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Ruth

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Ruth's life turned around after meeting Boaz

I am surrounded by family and friends who have been hurt by their beloved husbands. I also have friends of widow who have suffered bereavement and single who had never married. And there are friends who have been hurt by parents who were supposed to love them. In my case, my mother divorced her abusive husband, my own father. And I also divorced due to violence of my ex-husband. Today, especially in honor of Mother's Day, I dedicate Ruth to all mothers and all women in the world who are going through a hurtful and tumultuous life. Here is the question, "Yoko! Do you think it's only hard for women? Men have it hard too. Just like Mr.Tora(the character of Japanese famous movie)." I offer this message of Ruth to all the men who say like that. Because we should all encounter Jesus Christ, without regard to age or sex. Just as Ruth met Boaz and became happy, I pray that each and every one of you who listen to this message will meet Jesus Christ and become happy.

The Book of Ruth is the most romantic love story in the Bible. Ruth, a miserable widow, remarries Boaz, an influential man, and makes a great comeback in her life. In Judaism, there are seven festivals. The four spring festivals are the Passover (Pesach), the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of First Fruits, and the Feast of Seven Weeks (Shavuot). In addition, there are three fall festivals: the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah), the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and the Feast of the harvest (Sukkot). The festival that is particularly important in connection with Christianity is the Passover, which is related to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. And the resurrection of Jesus Christ to become the first fruits of our resurrection is comparable to the Jewish Feast of the First Fruits. And the [Pentecost of Christianity in Greek, is the Feast of the Seven Weeks which is "Shavuot" in Hebrew](#). Pentecost means 50 in Greek and is the 50th Sunday after the Feast of First Fruits. Easter this year is March 31, which means that May 19, 50 days after this date, will be this year's Pentecost. Historically, the Holy Spirit descended on the 50th day after Jesus' resurrection (Acts 2:1-4).

In addition, according to the Jewish calendar, Israel has three harvest seasons a year. Barley is harvested during the First Harvest. In Ruth 1:22, we learn that Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem around March-April, the time of the barley harvest. And on the Second Harvest that is the Feast of Seven Weeks (Shavuot), which celebrates the wheat harvest (Ex. 34:22). In Ruth 2:23, we learn that Ruth picked up the fallen ears in the field of Boaz until the

barley and wheat harvest was over.

The Feast of the Seven Weeks (Shavuot) has other significance for Israel. Three months after the Israelites escaped from Egypt, they pitched their tents in the wilderness of Sinai. Three days later, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and the Torah at Mount Sinai. So, to commemorate this, Israel celebrated "Shavuot" (Ex. 19:1-13) while reciting the Scroll of Ruth along with the Five Books of Moses during this seven-week festival. Therefore, the Book of Ruth is very auspicious and familiar to Israel because of the great reversal of her lives and happiness in about three months. The Book of Ruth is also loved by people because it is very instructive. We can learn many lessons such as filial piety, compassion and sacrifice for family, holy life as a widow, God's grace is given not only to Jews but also to foreigners, and God gives us reversal and victory even in our difficult situations in our daily life.

I would like to now consider the important parts of the book of Ruth as we read it together. First, please look at **the verse 1 of chapter 1, "In the days when the Judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab."** The book of Ruth takes place around B.C.1200, about 200 years before King David's accession to the throne in the time of the Judges. A man mentioned in verse 1 is 'Elimelech', who was from Bethlehem, but because there was a famine there, he emigrated to a foreign country, Moab, not wanting his family to starve to death. I am sure this situation is well understood by all of us who immigrated to Canada because we immigrated to Canada to be happier. Bethlehem is a very auspicious name for the 'House of Bread'. It later became the hometown of King David, and Jesus was born there. It is 9 km south of Jerusalem. Moab was a region east of the Dead Sea, inhabited by the descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot (Genesis 11:31, 19:30-38). However, they worshipped idols and were one of the enemy nations of Israel.

However, shortly after his immigration, Elimelech died, leaving behind his wife Naomi and two sons. Elimelech, probably worked very hard to become a permanent resident in Moab. I imagine he might have been forced to work over 12 hours a day at an unfair company. I have several friends in Canada. Their husbands worked very hard to obtain permanent residency and then became ill and died shortly afterwards. We know that many fathers had sufferings to work for their family. I would like to thank the fathers of this world.

Unfortunately, for the families left behind, a hard life awaits them. Naomi, who was suddenly widowed, had two sons, and she worked hard as a single mother to raise them. Eventually, her first son was accepted to the University of Toronto and her second son to UBC, got a good job, and married a beautiful woman from Moab. However, Naomi's sufferings continued. Both of her sons, whose her precious ones, suddenly died. We don't know if it was

the Covid-19 or not. They died suddenly, leaving no children to succeed them. What a tragedy! All that remained of the family was old Naomi and two young foreign wives. Even today, such this situation would be difficult, but in the year BC1200, it was too miserable. Women at that time totally depended on their husbands for their lives not to be compared to today, and I think the situation was so serious that they thought, 'We are going to kill ourselves today.'

Faithful Naomi, however, was different. She is very courageous. She made a right decision to live happily her daughters-in-law and herself. Like Naomi, the Holy Spirit leads us in a direction that makes our lives alive no matter what situation we are in. In Ruth 1:8, Naomi encourages her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, to return to their home and remarry. Orpah takes her mother's advice and decides to return to her hometown. Ruth, however, decided that she will follow Naomi. See [Ruth 1:16-17](#). "But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."" Ruth's decision of compassion and love for her mother-in-law! She said to her mother-in-law, "Mother, I will follow you wherever you go. I will put my bones in your home country." When we were baptized and confessed Jesus Christ as Lord, we also confessed our love to God like Ruth. "I love you, God! I will love you for whole my life. I will follow you no matter what trials I face!" The Holy Spirit, please guide us so that we can make this confession of love to our God Jesus every day.

