

The **Call** of God  
The **Response**  
of the Faithful

**November 2, 2008**  
**Ruth 1:1-22**  
**On Loss and Loyalty**

"In the godforsaken, obscene quicksand of life, there is a deafening alleluia rising from the souls of those who weep, and of those who weep with those who weep. If you watch, you will see the hand of God putting the stars back in their skies one by one."

- Anne Weems

"We are a people called forth to fulfill a divine purpose: to witness to God's love and mercy for all humanity.

Christian community is not a loose collection of individuals who gather occasionally to meet their self-determined needs. The church must explain and display the kingdom of heaven today, now, here. ...the church, like its Savior, must "embody," "enflesh," "incarnate" the good news that God's redemptive reign of peace, justice, and healing now extends to all the world through his Spirit and his body."

- Darryl Guder

**Share your story**

The scripture this week is the story of a family in tough economic times and how they responded in these circumstances. John Scelfo, for "Sent to Follow," talked about the economic circumstances of his family when he was a child and their response to God in it.

What did you learn growing up in your family about how to respond in tough economic circumstances?

**Read Ruth 1:1-22**

Discuss the three different responses these women have to their experience of loss and tough economic circumstances. Which action was most surprising? Which was most expected? Which women do you identify with the most? Why?

Why do you think Naomi tells Ruth and Orpah to return to their families?

Both Ruth (vs. 16-17) and Naomi (vs. 20-21) confess God's sovereign control of events, each in her own way. What truth does each convey of God? Of themselves? Of their success in coping with stress? Which confession is most startling to you? Why?

Ruth was a Moabite. What did it mean for her to go with Naomi and live among Hebrews? (Read Gen. 19:29-38, Num. 25:1-3, & Duet. 23:2-4 for some history of the Moabites and understanding of the attitude toward them.)

**Apply It**

What losses have you experienced this past year?

In what ways have these losses strengthened you and your relationship with God? What questions have you been challenged to ask that you may not have asked without going through these losses? What new things have been created out of these losses?

Who in your life is like Ruth, who is loyal to you in your emptiness?

To whom are you like Ruth?

At the end of the sermon Janeen asked these questions:

*What if we as the people of God risked this year? What if we worried less about fulfilling our needs and put others first? What if we gave more of our finances to God's work here at 1<sup>st</sup> Pres. So much more that it felt sacrificial? What if we committed to being present with those that are in need? Those that are vulnerable?*

What does the Holy Spirit stir up in you as you hear these questions?

**Pray It!**

In honor of the partnership between Naomi and Ruth, have your group divide up into pairs and take turns praying for one another.

**Live It!**

Watch for times when you can be like Ruth. Let God guide you to take risks, follow the path of uncertainty, and choose loyalty and sacrifice!