

Worship Resources: Where you go I will go; and where you stay I will stay

Key

 = Leader

 = People

 = Officiant

Liturgy

Call to Worship/Reading from the Psalter (based on Psalm 146)

 Praise the Lord!

 Praise the Lord, O my soul!

 I will praise the Lord as long as I live,

 I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

 Do not put your trust in princes,

 In mortals, in whom there is no help.

 Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,

 Whose hope is in the Lord their God,

 Who execute justice for the oppressed,

 Who give food to the hungry.

 Praise the Lord!

 Praise the Lord, O my soul!

Opening/Invocational Prayer

God of Naomi and Ruth, in our journeys through life, we have been both broken and blessed. In solidarity, you accompany us. You receive us as we are, in our own weakness and vulnerability. For your immanent presence in our journeys, we are ever grateful. With thankful hearts we gather as your people to praise you for redeeming us. And by your Word and through your Spirit, we ask that you transform us into redeeming and reconciling people in the world. Guide us as we stand in solidarity with the 60 million refugees and displaced persons across the world. As you have walked with us, help us walk with those in need.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

L or **P** (or both in unison): God our Redeemer, you are “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*.” You accompany us in moments of blessedness and in periods of brokenness. Yet at times we fail to recognize your presence and choose instead to live in self-centered reliance as though we are in isolation. In turn, we isolate the most vulnerable; we act as though crises beyond our community do not deserve our concern. Unlike Ruth and Naomi, we live up to Orpah’s** namesake and turn the “back of our necks” to others. We give into the fear of uncertainty instead of the grace of solidarity. We confess that by expulsion or neglect, we push away those who seek refuge in our midst, ignoring that you are the Redeemer who offers refuge to all. Free us now from our suffocating isolation, that we may breathe anew your liberating Spirit, the source of all compassion, the strength of all justice. We pray in the name of Christ Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

* *Psalm 46:1*

** *Orpah’s name means “back of the neck.” Orpah is the daughter-in-law who goes back to Moab.*

Assurance of Pardon & Passing of the Peace

L Scripture bears witness to a God of justice who “sets the prisoners free” and “lifts up those who are bowed down” (Psalm 146:7-8), a God of grace who has “reconciled us to himself through Christ*.” Therefore be assured, sisters and brothers, that our God liberates, Christ reconciles, and the Spirit lifts us up!

P Praise be to God! Amen!

L As a redeemed and renewed people, let us share the peace of Christ with one another.

* *2 Corinthians 5:18*

Scripture Readings

Old Testament—Ruth 1:6-18

Epistle—2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Reading of the Gospel: Gospel—John 15:1-17 (or 12-17) or Matthew 5:38-48

Sermon (based on Ruth 1)

See Sermon Starter on page 12

Invitation to Offering

In Ruth we read of the encounter between two refugees, Naomi and Ruth. Naomi is a refugee in Moab due to famine in Judah, and Ruth is a refugee due to patriarchal systems that rendered single women utterly vulnerable. Both Naomi and Ruth took refuge in Naomi’s land, and they survived such tumultuous transitions because each one gave the greatest gift: their very selves.

By participating in the Week of Compassion offering, we follow God’s command to love. Through this ministry we stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable. Through our giving, we as a Church accompany refugees as they seek to rebuild their lives.

Yet this time of offering—of giving a portion of our financial resources—is only the beginning of our call to give. Jesus declared, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends*.” In addition to your financial gift, consider other ways you can walk alongside refugees, and how you can remain open to ways others might minister to you. Let us give joyously and generously at this time. * *John 15:13*

Prayer for the Offering

L For your divine providence, we thank you, ever-generous Creator. In responsive humility, we have rendered unto you these gifts of our material possessions. We entrust them to you so that through them, your Church may live out its call of solidarity and accompaniment. May the witness and work made possible by our tithes and offerings comfort and empower those seeking refuge, that all refugees and displaced persons may be able to sing with peace and joy “the Lord’s song in a foreign land” (Psalm 137:4).

En el nombre de Jesucristo, oramos. Amen!

