

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Ruth 1:1-19a

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. ² The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. ³ Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴ They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, ⁵ both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. ⁶ When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. ⁷ With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. ⁸ Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. ⁹ May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them and they wept aloud ¹⁰ and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people." ¹¹ But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? ¹² Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— ¹³ would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me!" ¹⁴ At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵ "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." ¹⁶ But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." ¹⁸ When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. ¹⁹ So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem.

1:1-5 In this brief introduction, the author of the book of Ruth employs terse, abbreviated reportage to present the historical and socio-legal setting. Despite frequent paucity with words, the author can become verbose, so that his general style is really not terseness but is designed for impact. Although several significant events are presented compactly in a mere five verses, certain aspects are drawn out through repetition: "name" (five times in 1:2, 4), "two" (five times in 1:1-5) and "from Bethlehem of Judah" (twice in 1:1-2). This helps create the impression that a long period of time is being covered, which is made explicit by "about ten years" (1:4). (CC)

The opening verses (1:1–5) also are part of larger structures in the book. The entirety of chapter 1 is framed by an inclusio, since it begins and ends with parallel elements. It begins with a time reference (1:1a), departure, and settlement (1:1b), and ends with a time reference (1:22c), return, and settlement (1:22a–b). Both 1:1 and 1:22 refer to a family and a city whose circumstances change. In 1:1 the family consists of “a man . . . his wife, and his two sons,” but in 1:22 it consists only of the widows Naomi and Ruth; and Bethlehem is beset by “famine” in 1:1 but is the site of the “barley harvest” in 1:22. (CC)

Further, some elements in 1:1–5 have parallels in the latter part of chapter 4, which form an inclusio around the whole book of Ruth. Thus “boy” (נָעָם) occurs in Ruth only in 1:5, where Naomi’s original two die, and in 4:16, where Naomi holds the newborn. The presentation of the background particulars in 1:1–2 parallels the concluding particulars in the genealogy at the end of the book (4:18–22). The practice of bracketing accounts with such parallels at the beginning and end is frequently utilized in biblical stories, for example, in those of the patriarchs. (CC)

1:1 *when the judges ruled.* Probably from c. 1380 to c. 1050 B.C. (see Introduction to Judges: Background). By mentioning the judges, the author calls to mind that period of Israel’s apostasy, moral degradation and oppression. (CSB)

The events took place within an 11-year period during the time of the judges. Ruth was likely written during David’s reign (c 1009–970 BC). (TLSB)

For the author, not only was the era of the judges a distinct historical period, but the story he told was also historical rather than merely a folktale. “Judging” in this period of Israel did not just include political leadership and discriminating between civil and moral right versus wrong. The “judges” were theological and military leaders who led the people in repentance, turning from false worship, and returning to the Lord in faithfulness. Whenever the Israelites fell into idolatry the LORD would allow them to be oppressed by the surrounding pagans until they were brought to repentance, and the LORD would raise up judges who “saved” the Israelites from their oppressive enemies (Judg 2:16; cf. 2:18). Thus a judge could be called a “savior” (מַצִּיל, Judg 3:9, 15; cf. 6:36–37) who delivered the people from oppression. Generally speaking, they did not govern or rule.⁴⁵ While their office was a unique OT institution during a limited period of history, it helped prepare for the eternal threefold office of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King, and hence it was also a predecessor of the apostolic office of the Christian pastor, established by Christ. (CC)

According to the book of Judges, this period of Israel’s history was marked by religious and moral degeneracy, chaos, national disunity, and oppression by foreigners. But in contrast to the accounts there of tribes and the nation, defeats and victories, the book of Ruth deals with one family. As Ruth 1:1–5 portrays one tragedy after another, the essence of drama confronts the readers and hearers. Drawn into the story’s tension of a family faced with extinction, we find ourselves asking, Can they possibly survive? Will God come to their aid? (CC)

famine. Not mentioned in Judges. (CSB)

An affliction threatened by the Lord, Deut. 28, 22-24, and sent from time to time as a punishment of Israel's iniquity in committing idolatry. (Kretzmann)

Recorded famines were comparatively seldom in the account of Israel's history, but certainly they were not unusual. For the rains that came in the three winter months have always been uncertain and often insufficient.⁴⁶ Bethlehem had fruitful land for wheat, barley, olives, almonds, and grapes, and usually received sufficient rainfall. Its name means "house of bread (food)," that is, "granary." But, being situated on the eastern slope of the watershed of the Judean hills, it may receive less rainfall than elsewhere.⁴⁸ The higher plateau of Moab can receive rain from clouds that fail to water the hills of Judah. Thus, drought and famine might occur in Israel without affecting Moab (or Philistia, Gen 26:1; 2 Ki 8:1-2). Ironically, in Ruth 1:1 an Israelite family is forced to leave Bethlehem ("house of bread/food"), which had no food for them, and travel for food to the land of the Moabites, who had refused to offer food to the Israelites on their way to Canaan (Deut 23:4-5 [ET 23:3-4]). (CC)

