



Wayne's Words

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Sunday 7th November, 2021



Our God Who Calls into Being the Things That are Not!

Our readings this fortnight have included the beautiful oasis of the Book of Ruth.

Ruth comes after the chaos of the Book of Judges portraying Israel's abandonment of the Lord God and consequent horrific moral decline – where 'Israel was without a king, and everyone did what was right in their own eyes'. The Book of Ruth is a window into the deep love and faithfulness of this gentle Gentile widow who would become an unlikely ancestor of King David – the Lord's Anointed.

Ruth is an unlikely hero in several regards. She was a foreigner who the Israelites were forbidden to marry due to the risk of their faith being corrupted by the idolatry of pagan nations. She was a woman – much of the Scriptural action traces that of male kings and prophets. She was a widow.

Yet Ruth's determined love for Naomi and readiness to forsake the gods and people of her past to worship Naomi's God, the Holy One of Israel, reflect a total devotion that was rarely found in Israel itself. God honours Ruth's humble obedience and raises this obscure widow from Moab to the exalted status of great-grandmother of King David – the one of whom God said, he is '*a man after my own heart*'. From David's line would come the Messiah – Jesus, Son of David.

We see a pattern here, in the juxtaposition of these books of the Bible, of both the judgment and the grace of God. Throughout the Scriptures we see books that end with what appears to be a closed door of despair as Israel comes under the judgement of God for its persistent disobedience and corruption. Yet we turn the page and find God at work in the most unexpected and obscure of situations to bring about unfathomable blessing – way out of proportion to any deserving on behalf of his people. And in so doing he chooses the most unlikely people (given the cultural expectations of the day) – often a woman, frequently one unable, up to that time, to bear children (Sarah, Rebekah, Hannah, Elizabeth), at times a prostitute (Tamar, Rahab, Mary Magdalene?), a teenage virgin (Mary), and foreigners (Namaan, Cyrus, Roman centurions in Luke and Acts). David himself was the runt of the litter and Jesus' disciples were hardly the elite of Jerusalem's social circles.

Where do **you** look to identify God at work? On what basis have you managed to dismiss the likelihood of God using you in a special way? Remember, *God looks not on the outward appearance, but on the heart*. And he *chooses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise*. Moreover, at the very point where people are in despair, God in his grace has already secretly been hatching a wonderful deliverance. At such a time as this, might God be desiring to use even you? Might he be daring to work even through St Michael's? Will you dare to believe? Will you make yourself available to him, even today?

God bless you,

Wayne