

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

October 12, 2025

Trinity Lutheran Church: Beloit, WI

Pastor Matthew Thompson

Ruth 1:1-19a; 2 Timothy 2:1-13; Luke 17:11-19

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 lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷Where 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.” ¹⁸And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

¹⁹So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. Ruth 1:16-19

The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him;¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself. 1 Timothy 2:11-13

He Remains Faithful

When they first married, they were filled with hopes and dreams of their future. **What a faithful God** to bring them together! They lived during a time of peace sometime around 1200 to 1000 B.C.

During this time in Israel, we read (in the Book of Judges) that everyone did what was right in their own eyes. So when Naomi and Elimelech married they must have wondered how they would protect and prepare their future children in this confusing and treacherous world. But God would surely guide and protect, right? **He remains faithful.** God then blessed them with not one, but two sons! What joy! **He certainly remains faithful.**

But then . . . famine hit. What devastation! **Okay, but God still remains faithful, right? . . .** Next they lost their livelihood and home. Elimelech and Naomi began to falter. God doesn't seem to be helping them now. **Will God remain faithful? . . .** This didn't feel like it! So this young couple took their lives into their own hands. They moved out of Bethlehem of Judah and resettled in the idolatrous country of Moab. Even though God commanded the sons of Israel never to marry daughters of the idolatrous nations surrounding them, Mahlon and Chilion, their sons, did it anyway . . . perhaps with . . . or without Mom and Dad's approval! Their faithfulness to the Lord was faltering. Then Elimelech, Naomi's beloved husband, died. . . . And with him, Naomi's main means of support. . . . Well, at least she still had her boys to provide for her, right? . . . Then both sons also passed. **Does God remain faithful?** The fear, grief, anger, doubt, unbelief, and guilt must have begun flooding Naomi's mind and being.

After all, she had not trusted the Lord to care for her and her family during a time of famine. She had not objected enough or at all to her sons marrying idolatrous women. So when she would arrive in Bethlehem after the Lord ended the famine, she would tell her old friends, stop calling me “Naomi” (pleasant). *“From now on, call me ‘Mara’ (bitter); for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.”* **Does God remain faithful? Well, even if He does remain faithful** maybe I don’t deserve His faithfulness to me. I deserve bitterness, not a pleasant life. I deserve nothing but temporal and eternal punishment. Thankfully, I have good news for you: God never leaves the story of our lives there, does He?! He promises us: **“I will remain faithful.”**

How can it be true that God is faithful when tragedy strikes you? I am certain that some of you sitting here today can relate well to the emotion and the thoughts Naomi felt and thought. You may have even felt considerable guilt and some fear because of your thoughts or words directed toward God. He seemed to be so uncaring and unresponsive to your prayers. As a pastor I have spent time comforting more than one person who could no longer pray (for a time): “Thy will be done.” They feared and hated God’s will for them as they were experiencing it. But God would prove faithful to them in the end.

Have you ever or are you now suffering from chronic illness, like the lepers in today’s Gospel reading? Just when you start feeling halfway human, another ailment comes along. Surgeries, chemotherapy, medicines to treat the ailment and others to counter the side effects. And some friends and family? They don’t know what to say or do . . . so they say and do little or nothing to comfort you. What is God’s role in all of this? **How is He still remaining faithful in all of this?** Even if He is, maybe part of you feels that you deserve it. Maybe, Satan whispers, “God is punishing you.” “You aren’t worthy of His love or His mercy,” he hisses. “You will never again know that peace that surpasses understanding,” Satan slithers. Don’t listen to his lies!

God remained faithful with Naomi who had lost so much! And He is and always will be faithful to you, even during your tragic times.

How does He make such comfort and certainty of His love and faithfulness possible? Naomi’s hometown gives us a clue. She was from Bethlehem in Judah. . . . Ring any Christmas bells? Her daughter-in-law, Ruth remained faithful to her. God had worked such faith in her. She would later marry a man named Boaz. Naomi’s friends would later gather around her after Ruth gave birth to her first child and say: **“Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without A REDEEMER, and may his name be renowned in Israel! ¹⁵ He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.” ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the**

child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. ¹⁷ And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

God was faithful. He not only prospered Naomi for her life on earth, but through her great-grandson, David, God would faithfully keep His promise to send the ultimate REDEEMER who would pay the price of His own body and blood to ransom us from disease, death, and hell itself. In this story of Naomi’s tragedy and God’s hidden faithfulness, we witness the seeds of Micah’s prophecy: **But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. . . . And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. ⁵ And he shall be their peace. Micah 5:2,4,5**

Such peace is His gift to you and me as well every time we receive His Word and His very body and blood given and shed for you in His Supper.

God remains faithful for you. When you feel you can no longer pray “Thy will be done.” **He remains faithful.** When you fear you have lost your faith in Him, **He remains faithful.** Even when you push Him away or run away from Him, **He remains faithful.** **God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. . . . For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life?”** (Romans 5:9-10) He will always leave the ninety-nine sheep as your Shepherd just to come and rescue you when you are lost. Where you go, Jesus goes with you. Remember: **“If say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** 1 John 1:8,9 He stands and shepherds you with the strength of the almighty God. You are safe and secure, even now during tragic and scary times. His arms enfold you. Where you abide, He abides with you. He is your peace. You can, with confidence pray, “Thy will be done,” for His will toward you is gracious and good. **He remains (and always will remain) faithful.** Thanks be to God! In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus until life everlasting. Amen.