

**“WOMEN OF ADVENT”**  
**“Ruth, the Moabite”**

We began a new sermon series as we start the Christian year. “The Women of Advent” invites us to consider not only the ancestors of Jesus, but how we carry on their faith and love as the bearers of Christ in our day and time. Over the next few weeks we will focus on the women in the genealogy of Jesus as found in the first chapter of Matthew. This would be interesting in and of itself as in most genealogies’ women are not named and if they are, it is in relationship with their husbands or their fathers. In this listing, not only are these women named, but three of these women are named and the fourth by the name of her murdered husband. Mostly these women are outsiders, of a different ethnic group and are known because of the scandals by which they are associated. The first Sunday of Advent we learned about Tamar. The second Sunday of Advent, we focused on Rahab. On this third Sunday of Advent we are invited into Ruth’s story. While familiar, there are nuances that we may miss because of what we think we know. This Moabites faith, love and joy are remembered and are a model for us. While we do not read all of Ruth’s story in worship, however the daily readings will cover the whole the book of Ruth (four chapters.) Paired with Mary’s song the Magnificat, we see how God works through a variety of people and often through those we would not expect. What joy it brings to know that God can work in every person no matter their background or heritage. God has a roll for everyone in proclaiming the good news of Christ. May this week we experience the joy that praises God in what we see, what we hear and in all of our lives.

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Ruth, the Moabite”**

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**Daily prayer:** *God of timeless grace, you fill us with joyful expectation. Make us ready for the message that prepares the way, that with uprightness of heart and holy joy we may eagerly await the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.*  
([www.lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu](http://www.lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu))

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This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

## Study Guide

### **Monday, December 16, 2019** Ruth 1:1-22

This chapter is the best known of this lovely book. The back story is that Naomi along with her husband and two sons move to Moab because there is famine in Judah. The two sons marry Moabites: Orpah and Ruth. In due time, Naomi's husband and two sons die. The women, all widows, are left to fend for themselves. Both Orpah and Ruth vow to stay with Naomi, but Naomi convinces Orpah to return to her home and find happiness. Ruth refuses and goes to Bethlehem with Naomi. Ruth's impassioned song of faith and love is one of the most beloved in scripture. Even so, Naomi asked to be called "Mara" which means bitterness. She has no hope, no real chance to find security and happiness. What kind of life can two widows have, when one is a Moabite, cursed, hated and loathed? Ruth will never be accepted, nor her children or her children's children. (Deuteronomy 23: 3) *Have you ever felt the kind of bitterness and grief that Naomi did? Have you felt cut off, loathed or cursed? How does Ruth's song of faith encourage you to look to God for hope, for love, for grace?*

### **Tuesday, December 17, 2019** Ruth 2: 1-23

Ruth goes to glean grain for Naomi and her to have food to eat. This could be treacherous in ancient times. Women were accosted, assaulted and raped. Boaz, Naomi's husband's kinsman, sees Ruth and asks about her. He immediately provides protection and extra grain. He notes her kindness, her faithfulness and sacrifice for Naomi. He makes sure that extra grain, food and water are available for Ruth. Ruth shares this information with Naomi who encourages Ruth to stay close to Boaz's women and Ruth gleanes throughout the harvests. In spite of her background, Ruth is noticed. She works hard, as hard as any others, she is faithful to her mother-in-law and provides for her. Ruth was challenging people's understanding of "Moabites". She wasn't lazy, "loose" or unsavory. *Have you ever had your preconceived stereotypes challenged? Who did that for you and how did you resolve the contradictory feelings?*

### **Wednesday December 18, 2019** Ruth 3: 1-18

Naomi becomes proactive to provide for Ruth and for herself. She has Ruth dress in her best "party" clothes and to lay down with Boaz on the threshing floor. The "threshing floor" in scriptures is often used to describe places where sexual behavior might occur. Ruth uncovers Boaz's "feet" which is euphemism for genitals. She makes herself vulnerable to Boaz and others. Boaz is honored by her loyalty to Naomi and in asking him to care for her. He promises to do what he can for her. Have you done anything in the same calculated way as Ruth? She could have been humiliated, hurt or assaulted. She risked everything to secure a future for herself and Naomi? *Who would you be willing to risk everything for?*

### **Thursday December 19, 2019** Ruth 4: 1-22

Boaz is a master at "working the system". There was one kinsman closer in relationship to Naomi. Boaz begins to bargain for the piece of property that Naomi's husband still owned. The kinsman was interested in the property until it became known that "Ruth the Moabite" came with it and the need to have a child for the dead man. The next of kin is no longer interested, but Boaz is! Boaz does not shrink from taking a loathed Moabite as his wife. The community blesses this union: *May she be like Rachel and Leah. May your house be like Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah!* Other righteous and scandalous women are remembered and honored for their faithfulness. Perhaps Boaz had no trouble accepting Ruth, because according to Matthew his mother was Rahab. He had firsthand knowledge of having less than stellar "blood lines". Through them, we are given Obed, Jesse and then of course King David. *Say a prayer today blessing those like, Boaz who see past prejudice and see God's gift of grace.*

### **Friday December 20, 2019** Luke 1: 46-55

Mary's Magnificat is a song of great joy! Her song reminds the faithful that God is not as picky as human beings. "His mercy is on those who fear him...and has lifted up the lowly." God remembers and blesses the lowly like Tamar, Rahab and Ruth. God offers joy to the outcast, the outsider and the grieving. *How has God blessed your life and how have you seen God's blessings for those who need it most?*