

Traveling Companions
[Ruth 1:1-18](#); [Mark 3:31-35](#)

Rev. Kenneth M. Locke
Interim Pastor, St Paul United Church of Christ; New Bremen, OH
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Let's pretend, just a minute, we're going to take a journey. Going on a trip. Somewhere exotic and exciting. Maybe we're going to hike the Pacific Crest Trail from San Diego in the south all the way up through California, Oregon, Washington and up to Vancouver in the north. Perhaps we're going to take an ocean freighter to Europe, buy a Euro rail pass and see all the tourist spots in Europe. We'll sleep on the train or stay in rundown Youth Hostels and see everything we want to see. Or perhaps we're going to buy a minivan and drive all the way from New Bremen, to Texas, through Mexico, Panama, Brazil, all the way down to Cape Horn at the very tip of South America. Wherever it is we're going, it's exciting, exotic, and maybe, maybe, just a tad dangerous.

Who should we take with us? What sort of person, what character traits would we want, in a traveling companion? Maybe someone with a lot of money who could pay most of the expenses? Maybe we want someone with plenty of stamina who can get up early, strike camp, carry all their luggage and some of ours. Or what about someone who's quick-witted, good company, always has a smile on their lips and a song in their heart? Maybe someone with a sense of adventure, always up for a challenge. What kind of person should we take with us on our long journey?

Let's look at Ruth and Naomi just a minute. Clearly, Ruth is committed to Naomi. Ruth ain't going nowhere without her. But why? Does Naomi have money? No. Does Naomi have connections? No. Does Naomi offer Ruth any hope at all for the future? Is there anything Naomi can do for Ruth that would be a help to her? No! And yet, and yet, Ruth refuses to leave her. "Where you go, I will go. Your people, my people. Where you are buried, I will be buried."

Most people would say Orpah was the smart one. And notice, our text says nothing against Orpah. No one is saying Orpah was disloyal or bad in any way. Orpah is perfectly respectable. She has done nothing wrong.

Ruth, in fact, is the odd one. Naomi can do nothing for her. Nothing. And yet, Ruth is absolutely committed to her.

Think about it. Is that the kind of person we want to take on our trip? Someone who will stick with us through thick and thin, high and low, who will absolutely never leave us? Is Ruth, maybe, the kind of person we want to take on our journey?

In our New Testament lesson, Jesus has been arguing with the authorities. He's done well, held his own against them, even gotten the better of them in the verbal back and forth. But still, Jesus is clearly the outsider. Jesus has no authority. To most people, he's just a wandering preacher.

Jesus, like Naomi, is on a journey. Who does Jesus want with him? Who does Jesus want to be his traveling companions? Does he want powerful people who can grease the skids? Does he want learned people who can discuss the law? Does he want his closest relatives, those who know him best, to be with him?

No. No. Jesus wants those who do the will of God. The only requirement to walk with Jesus is a commitment to doing the will of God. Just as Ruth is committed to being with Naomi, Jesus wants people who are committed to doing the will of God.

Friends, how committed are we to following Jesus? Are we willing to be true outsiders, doing God's will? Are we as committed to following Jesus as Ruth is committed to following Naomi? Are we willing, like Ruth, to give up all hope, all security? Are we willing to give up our family, our land, all we've ever known and commit ourselves to following Jesus?

As Christians, we know God is with us on our life's journey. In the sacrament of baptism, God reaches out to us in love, claims

us as God's beloved children, and promises to be with us all our days. We know God is with us in our ups and downs, our good times and bad, our living and our dying, and at our death God reaches out and welcomes us to our heavenly home. God is always with us on our journey of life. God is fantastically committed to being with us on our journey of life. This is good news.

But Jesus is also on a journey. Jesus is on a journey to a cross. Friends, would Jesus choose us to be his companions on the way? Are we as committed to following Jesus as Ruth was committed to following Naomi? Are we committed to doing the will of God before anything else in life? Would Jesus choose us to be his companions on the way? Amen.