

What's in a name? Ruth 1.19-22

Today's TFTD is from Rod Hill

The verse prior to our reading for today is crucial in our understanding of these few verses. Orpah has kissed her mother-in-law goodbye as they were beginning the return journey to Bethlehem, but Ruth has pledged to go with her Mother-in-law.

¹⁹ So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?"

²⁰ "Don't call me Naomi,^[b]" she told them. "Call me Mara,^[c] because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. ²¹ I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted^[l] me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."

²² So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

Some of you will know that Carole and I have recently become grandparents for the first time, and I can't resist the chance to share a photograph of our grandson. Our son and his wife didn't want to divulge the baby's name before the birth, so we were intrigued as to what names they had chosen. Let's just say that the choice of name has been interesting. He's called Lincoln Rodney! – Lincoln because, well his parents just liked it, and Rodney after me, because that's a part of the family tradition on our daughter-in-law's side of the family.

So, there's a sense in which our grandson's middle name has meaning, but generally speaking in our culture names usually don't have a particular meaning. But in the Old Testament, as in many cultures today, a person's name meant something.

Can this be 'Naomi?', (meaning 'pleasantness') they ask.

'Don't call me that, 'she replies, call me 'bitter' because that's what the Lord has made me. Not surprising, you may think, given all that's happened to her since she left Bethlehem – she's certainly not the same woman now.

I wonder, if you could choose a name for yourself now that said something about your relationship with God, or your experience of God in your life. What would it be? At the moment mine would be similar to the name that one of my African friends gave to one of his children, I'd be called 'Blessed'!

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