

# Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Reverend Dr. Daris Bultena

November 8, 2009

32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ruth 3:1-5, 4:13-17

<sup>1</sup>Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. <sup>2</sup>Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. <sup>3</sup>Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. <sup>4</sup>When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do." <sup>5</sup>She said to her, "All that you tell me I will do."

<sup>4:13</sup>So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the LORD made her conceive, and she bore a son. <sup>14</sup>Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin; and may his name be renowned in Israel! <sup>15</sup>He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him." <sup>16</sup>Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. <sup>17</sup>The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Mark 12:38-44

<sup>38</sup>As he taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, <sup>39</sup>and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! <sup>40</sup>They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

<sup>41</sup>He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. <sup>42</sup>A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. <sup>43</sup>Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. <sup>44</sup>For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

## **"Economics Done God Style"**

**Introduction to Economics. Econ 101. Professor Milo F. McCabe. It was taught in one of those lecture hall theater style rooms. The kind that rise steeply and descend to the podium and chalk board covered wall. Dr. McCabe was military and he ran the class that way—sure we were college students and there were 200 of us in the class but we would sit in alphabetical order, and at least once every other week, without announcing when, he would call the roll by shouting out last names only.**

**“Bultena.” Present. No points lost there. His military style was imposing. In fact, it was more than imposing—it was scary. His lecture format was quick and required the taking of copious notes.**

**Unlike my other courses—that course had no text book. Dr. McCabe—in an overly self-confident manner—told us that our notes would be our text book because his presentation was more thorough than any text written. He told us to bind in a three in binder (yes, he specified the size) the handouts, worksheets, and problems distributed daily in class.**

**His course was difficult and required attention to much homework. In fact, I spent more time that semester doing Economics homework than any other. Dr. McCabe told us if we ever had difficulties we should sign up outside his office door to see him. What I knew of his sign up sheets were that they were divided up into 5 minute increments—the implication was clear—you were not worth more than 5 minutes of his time.**

**Indeed—I doubted that he ever knew any of his students—most were too frightened to ever pen their names on that list.**

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**Boaz, he took Ruth as his wife. The real deal here is he was not obligated. It was not his place. He was not the next in line. But Boaz had encountered Ruth prior to today’s lesson.**

Ruth had returned with her Mother-in-law. This was neither Ruth's homeland or her people. But Ruth had vowed to be with Naomi—to take her people and God as her very own. Ruth was a model of relationship—she did not leave her mother-in-law's side even when that same mother-in-law had told her to go.

There she was a foreigner in a foreign land. With no status or men in their lives, Ruth had little choice other than to follow the other women into the fields—and there behind the harvesters they picked up the left-over crumbs. They were gleaning for those tid-bits of barley that fell from the shocks of the harvesters.

Boaz had noticed Ruth and he inquired about her. He found out that she was the Moabite who had come home with Naomi. And he not only allowed her to be in the field, but he instructed the others to not chase her away. Not only that, but they were to drop a handful here and there for Ruth to pick up.

The mercy he showed went the extra mile when they stopped for lunch and Boaz invited Ruth to take a seat and eat with him and the other harvesters. Such mercy was not common—and was not normally shown to any women, let alone a foreign woman.

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Cody was 13 at the time. He had turned 13 that August. All in all he was always a good kid. I expected better grades out of the boy, but he never seemed real interested in acquiring better grades. He was your typical 13 year old. He liked bikes, skateboards, and anything fast moving.

As a kid Cody was always a planner. He had Halloween night all planned. Cody and his friends were going to be staying over night at Dillon's house. He had the plan all approved by his parents and everything was set.

The evening before, however, Cody was unhappy and even weepy. He would not say why. Finally the truth came out. The issue was Mark. Now Mark was a foster kid—and because of that many of the other boys did not hang out with Mark. He wasn't, in their estimation, cool. Cody was his only friend. Cody cared about Mark and tried to talk Dillon into including Mark in the sleep over.

Dillon was not convinced. Cody had a decision to make.

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The Scribes prance around and parade out their giving so that everyone sees. The scribes wear their long robes like us preachers do and they love to be the center of attention—uh, um—sort of like us preachers do.

Jesus was observing that day in the temple courtyard. There in the courtyard were 13 collection bins—now understand these bins were not like our collection plates we use here at Good Shepherd. Here our collection plates have these little pads at the bottom of the plate so on the chance that dropping your money into the plate it could make noise—it is silenced by the little cushion.

Those collection boxes in the temple were not that way. They were more like horns of a brass trumpet. Drop something in and it made a sound. The more you drop in the larger and louder the sound. Of course—there were plenty in the crowd who like to make a big noise of what they put in.

It was as good, if not better than prancing around in long flowing robes. Jesus was observing that day—and there among them was poor widow woman. Widows were poor—there were no pension plans, there was no inheriting of property or money for a woman in that culture and age.

