²⁵ Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

²⁷ Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Mark 12.38-44

³⁸ As he taught, Jesus said, 'Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the market-places, ³⁹ and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets.

⁴⁰ They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.'

⁴¹ Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts.

⁴² But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few pence.

⁴³ Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴ They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on.'



Today we are celebrating All Saints Day. All saints day was actually last Monday but, in the church, we often celebrate things the next Sunday.

How many saints do you know, or have you known over your life? Do you think of saints as people who were extraordinarily holy, who did amazing things and probably had visible halos, or do you think of them as the people sitting in the pew just a row or two in front or behind you?

Have you ever been to the Anglican Church in Tumut? There is a stained-glass



window there of an organist. I don't think this is the same one but obviously someone else had the same brilliant idea. All our organists are saints, and our wonderful administrator, and all those who serve on parish council, and wardens and those who go on the roster, especially cleaning, those who update the data-base and print things off and even deliver them to those who don't have email and all those who quietly do all sorts of things around the place, in fact anyone who believes is a saint. Paul said at the start of 1 **Corinthians**.

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, ² unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: ³ grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are all called to be saints, we are all sanctified. And on this day, we remember and celebrate all those who have gone before and celebrate those who are still with us.



Ruth believed in the one true God, she was a saint, she gave up everything, her family, her friends, and any hope she had for her future to go to a strange country with her mother-in-law so that she could look after her. In Israel she gathered discarded and missed grain after the workers had gone through the fields to get enough food for them both and looked after Naomi.

In our reading today Naomi sends Ruth to Boaz who is Naomi's nearest relative, to sleep at his feet, which is a culturally appropriate way of asking to be taken into his household. Our reading leaves out the working through of that, but



Boaz does all the right things to be able to marry Ruth and they are all blessed with a son who is a very distant ancestor of Jesus through King David. Ruth never looked for reward, but her faithfulness was blessed.

In our gospel reading today we meet another widow who is a deliberate contrast with the teachers of the law who enjoy giving themselves airs and having a great reputation for piety. Those robes were the kind in which one could neither hurry nor work a sign of a leisured man of honour. The term: Rabbi' means 'my great one' and you can imagine how they liked to be so honoured but they were not saints, their only interest was the good life, the adulation, and the nice things it brought. They were even using their position to defraud poor widows and line their own pockets.



The rich people in those days made a great show of putting money into the treasury, they did it when everyone could see and notice how generous they were. But the truth is they were not generous, they had plenty and what they were putting in the coffers was probably a small proportion of what they might spend on a party for their friends.

A widow came quietly and put two very small coins into the treasury out of her love for the Lord, no show, no fanfare, probably if anyone did notice they



despised her small offering. Except that Jesus was watching that day and he noticed and knew that her seemingly tiny gift was in fact everything she had, she had given her all, she was a saint. That was true devotion. We don't know if the Lord

provided for her that day and the next, we don't know if there was a happy ending, or perhaps she went hungry that day and many days afterwards but she choose that option out of her love for her Lord.

Real giving is sacrificial. The amount of the gift is not important as much as its cost to the giver: not the size of the gift whether it is money or time or anything else but the sacrifice. Few people will go without their pleasures to give a little more to the work of God but perhaps the long-term benefits would outweigh the present cost.



Real giving has a certain recklessness about it. That widow could have kept one coin, but she gave everything. We say we love the Lord our God, and we give something towards the upkeep of the church but is the Lord calling us to give more, to the church or his people in need? Is there a part of our lives, our activities, ourselves that we have not wholly given to our Lord?



Isn't it a wonderful thing that our biblical example of generosity is a person who gave the equivalent of less than a cent? We may feel that we very little in the way of material gifts or talents to give to our Lord but if we put all that we have and are at his disposal, he can do great things with it and with us that are beyond our imaginings. Even make this church significant in this community again.

Sometimes, in our lives our Lord does ask us to make sacrifices; to do things which in our hearts we don't really want to do. It might be to give more money to the church or to other people in need it might be to sacrifice some of our precious 'free time' to help other people or to pray for them and sometimes it will be a real sacrifice and sometimes the Lord will give it back to us in his own good time. The Lord knows what we need and sometimes we need to give things up so that they do not become too important in our lives.



When I was a single Mum, after my first husband had left, I really wanted to be married again, to have a helpmate, a companion in my life but the Lord asked me to give up that dream and rely totally on him. It was very difficult for me, and it took some time for me to get to the place where I was able to truthfully say that I was content to be single the rest of my life. In fact, I was determined that if I did ever marry again, I needed to be sure it would be a really good marriage. Then the Lord introduced me to Phil.

By first describing the event and then having Jesus tell his disciples about it Mark is underlining the gap between a wealthy person's offering and the widow's gift of her whole livelihood and pointing out to us that true giving comes from our love for the Lord not our excess.



This story poses the same challenge to us today as it did to the people who heard it the first time. People usually think of giving to the church or charities or other people, whether it is time or money as an option after personal needs and wants have been met, but the Lord wants to be first in our lives. As we discussed last week, the Greatest commandment is Love the lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul and all your might.