Urged by Ruth's loyalty and love, Naomi took Ruth, a foreigner, back to her hometown of Bethlehem. The moment the two entered Bethlehem, rumors quickly spread throughout the town. "Naomi! What's wrong? Where is your husband? Where are your sons? Where is your daughter-in-law from?" The whole town gossiped her with many questions. To this Naomi responded as follows. Please look at [Ruth 1:20-21](#). "Don't call me Naomi (pleasant)" she told them. "Call me Mara (bitter), because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me pleasant (Naomi)? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me." Naomi said of herself as Mara (Bitter). She was in deep sorrow. Naomi's faith is wonderful even in this sad situation. She confesses that even misfortune happens under the authority of God Almighty. [Hebrews 12:5-6](#) "My son and daughter, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his children." We believe that hardships and trials are given to us because we are

God's children.

It is easy for us to understand that Naomi's return to Israel, if we think of them as a return to the church and a life of faith. Naomi believed that her current sufferings were given because God loved her, so she was able to return to her homeland Israel. Everyone, if you are going through a hard time in your life, please continue to come to church as Naomi did. At times, rumors may be spread about you in the church, and you may even be hurt by cold hearted words. Even in difficult circumstances, Ruth continued to glean in Boaz's field. We, too, should come to our church where God's presence is and continue our life of faith, no matter how terrible our situation may be. Attend church services, listen to the message of the Bible, and grow with our brothers and sisters. **Ephesians 2:21-22 "In Him whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit."** Just as Naomi was blessed when she returned to her homeland of Israel, we are to be blessed in the church.

Finally, we begin in chapter 2 with the story of Naomi leading her daughter-in-law, Ruth, to Boaz. Please look at **Ruth2:1. "Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz."** Naomi reminded Boaz as one of the influential relatives who could restore the honor of her husband Elimelech. Naomi was well aware of Boaz's role. **Ruth2:20 says, "She added 'That man is our close relative; He is one of our guardian redeemer.'"** Here, "one of our guardian redeemer" is 'go'el' in Hebrew, which means a person for his relative's property to buy back or redeem. According to the Law of Israel, there was an obligation to buy back the land of inheritance for their relative's protection of kinship and heirship (Leviticus 25:25; Numbers 35:12, 19). Isaiah 41:14 praises God, "You are the Redeemer. Boaz is a prefiguration of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ became our Redeemer, forgiving our sins, delivering us from death, and saving us. **Rom. 8:1-2 "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."** Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins on the cross. And He has freed our souls from sin and death. Not only that, He gives us abundant blessings such as peace, healing, health, and restoration of relationships when we live in this world.

In the Book of Ruth, you see Naomi, the mother-in-law, giving Ruth appropriate advice so that she can marry Boaz. This is said to resemble the Holy Spirit leading us to Jesus Christ. And because Ruth obediently followed his mother-in-law's advice, her life became a life of reversal and victory in just three months. She married Boaz, and not only that, but to our surprise, she was placed in the genealogy of King David, the most respected king of Israel.

And that's not all. Later, she would also be in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. **Isaiah 40:31: "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; They will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."** Eagles don't fly under their own power. They spread their large wings and just let the wind carry them, and the wind power allows them to leap from low to high and fly for long periods of time. Just as Ruth followed the advices of her mother-in-law, Naomi, so we too, when we are led by the Holy Spirit, our lives can fly as lightly as an eagle soaring high. With our power we can only fly like a sparrow, but with the power of the Holy Spirit we can fly like an eagle, with God's grace and without our effort. And when we are led by the Holy Spirit and encounter Jesus Christ, our lives will change by leaps and bounds at super speed.

Finally, Boaz greatly congratulates Ruth. **Ruth2:11-12 "Boaz replied, 'I've been heard all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband - how you left your father and mother and your homeland and come to live with a people you did not know before. May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be will richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to refuge."** What a surprise, Boaz knew detailly about Ruth. He knew all about her painful experience of losing her husband, her filial piety to her mother-in-law, her international marriage after leaving her own parents and her own homeland, and her struggles in the foreign land of Israel. Boaz in particular is very complimentary of Ruth's refuge to the wings of the Lord and her faithfulness. When we go through the hard times of life, we are easy to rely on our siblings, other relatives, our connections, a little bit of our wealth, and our own abilities. But God is very complimentary when we rely on Him with faith rather than these things. Boaz blesses Ruth that God will reward her for her good deeds. I know that we raise our children, devote ourselves to caring for our parents, and go through many hardships while living as immigrants. In these our daily lives, God will praise us and reward us for our hardships when we live with faith. **Revelation 19:9** says, "Then the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb! And he added, "These are the true words of God."'” Eventually, when Jesus Christ returns, He will invite us to his wedding as His holy bride. And He will reward us for all our hardships in this life. **Revelation 21:3-4** "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying. "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

The story of Ruth following Naomi's instructions to meet and marry Boaz and enter the genealogy of King David is truly inspiring. In this way, the Holy Spirit leads us to Jesus Christ,

just as Naomi did. John 14:15-17 "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." The Spirit of truth, the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, is with us and leads us to Jesus Christ. We must read the Bible and pray in order to receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit! It is also important that we continue to attend church and worship. As we continue our life of faith in all circumstances, we will encounter Jesus Christ, just as Ruth encountered Boaz, and it will be a life turned around victoriously. Hallelujah!

Let's pray. Beloved Heavenly Father! Today is Mother's Day. Please richly bless all the mothers who have struggled to raise their children and all other women in this world. And if there are those who have not yet met Jesus Christ, may the Holy Spirit guide them to believe in Him and be saved today. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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