

Sermon Series: Celebrating Life—Catching the Joy Stealers – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN – 6/21/2009
Title: “Celebrating Relationships: Catching Self-Protection”
Text: Ruth 1:16-17
Intro.: *Illus.: The human need for relationship “It is not good for man to be alone.” Genesis 2:16*
Theme: To be in relationship with another is an intentional commitment to defer to their need and submit to their way because of love, all of which can only be done when the mind of Christ’s takes us captive to His love.

The Risk of Relationship

- The story of Ruth
- 1. Famine, marriage, sickness, and death — a commitment to a foreign mother-in-law – *“I didn’t sign up for this one”*
- 2. Naomi wants to return to her roots – decision-time for Ruth— does she sacrifice everything (family, culture, traditions, religion) out of relationship or selfishly seek self-preservation
- Our story – most of us are jaded on the joy of relationships – haven’t lived a *“fairy tale existence”* in our relationships
- 1. When the playing field is level and all is well, it is easy to love because we are getting something in return
 - a. Do we make long term commitments with our fingers crossed behind our back – just in case we need a way out?
 - b. *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Philippians 2:3-4*
- 2. What are the risks of relationship?
 - a. In a broken world someone else could take advantage of and misuse you – **God’s response:** *(The Lord is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me? Psalm 118:6)*
 - b. Your plans and dreams could be derailed or changed – **God’s response:** *(For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9)*
 - c. You might be called upon to serve someone else for the rest of your life—or at least a long time (*where you dwell, I will dwell*) – **God’s response:** *(Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. John 13: 16-17)*
 - d. **Illus.: Edwin and Martha Englert – life-long devotion**

The Hard Work and the Godly Reward of Unconditional Relationship

- When the one you are trying to love, makes it hard for you to love them
- 1. Naomi wanted to live in a “Eeorye” funk
 - a. Worked hard to dissuade Orpah and Ruth and to send them back
 - b. *“Don’t call me Naomi,”she told them. “Call me Mara because the Almighty has made my life very bitter.” vs. 20*
- 2. How do you love some one who doesn’t want to be loved? (spouse, child, parent)
 - a. Make your focus the end goal not the drudgery of the journey
 - b. **Illus.: Huron River canoe trip – goal was to get back home**
 - c. Ruth came to love Naomi’s God and so kept this Messiah as her motivation to love Naomi (*your God/my God*)
 - d. *Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2*
- Relational commitment is hard work but with a promise of Divine resourcing
- 1. Like Ruth giving away **love with reckless abandon because God is supplying it**
 - a. *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed. 2 Corinthians 9:8*
- 2. **Loving with a transplanted heart**
 - a. *“And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh.” Ezekiel 11:19*
 - b. Repenting of a stubborn, stone-cold heart and praying God melts our heart of stone to love others as He does
- 3. **Loving with an out-of-this-world love**
 - a. *We love because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19*
 - b. *Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8*
 - c. **Illus.: Leaving No One Behind**

The Human Need for Relationship

A rather crude and cruel experiment was carried out by Emperor Frederick, who ruled the Roman Empire in the thirteenth century. He wanted to know what man's original language was: Hebrew, Greek, or Latin? He decided to isolate a few infants from the sound of the human voice. He reasoned that they would eventually speak the natural tongue of man. Wet nurses who were sworn to absolute silence were obtained, and though it was difficult for them, they abided by the rule. The infants never heard a word -- not a sound from a human voice. Within several months they were all dead. **Joe E. Trull**

Leaving No One Behind

Based on a true story of an army commander in Vietnam, *We Were Soldiers* tells of Lt. Col. Hal Moore leading his troops into one of the bloodiest battles in American history. Moore is a Christian, a great leader, and an American hero. Before a decisive battle Moore gave a stirring speech to his troops, promising his absolute commitment to them and his dedication to sacrificial leadership. With sternness he says:

Let us understand the situation. We are going into battle against a tough and determined enemy. I can't promise you that I'll bring you all home alive. But this I swear before you and before Almighty God: that when we go into battle I will be the first to set foot on the field and the last to step off. And I will leave no one behind. Dead or alive, we will all come home together, so help me God. *We Were Soldiers (Paramount, 2002), written by Harold G. Moore and Joseph L. Galloway, directed by Randall Wallace*

Ruth 1:16-17

But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. ¹⁷"Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me." [NASB]