**And there that poor woman is—doing as the rest making her contribution. She gently drops in two coins. Bing. Bing. That is all. The sum of them is a penny. Economically speaking not worth anything really.**

**A penny. It was all—but it was everything. Everything.**

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**Dr. McCabe—truth be told—I was not only frightened of the man, but I was scared of him. I was scared of him. I steered clear of him. I never signed up for one of those five minute appointments. I did not want to have anything to do with him.**

**I just did what I was supposed to do. I took those copious notes. I did my homework. I got good grades. I was prompt to class.**

**But then that day happened. “Bultena.” Now, you know that “Bultena” begins with a “B” and in alphabetical order in that descending classroom it put my seated body at eyelevel with Dr. Milo Fr. Military McCabe. I did notice that there were those times my pen would trail off the paper. There were those times when the squiggle was all there was.**

**Yes, in those times I was mid copious note and had fallen asleep. I always tried not too-but there were those days. Mid semester as class concluded he stepped into the aisle and up the stairs—he grabbed me by the shoulder of my shirt and said, “Bultena, you were asleep in my class. Your name better be signed up outside my office door for an appointment.”**

**Talk about not fun—go sign up for a time to be scolded by Dr. Milo Meany. I signed up for an appointment. Two days later I went. I knocked on the door. “Come in. Sit down. Explain.” That was what he said, “Come in, sit down, explain.”**

I was at a loss for words so I apologized, “I’m sorry sir, I’m sorry.” I said it twice as if repeating it made it more meaningful.

His next words were, “I’ve spoken with the dean of the Business School...” My mind knew what he would say next—“we are tossing your behind right out of this class and I won’t tolerate lazy sleepers in my class.”

But he did not say that. No. Instead, he continued: “If you will add economics as a minor you are eligible for an additional scholarship through the Business School.”

I must have looked puzzled, because he explained. “I will not tolerate you sleeping in my class—I’ve checked and I know you are worth the investment. It’s a matter of economics. I’ve checked you are not out at the frat parties; you are working a full time job.”

“I did that when I went to Northwestern. I want more for my students than I had. See Dean Cash today—that will be all. Make sure you are awake in my class tomorrow.”

Mercy. Yes. I do not know that he knew anything other than my last name, but he called me, “A good investment.” Economics.

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She looked different. She talked different. She was a foreigner. The other harvesters—surely they had some comments. Hey, she was not his problem. He was not responsible for her. He was not the next man in line—the code of hospitality did not require Boaz to step forward—it required another.

Boaz went to him—and inquired. He inquired and he volunteered to take responsibility for Ruth and Naomi.

He took Ruth into his household. He married her.

**He showed her mercy when he did not have to. It was not required. But he showed it to her. He saw her dedication to Naomi—he saw what others missed. He saw inside—beyond the foreignness—to the person she really was.**

**And he honored that—I dare say fell in love with that.**

**And he married her—she bore him a son—Obed—the father of Jesse—Jesse the father of David.**

**Yes, a foreigner—an outcast to many—one not even worthy to pick up the left over of the harvest – Boaz says allow her – and God writes her into the very genealogy that will bear the Christ child.**

**David’s great grandmother – it hardly makes sense. Its not how the world works except in God’s economy.**

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**We finally figured it out. But not until the next day. Cody was so upset because he had a difficult decision to make. Would he be with his group of friends? Would he be with the ones who were the popular ones along with him in the class? What about Mark? Would he avoid Mark? He had not invited Mark—that foster kid nobody liked—to anything. There was no obligation there.**

**But there was a decision to make. It was not an easy one. It was clear the next day when he came home from school. Mark was along.**

**He made the decision that in the economy of a 13 year old makes no sense. He made the decision to be with Mark. He made the decision to care about someone else. He made the kind of decision that God made for humanity.**

**Cody made the right choice.**

**It is not his grades in school that prove who he is.**

**It is not the popularity that he generates or even the quantity of sleep over parties the he is invited too.**

**Cody made the right choice. He chose that which would make him the most vulnerable—he chose that which would extend beyond that event and prove to this adult the reality of this fleshly love that God has poured into us as people.**

**Cody got it. He made the right choice.**

**Not according to the world—but in God’s world, by God’s style and design—foreign through it seems—he made the right choice.**

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**Bing. Bing. Plink. Plink. A penny in total. Not much—nothing. Everything. Yes, she gave everything!**

**She gave it all. The rest—just a part—she put it all out there. All of it.**

**Jesus explained that she gave it all.**

**That her all was more than their much. Her bing, bing, added up to more than the heavy plunking and pounding of their gold coins. How could that be?**

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**Well, its economics done God’s style.**

**It might not add up in those without eyes to see or ears to hear, but it does to those who see and hear God style.**

**Her life matched her faith—her life matched her faith. She believed all the way. She believed with everything and she gave her everything. She did not show off; she did not parade around—she presented it all to God because God was her all.**

**It was like Cody—his decision matches the person God is calling him to be. Yes with struggle and with difficult decision, but his life matches who he is to be.**

**Oh that is Christ—it is Christ—for in him—all the love of God matched up with humanity. And in that love he was willing to give everything for us. And he did. In that cross—through that tomb.**

**Its economics done God's style. The world won't get it, but we will. This faith is a place where a penny is worth more than a million.**

**This faith is a place where a decision to reach out to the Mark foster kids of this world is the right decision. The world does not get it, but we do.**

**It's a faith where a professor does more than grade and lecture—and enables future.**

**It's a faith where our two cents—where our Boaz inviting the foreigner to our table living makes God style economic sense.**

**Amen.**