The Lord’s Supper

Preface:

- C** The Lord be with you.
- P** And also with you.
- C** Lift up your hearts.
- P** We lift them up to the Lord.
- C** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
- P** It is right to give God our thanks and praise.
- C** In a spirit of thanksgiving, let us sing as we ready our hearts to partake of the Bread of Life and Cup of Salvation.

Hymn/Communion Hymn

See suggested hymns on page 12

Invitation to Communion

C In the time of Ruth, the Holiness Code of the Law required that farmers not harvest the corners of their fields or recover produce that was dropped during harvest.* That food was left to be collected by the marginalized, the poor, the stranger, the refugee—people like Ruth and Naomi. This Law was for the sake of the less fortunate so that no one—no one!—would be hungry in the land.

Christ declared, “I am the true vine” (John 10:10). As the vine, Christ provides life and livelihood to us all, and there is plenty for all to draw on him. At his Table we find a gleaning field where all are fed and no one is turned away. There is plenty for all, including all who have been forced to leave their homes and seek refuge across this world.

**For example, see Leviticus 19:9, 23:22, and Deuteronomy 24:19.*

We are nourished at this Table of Abundance so that in turn we may live abundantly a life of neighborly love—a life lived for the Other. In the Incarnation, God goes where we go and stays where we stay, assuring us as God’s people. In response, we stand in solidarity with refugees and those deemed “outsiders,” assuring them with words and acts, that in Christ they always have refuge.

Words of Institution

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Prayer for the Elements

Loving God, thank you for setting this table for us, a gleaned field of nourishing abundance. We partake humbly and joyously of this Holy Feast. Through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son we have been reconciled to you. Help us now to go forth and be reconciling people in the world. Open our eyes that we may catch glimpses of Christ. May your Holy Spirit descend upon these gifts of bread and wine, blessing them and making them holy. May we, consecrated by your Spirit, be the Body of Christ, accompanying our world as you transform it into a New Heaven and New Earth. Through Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Sharing of the Meal

Come, feast on Christ. Feast on his Body and Blood. Come glean from his table of plenitude where all are nourished from his abundant life, and where we are empowered to share lively abundance with the world.

Benediction/Charge

Through song, prayer, word, and fellowship, we have been challenged to stand in solidarity with the stranger, the foreigner, the refugee—to accompany the most vulnerable as an expression of love for God. We have been nourished by the Word, both proclaimed and served at the Table. Therefore, my sisters and brothers,

Go into the world as God's agents of reconciliation.

Have the courage of Christ to lay down your life for others.

Hold on to what is good and just.

Return to no one evil for evil, but instead help the suffering

Honor all people.

Love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen! Amen! Amen!

Suggested Hymns

Assembled by Amanda Garcia

- Lead Me, Guide Me
- I Want Jesus to Walk with Me
- Guide My Feet
- Help Us To Help Each Other
- In Christ There Is No East and West
- Will You Let Me Be Your Servant
- Healer Of Our Every Ill
- For The Beauty Of The Earth
- God of Justice - Tim Hughes
- Until All Are Fed - Bryan McFarland
- All Who Are Thirsty - Brenton Brown
- I Will Follow - Chris Tomlin
- We Are One Body - Dana Scallon
- There Are Many Gifts - Patricia Shelly

Sermon Starter

By José Francisco Morales Torres

Primary Scripture

Ruth 1:1-22

Other Scriptures

Psalter—Psalm 146

Epistle—2 Corinthians 5:16-2

Gospel—John 15:1-17 (or 12-17); Or, Matthew 5:38-48

Where you go, I will go...

Ruth 1:1-22 (To be read in liturgy: vv 6-18)

Our justice work for the year focuses on ministry with and for refugees by our ecumenical partners. And there is no better biblical story than that of Ruth and Naomi, as beautifully portrayed in the Book of Ruth. Brief yet profound, we encounter the resilience of two women, ravaged by the natural disaster of famine and the human-made disaster of patriarchy. These ecological and socio-political events rendered Naomi and Ruth, who in turn become husband-less, the most vulnerable in societies structured on male privilege. Like refugees today, Ruth and Naomi did not have the privilege of choosing to stay in their homes. Forces beyond their control left them no other choice but involuntary relocation. There are currently 60 million individuals who are living as refugees or displaced persons in every region across the globe. The numbers will only continue to grow as violence and persecution reigns in parts of the Middle East, Northern Africa, and Latin America. In preaching the text in light of the refugee experience, this connection should be made, maybe with contemporary stories as a way of elucidating the dynamics at work in the Ruth narrative. (*Stories can be found through Disciples Home Mission's Refugee & Immigration Ministries at <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/dhm-ministries/refugee-immigration-ministries/>*)

