

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

November 11, 2018

The Rev. Jamie Samilio

Verb: CELEBRATE

## Changes to the Script

*"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good;" Amen*

The book of Ruth this morning reads a little like a tele-novella, a type of limited-run television serial drama. They are akin to soap operas, but previously taboo soap opera themes such as urban violence, racism, and sexuality are incorporated into tele-novellas. The drama in this episode of Ruth began before our reading today in that Naomi lost her husband and both of her sons, leaving her with only two daughters-in-law. Naomi did the right thing, and told the two women to leave her, for a woman in those days without a husband or sons was of no value. Ruth loved her mother-in-law, trusted her God, and hung in there despite the odds. If it were the tele novella version, this is where we would all be yelling at the TV, "Run, go, get away while you can!" We judge her actions and agree there is no way she should have stayed. The scene changes, and Naomi cooks up a plan, she wants to protect Ruth for being so loyal. The plot thickens, and Naomi schools Ruth in the ways of seduction, put on your best dress, wait until his defenses are down, plan to rendezvous with Boaz at night. Bam, it works -- Boaz takes Ruth, she becomes his wife, nine months later, Ruth and Boaz's son Obed is born. Ruth has a husband and son, Grandma Naomi has a family and a new purpose in life—a happy ending for all—cue the credits. But wait, there's a sequel to this story, Obed grows up, and has a son of his own named Jesse, and Jesse is the father of King David—Jesus is from the house of David! A cliffhanger to be sure, but we will have to wait for our next season of the church year for the mini series on Jesus to begin—unless of course, you opt to "binge watch" upcoming seasons by engaging in a bible study.

One of my most important life lessons is reflected in this story of Ruth. It is the understanding that out of adversity, there is opportunity. I have also learned, that attitude is everything, and when love, obedience, and trust rule your actions, positive life outcomes are sure to follow—outcomes like joy and peace.

The widow in Mark's Gospel today also knew that attitude was everything, and love, obedience, and trust clearly ruled her actions—she gave all she had to honor God. While we do not know what became of the widow, if you measure success by fame, here we are 2000+ years later still telling her story, still striving to follow her example. I guess you could argue that we are also still telling the story of scribes and their greed, lack of empathy, and lust for fame and fortune. But, we are not holding them up as examples to follow. Their only claim to fame here is that they serve for eternity as bad examples.

We are not perfect beings, no one is, not Ruth, Naomi, not even the widow, and certainly not the scribes. But perfection is not anything we will ever achieve. The best we can hope for is to live life with a positive attitude, an attitude of gratitude for all we are, and all we have been given. They say that with great wealth comes great responsibility, but it is not just about the wealthy. To all of us has been given the responsibility to be *good stewards* of what God has blessed us with—even if that blessing does not seem to measure up to what others have been given, we are still called to be *good stewards*, and to follow the example of Jesus—generosity and hospitality to everyone—no exceptions. [I will be back after a word from our sponsor, Stewardship.]

As my friend Liz said of stewardship, "...in many ways, it is an "All or nothing at all" proposition. Think about how much Jesus loves us... and what he asks of us. He's wants it all!! And who could blame him? He wants each one of us to be 'all in' with him. And isn't that what a real relationship is...being 'all in'? As we contemplate how much we will give him of ourselves, our talent, our time, and our treasure, do we really want to 'shortchange' Jesus? Is that what our relationship with him looks like? Does he get the leftovers or does he get the best we have to offer?\*

Today is the Holy Cross ingathering. The day we pledge to support the mission and ministry of this church, this Body of Christ. Today we make a pledge to each other, because we are the church, the people are the church, and together we are the stewards of the parish. Giving of our time, our talent and our money, we ensure this place is here for us and for all who seek a relationship with the one who gave us everything, Jesus. [Back to our story.]

What does the tele-novella script of your life look like? Is it filled with drama? Maybe some action scenes? Or is it filled with peaceful, calm days filled with laughter? We are not perfect, but we are the ones who control our attitude and our actions, and we are co-writing our scripts. When scripting your life, remember to *Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, and hold fast to what is good.* Remember to *love* and honor *one another with mutual affection.* Get excited about doing good in the world, and finish what you start. Hang onto hope, be patient when you are hurt or grieving, *persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of others; extend hospitality to strangers, and open your hearts, minds, and wallets to a hurting world.* And, when you stray from the script and try your hand at improvisation, remember that you are not a solo actor on the stage of life, and you may get some rather unexpected responses from your fellow cast members – or even from the director. So, at a minimum, try and keep your free will focused on good and right things, and in every scene, reflect love and loyalty in your character.

*While it may not improve your ratings, bless and do not curse anyone—be kind to everyone,* because we have no idea what they are suffering through. Be fully present and strengthen relationships with one another. *Share the fullness of life with one another, the joys and the —be good stewards of each other.* Our job is not to judge and punish the world. Our job is to love each other, seek peace, and respect each other, even when we disagree.

All of this is easy to say and difficult to implement in our fast passed, self-centered lives—especially in times of uncertainty. Often, judging and punishing give us some feeling of being in control, but really it is the shortest path to losing everything for a moment of feeling an “I told you so” boost of self-righteous pride.

It takes trust and the right attitude, to *genuinely love, to avoid temptation, and continuously refocus on what is good in the world.* Today the verb is Celebrate. Let us then celebrate the fact that we are good people, and we are in a good place. Let us celebrate our love for one another, and let us celebrate this day that we gather to give of ourselves, as Jesus loved us and gave himself for us. That’s a wrap! Amen

\* The Rev. Liz Tomlinson, St. Paul's, Bailey's Crossroads

Ruth 3:1-5, 4:13-17

Psalm 127

Romans 12:9-21

Mark 12:38-44