

TFTD 27th. July 2020

NEEDING

Ruth chapter 4 verses 1-8

To our twenty-first century western European culture this passage about the life of Ruth may not sit very comfortably with many who read it today.

In the choices she made Ruth was clearly a person who knew her own mind and someone who went the extra mile to care for her mother-in-law. She was, however, due to the death of her husband, in a vulnerable position, reliant on others cooperation to enable her to receive even the basic needs of life. In that sense she was needy. Needy through no fault of her own, but even in her need she was compassionate and a lady to be admired.

Many of us don't like to feel as though we are viewed as needy whether that be material, emotional or spiritual need. By refusing to accept that we need help we can effectively put a block on the provision of what we need. That is a trap into which Ruth did not fall, but why do we fall into it? Possibly because we associate being in need with a perceived failure on our part and our pride takes a hit. It is often said that it is easier to give than to receive and for many, even in the church, that rings true.

Setting aside pride it is worth asking whether the following statement is true 'Being in need only becomes a problem when it is not accompanied by the provision of whatever is necessary to meet that need'. On the face of it that statement is true but the answer to it is not that simple. We need to determine the factors that give rise to the need in the first place for they indeed may be the problem. If those factors are not addressed then need will continue and no amount of provision will remove the problem.

In war-torn areas and in refugee camps the need for provision will continue until the real problem is addressed. We have again seen on our televisions this week the heart-breaking images of children barely clinging to life where Covid-19 has made an unspeakably dreadful situation even worse. Like you, I have heard the appeals for £3 to help save a child's life and was left wondering just how much difference that £ 3 can make. I am sure many of us, at times, have found the enormity of a situation just too big to embrace and don't let it lodge firmly in the forefront of our minds. In the majority of situations of need a major contributory factor is injustice but with good will on all sides this can be resolved. That is why **JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION IS THE MANTRA OF CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD**. When those conditions prevail on earth then the Kingdom of God is reigning.

I was witness to that reign after the devastation in Bosley following the enormous explosion and fire. I can honestly say that our prayer 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done' was tangibly realised there. Setting aside the cause of the devastation all barriers that divide people were gone and there was a genuine compassion for each other and a willingness to provide for each other. The management of Covid-19 is another situation where we see people behaving as Ruth did and going above and beyond what could reasonably be expected of them in their care for others.

To me the following verse from a hymn sum up our thoughts for today:

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
Let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

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