The book of Ruth can be read as a human story and a God story, the former “incarnating” the latter. As a human story, we are moved toward *the spirituality of solidarity*, which is richly encapsulated in verses 16 and 17-

“But Ruth said,
‘Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!
Where you go, I will go;
where you stay, I will stay;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.
Where you die, I will die—
there will I be buried.
May the Lord do thus and so to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!’”

In the divine realm, it is about God’s redemption, which is mirrored or reciprocated in the human act of solidarity. *Redemption means that God stands in solidarity with us.* In traditional exegesis of Ruth, the human archetype for God—and in the Christian imagination, Christ—has been given to Boaz, the “kinsman redeemer” who “redeems” Ruth, securing a life for her. Yet, *I contend that the divine act of redemption is also embodied in the commitment Ruth and Naomi make to each other to stay together.* Hence with this exegetical move, salvation takes on communal dimensions. This is much-needed good news in a globalizing world that sinfully seeks to distinguish people between “them” and “us.”

Applying the words of the theologian Roberto Goizueta to Ruth, this is “a theology of *acompañamiento* [accompaniment].” The God that is hidden in the Ruth story is revealed in the act of accompanying the most vulnerable in society. *God is revealed to us in our accompanying the refugee.* Consequently, we, like the refugee, come face-to-face with our own need and vulnerability: we need to see the refugee in order to see God in our midst. Therefore, in a deeper, truer sense, we have received even more. We reignite our own faith and reframe our own humanity in our encounter with the faith and humanity of the other. This sermon can be an opportunity for Christians to recognize the transforming power of solidarity, not just for “them” but for “us.” After all, through the eyes of *acompañamiento*, there is only “us!”

Homiletically speaking, the passage can be approached in many ways. Here are three ways (not mutually exclusive) of entering the story of Ruth and proclaiming its implications for the Church’s ministry with and for refugees:

As mentioned above, the Ruth/Naomi covenant personifies the Church’s call to seek justice for refugees. Reading Ruth and Naomi’s journey through our globalizing world (and the refugee phenomenon it engenders), and reading our globalizing world through Ruth and Naomi’s journey, generates, in dramatic fashion, a summons to the Church to stand with refugees as a *mutual act of vulnerability and hope*. This sermon will highlight salvation as a communal act and *acompañamiento* (or solidarity) as its correlating spiritual discipline. *Solidarity is a spiritual discipline because, by engaging in it, we encounter God.*

Each stanza or line in verses 16 and 17 can serve as a structuring device with which to explore the dimensions of solidarity. For example, “Where you go, I will go” asserts that incarnational presence is foundational for solidarity; and “your people shall be my people” calls for identifying with “the other.” The spiritual depth of solidarity can be highlighted by the stanza “your God my God.” In a world where the power of words is depleting, this in-depth “word study,” centered in verses 16 and 17, can help recover, for the congregation, the substance of the word “solidarity.”

Also mentioned above, there are two planes, one explicit and the other implicit, on which the Ruth narrative operates: the human and the divine. The act of solidarity is the human corollary of the divine act of redemption. A good homiletical approach to the two planes will highlight the relationship between our theology and our ethics. In other words, our vision of God should inform our way of being in the world. In Ruth, the portrait of God is painted by two women who choose solidarity. God is, therefore, one who chooses to stand in solidarity with us, whether we are from Judah or Moab (or from North America or the Middle East, etc.). There are various theological traditions from which to draw: womanist (the mutuality and reciprocity of liberation), liberation (God accompanying those who suffer), or Eastern Orthodox (incarnation as God taking on flesh to be in “solidarity” with all flesh), to name a few.