

SUNDAY, November 17 2024 Love and Good Deeds

Ruth 3: 1-5. 4:13-17 | John 4-16 Mark 13:1-8

Two weeks ago I suggested a Faith Challenge of "Welcome to the Circle" focusing on the first part of the story of Ruth and Naomi and Jesus commandments on love. Today's second faith Challenge continues that theme of love but adds the action of doing good. This challenge may help or hinder our faith while we live out each day. But it is essential of putting what we say we believe to become more than just words. It means doing good things; because of love, for others and out of love all will benefit. But we must be willing to listen, not just attune our ears, but fully embrace Christ's teachings, by continuing to hear Ruth's story and by wondering how we might share that Jesus is who he says he is! I am he!

Ruth and Naomi are back in Judea and Naomi knows that Ruth needs security of some sort for her future. Boaz is a member of the family and he knows that Naomi has land that belonged to her deceased husband. He strikes up a deal with the family members to buy the land and of course with this deal comes both Naomi and her family members-- including Ruth. But Ruth and Boaz have experienced love and this deal is made even stronger than first thought. The deal is made by the exchange of sandals in front of the elders. And so Ruth and Boaz are married and he acquires the land and this maintains the dead man's name on the inheritance. Love was present between Ruth and Naomi, and then Ruth and Boaz. This story is important because Ruth eventually gives birth to Obed, which lead to the generations which followed= Jesse, and David... and eventually to the line of Jesus.

What was the good deed done here? Boaz a kinsman of Naomi marries Ruth to carry on the line of Elimelech and enables the ancestral line of the people to continue and this line leads us to the birth of Jesus as a human infant. Boaz loved Ruth and trusted her so it was in his best interest to acquire the land and her as his wife.

We may not agree with this kind of transaction today, but this was the law of that time. But what must be understood is that the good deed came out of love. Ruth had gleaned what she could in the field of Boaz and he had seen her; he was attracted to her so it just wasn't a land transfer agreement- it was marriage.

What good deeds have you completed this week? Hopefully some things you accomplished were done because you care about others? While visiting I often ask this question about what the people can do even though they may have difficulties or health issues. I encourage others to pray.. share with God about the concerns you are aware of with neighbour,

friends, family who are hurting-- whether due to physical challenges, or in grief of the death of a family member; or maybe a friend who needs support after a receiving devastating news about loved ones- what do you do with this information? Pray. Offer help? And those who are in need and are asked these questions, have answers!-- don't say I'm ok I don't need help-- because you do- we all need help from time to time. And this is one of the reasons the church exists-- it is where we connect with people who we grow to love and care about. It is where the church family learns from others about what is needed-- sharing, openness, forgiveness, learning how to do things differently and to ask questions and share information as needed.

Charlie Brown is a beloved character in Peanuts cartoons because he seems to always be second in accomplishments and abilities to his dog Snoopy. But if we read more cartoons and even watch some of the beloved specials Charlie learns that being "good" means trying your best and making the most of what you have in life. He is always learning what it means to be good, giving, offering second chances and just being positive.

How often do we really try to do something good? How much effort do you put into anything? As we age it reduces because we may not have the same desires, energy capabilities, or even push to do so but good deeds are often reflective of what we need to do in order to lift up our spirits, in order to see that life is good. Good deeds lift up others when they are down; and lift up those doing them too.

But there are times when things just don't seem as good as they appear. There is a story about a boy who woke up early the morning of his birthday and looked out his window to see a giant pile of manure in the yard. He ran downstairs got a shovel and started happily shoveling. A friend asked, "What are you doing?" "I know there's got to be a pony in there somewhere.! Look what it left behind! " The boy sees that there is a need to suffer a little bit just in case the pony is somewhere close by.

Our reading from Mark 13 is not filled with much good or hope. Jesus is teaching the disciples that at some point there will be a time of destruction and he is referring also to his death. There will be people claiming to be the messiah after him. The disciples ask when will this be? They want to know and be prepared. But Jesus tells them remember what I am telling you-- there will be wars, earthquakes, famines but these are just signs not when it will come. He talks about the destruction of the buildings in vs 2; nation rising against nation in vs 8; betrayals within families vs.12-13. And so Jesus warns them-- beware v.5 and that you will be handed over to councils, beaten, stand trial and such vs 9.

And yet in all of these items of bad news and warnings- there is comfort and good news to be found: don't be afraid-- wars, 7. Uprisings vs 8, earthquakes and famine vs 8 because the Holy Spirit will be with you. But we are to do our part now.. and that is "proclaim the good news to all nations." We are to do good deeds out of love and share the message of hope in Christ. For the ones who do this, will be saved.

Winston Churchill British PM during WWII stated, "Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never, in things great or small, large, or petty, never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense". In the darkest days he also said. "If you're going through hell keep going".

As followers of Jesus our Saviour, there is something better coming-- this is the birth pains of new life offered in Jesus' name

As we look in our world right now-- there is confusion, chaos, war, climate challenges, political leadership uncertainties, and a wondering of what is to come. But what do we need to do-- love and share good deeds. And trying your best and making the most of what you have in life. This is because the Holy Spirit supports us in every dreaded encounter and event. And the one who keeps the faith and endures to the end will participate and celebrate Jesus' resurrection filled with hope. For He is the King of Kings, alpha and omega and worthy of all praise. Thanks be to God!

Faith Challenge Part 2: Love and Good Deeds. Whom do you love? With whom do you offer praise and thanksgiving, share ideas, and what do you do? You do your best, make the most of what you have in life and live knowing that one day you will be called home to rest in your promised heavenly home with Christ Jesus our Saviour.

This is worth it all; this is why we are here- today and what makes us come to Jesus and live anew. Thanks be to be God!

Let us pray;

God of grace show us your love given in Jesus. Help us to hear the good news that you are love and that through You we are able to be forgiven and given hope. Hear us and help us we pray. Amen.