Israelite farmers lived very near the level of subsistence, so a few harvest failures could bring them to ruin. If a drought lasted for several years, a famine would result, as happened for three and a half years in the time of Elijah (1 Ki 17:1; 18:1-2; Lk 4:25; James 5:17) and seven years in the days of Elisha (2 Ki 8:1-2). However, it is possible that the famine in Ruth, which lasted for at least ten years (Ruth 1:4), may have been instigated by the devastation of all crops and cattle during the seven-year oppression of Israel by the Midianites (Judg 6:1-6; 8:28) ca. 1210-1190 B.C. Other less likely situations for the events of Ruth are during the judgeship of Ehud after he had led the defeat of the oppressing Moabites and the subjection of Moab (Judg 3:12-30) ca. 1330-1310, or during the oppression of the Ammonites and Philistines (Judg 10:6-9) ca. 1125-1100. (CC)

That the famine "occurred ... in the land" (Ruth 1:1) is an implication in Scripture that it took place with God's permission and to advance his plan for his people. What good might God be able to bring out of the misfortune (see Gen 50:20) of this famine? (CC)

Bethlehem in Judah. David's hometown (1Sa 16:18). Bethlehem (the name suggests "house of food") is empty. (CSB)

Means "the house of bread"; ironic in a time of famine. (TLSB)

Our story begins with a focus on Bethlehem (mentioned also in Ruth 1:2, 19, 22; 2:4; 4:11), which is further identified as the Bethlehem "of Judah" because there was another Bethlehem in Zebulun (Josh 19:10, 15). This Bethlehem in Judah figures in other biblical passages, including Judg 12:8-10; 17:7-9; 19:1-2, 18. The book of Ruth links the Ephrathite clan, to which Elimelech belonged (Ruth 1:2), to the story of Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38). In Ruth 4:11-12, townspeople and elders of Bethlehem pray, upon Ruth's marriage to Boaz, that the LORD would make their house fruitful like that of Perez. They first mention Ephrathah and then affirm what Gen 38:25-29 states, that the union of Judah and Tamar produced Perez. Thus Ruth 4:11-12 implies that Perez was the progenitor of the Ephrathite clan. Moreover, Ruth 4:18-22 traces the genealogy from Perez to Boaz and David. (CC)

The original Israelite audience hearing the story of Ruth would have remembered the immorality and deaths in the account of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 and also the idolatry, immorality, and violence of two other accounts concerning Bethlehemites: the idolatrous Levite (Judges 17–18) and a Levite whose harlotrous concubine is raped and dies after the homosexual rape of the Levite is foiled (Judges 19), provoking civil war against the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 20). In the era of the judges “there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in one’s own eyes” (Judg 17:6; 21:25). Beginning as Ruth does, would this account be another tragic story of lawlessness and godlessness? (CC)

In the course of time, Bethlehem experienced a number of historical events besides drought and famine. Most significant of all, it would be, according to a later, eighth-century prophecy, the birthplace of the Messiah (Micah 5:1 [ET 5:2]). Bethlehem (“house of bread”) was the site of the nativity of Jesus Christ (Mt 2:1–8; Lk 2:4, 15; cf. Jn 7:42), the true bread of life come down from heaven, who gives his very flesh for all mankind, that whoever feeds on him may live forever (Jn 6:35–58). (CC)

Taking intertextuality into consideration, the placement of Ruth after Judges in the Septuagint and Vulgate as well as in English Bibles, and thus right after the two sordid Bethlehem tales at the end of Judges (chapters 17–21), creates a dialogue between the two books. One might have asked (cf. Jn 1:46): “What good can come from Bethlehem?” There two tribes threatened with extinction, Dan and Benjamin (Judg 18:1; 21:17), were each renewed through six hundred men (Judg 18:11; 20:47). Here in Ruth, it is two women who save an endangered family. So, aside from the historical note that Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel for seven years (Judg 12:8–10), Ruth is the first positive story linked with Bethlehem. As such, it not only foreshadows the stories of David (1 Samuel 16–1 Kings 2) but also the new beginning “in Bethlehem of Judea” foretold by Micah (5:1 [ET 5:2]) and announced by Matthew (2:1), that is, the birth of the Son of David, who is God the Son incarnate and the only Savior for the whole world: Jesus the Christ. (CC)

