

'It is always and all about Jesus!'

(Rev David Dong Won Kim)

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

1 Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, **I need to seek some security for you**, so that it may be well with you.

2 Now here is our kinsman Boaz, **with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.**

3 Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

4 When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then go and uncover his feet and lie down, **and he will tell you what to do.**"

5 She said to her, "All that you say I will do."

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. When they came together, the Lord made her conceive, and she bore a son.

14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin, 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 borne him."

16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom and became his nurse.

17 The women of the neighbourhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him **Obed**; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Hebrews 9:24-28

24 For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

25 Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the holy place year after year with blood that is not his own,

26 for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27 And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once and after that the judgment,

28 so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

When Naomi talked to her daughter-in-law 'Ruth,' she was so sure about what would happen to Ruth but when the reading from Ruth chapter 3 was translated into other languages, especially in English, the translation doesn't emphasise how certain and desperate Naomi was when she talked to Ruth. According to the Hebrew bible, Naomi wasn't just talking to Ruth about something she wished to see, but rather prophesying what God was about to do.

Let me explain to you what I mean by that. Verses 1 and 2 from Hebrew bible are grammatically inverted sentences. In other words, there is an intended inversion of emphasising certain things that Naomi knew for sure.

So let me give you my translation of the these two verses from Ruth chapter 3.

I hope you hear the difference. English translation says, **"I need to seek some security for you. Now here is our kinsman Boaz."** But the Hebrew bible actually says, **"Should I not need to secure your well-being! Isn't Boaz our relative who knows us!"**

Why it's important for us to hear the difference? Because Naomi wasn't just trying out something that might be happening to Ruth, but she was prophesying and telling Ruth for sure what would happen to her when Ruth followed her instruction.

And indeed, the following verses tell us what exactly happened when Ruth went to be in the presence of Boaz. She was acknowledged and accepted.

This is what faith says to us and guarantees for us that when we go to Jesus, the Christ, he will see us and accept us because he knows us. Isn't Jesus our Lord and Saviour! Isn't Jesus the Son of God! Isn't Jesus the one who died for the forgiveness of sin and isn't Jesus rising up again from the dead!

So, this faith in Christ says to us, or rather prophesies to us that when we go to Jesus, there is life for us, there is the future for us, and there is a room for us to be with him.

So, today's bible reading from Ruth calls us to go to where Jesus is. And then, we will be seen, accepted and called to be with him. Every time we come to church, don't we want to and expect to be seen, accepted and called by name!

I have seen these things happen in the church. As the VICTAS Synod Multicultural Ministries Coordinator, one of my privileges is to visit different churches on Sunday and get to meet the leaders and members. Especially, when I worship with CALD congregations, migrant churches, quite often I witness that there is joy and hope in the presence of God while worshipping together.

Maybe because they left their home country and home church, so when they gather in their church, the church becomes their worshipping space to where they belong, where they bond with each other, and where they find joy and hope in the presence of God.

For them, church is not a building, but a living family and the community of faith. But some churches I've been to make me sad because I hear people saying **"We are the last ones left here. After us, the church will be closed."**

To be honest with you, Church buildings may be closed and sold out eventually, but the living body of Christ that is the people of God, the living building of the Christ remains forever.

That's why the second reading from Hebrews 9 says, **"For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one. (9:24)"**

Church or Sanctuary is a mere copy of the true one.

So where people gather is called a mere church as a building, but the true church is where God in Jesus dwells and where God in Spirit lives. So, in that true church is a space where that God sees, accepts and calls people gathered there.

When Israel's people came back to Jerusalem after 70 years of slavery in Babylon, with their leader, Zerubbabel's leadership they wanted to rebuild the temple of God. However, before they started rebuilding it, God sent the prophet Zechariah to tell them, **"This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts.(4:6)"**

God wanted them to build the true temple where God would see them, accept them and call them, not just a building where the images of God were hung and painted. But the real and true presence of God in among them.

Where can we find this kind of true church where the real presence of God can be witnessed? I am sure you don't come to church to meet friends or for morning tea, but we gather here to meet Jesus in God, the God in Jesus, and Jesus in Spirit, the Spirit in Jesus, right?

Therefore, instead of asking **'where we can find the true church like that,'** let me just say, **"Can we, are we able to make our church be like that?"** Perhaps, from the Gospel reading Mark 12:38-44 may give us a clue.

So let me now read Mark 12:38-44.

Mark 12:38~44

38 As Jesus taught, he said, ‘Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces 39 and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets!

40 They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

41 He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny.

43 Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury.

*44 For all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she **out of her poverty has put in everything she had**, all she had to live on.”*

Some people like to be seen by others and like to be respected. So they do things to make their names known. In the meantime, some people don’t even think about it because they know that no one would see them, no one would pay attention to them. They know they are nameless and faceless. But today, Jesus rebukes people with big names, and sees this poor widow. Maybe for her, it is the first time someone sees her presence and pays attention to what she is doing.

Manningham UC has 2 Sunday services happening simultaneously: Fellowship@10 and Family@10. Do you see your brothers and sisters from Family@10? Whether people are rich or poor, church members or visitors, English speaking or speaking other languages, do you see each other, accept each other and call their names from Family@10 and Fellowship@10?

Do you pay attention to people who come to the church on weekdays? When total strangers come to cafe, do you see them and pay attention to them and call them by names next time you see them again? If yes, this is one of true churches where God sees, accepts and calls people because they are, we are, all made in the image and likeness of God.

So, keep your church be a space of grace and love of the Christ, be a space where people come to hear the good news about Jesus, the Christ, and be a church where people see and pay attention to each other.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