MOAB – Moab was at times an enemy of Israel, but at this time it seems to have been open for the family of Elimelech. In stark contrast to the gracious God of Israel was Chemosh, the “abominable god of Moab” (1 Kg 17:7’ 2 Kgs 23:13; Jer 48:7, 14; Num 21:29).. Chemosh was also associated with the neighboring Ammonites (Jud 11:25) and likely was related Ammonite god Molech, to whom children were sacrificed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

During a famine, Elimelech led his family to more inviting agricultural prospects. There is nothing wrong in his move to Moab. To escape famine, Abraham went to Egypt, Isaac went to Gerar of the Philistines, and Jacob went to Egypt at God’s command (Gn 46:1–7). To avoid Saul’s rampage, David hid his parents in Moab (1Sm 22:3–5). (TLSB)

The narrator provides the background for the story with orientation. The characters are gradually brought into focus by being introduced first as family members, then individually by name. A series of motion verbs shows how the family established itself more and more in Moab: “went,” “entered,” “remained,” “took wives,” and “lived” (1:1–4). (CC)

Elimelech and his family sought refuge (“to sojourn,” 1:1) in a fertile area of Moab. To reach this area, Elimelech and his family had to journey on foot about a hundred miles from Bethlehem, going through the deep Jordan Rift around the north shore of the Dead Sea. This move put them outside of the area of both their faith and Israel’s Law, in a potentially precarious existence. Though not enjoying full rights as citizens, strangers would normally receive from their hosts essential protection. The family probably intended to stay in Moab only temporarily, without becoming integrated into the host people. (CC)

Believers naturally may want to condemn Elimelech for forsaking the land of Israel given by the LORD, who had promised to care for his people there (Deut 11:8–17). Pressed by hard times, he went to an enemy land, apparently failing to trust in God. Seeking to avoid one affliction is no guarantee that one will not suffer a greater one. When adversity struck Israelites in the promised land, we would have expected them to bear it as chastisement for sinfulness, sent to move them to repentance, or as a discipline for strengthening their faith (Gen 22:1–12; Deut 8:1–5; see Heb 12:5–11), instead of trying to avoid it, for our God gladly comes to the aid of his believers in need (Psalm 13). But he works in mysterious ways according to the theology of the cross as he brings about salvation through suffering. (CC)

For an Israelite, a major deterrent from leaving his home was the fact that his personal real estate was really on loan to him from the LORD ever since the land of Israel had been parceled out among the tribes, clans, and families (Joshua 13–21). It was his duty as a member of the covenant people to retain his inheritance faithfully, for it was a personal sign to his family of God’s gracious covenant, a down payment on God’s promise of eternal life in the new heavens and new earth. To abandon it or sell it to strangers, except because of extreme poverty, would be tantamount to reneging on the covenant, on one’s bond to the Israelite community, and on one’s bond and duty to both ancestors and descendants (see Lev 25:10, 13, 23–28; Num 36:7). Elimelech and Naomi must have been greatly ashamed⁶³ at having to sell their inheritance’s usufructand to take refuge in Moab. Compare Naboth, who could not conceive of selling his inheritance, not even to the king for a better vineyard (1 Ki 21:2–3). Similarly, Christians should trust in the Lord’s care where he has placed them (Deut 30:20), and not precipitously flee difficulties for what appear to be greener pastures elsewhere: “Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness” (Ps 37:3NASB). (CC)

Why should Elimelech have wanted to go to Moab? For the Moabites were descended from Lot through an incestuous relationship (Gen 19:30–38). Further, Moab became an enemy of Israel, for their King Balak attempted to have Israel cursed (Numbers 22–24); their women enticed Israelite men into immorality and idolatry (Num 25:1–3); and they oppressed Israel for eighteen years (Judg 3:12–14). There is an inversion of normalcy here: the “House of Bread” (Bethlehem) is struck by famine while the enemy Moab becomes an asylum. Similarly, David later sent his parents to Moab for refuge from King Saul (1 Sam 22:3–4). (CC)

Naomi, upon her return to Bethlehem, may appear to allow that her tragic experience in Moab was punishment from God for having forsaken his land to avoid his discipline (Ruth 1:20–21; see also 1:13). However, the author nowhere implies any judgment upon Elimelech and his family. Instead, he seems intentionally to compare this experience with that of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who left the promised land under duress as refugees because of a

famine: Abraham and Jacob went to Egypt and Isaac to Philistine Gerar (Gen 12:10; 26:1; 41:56–42:2; 47:1–6). Indeed, the LORD encouraged Isaac to stay in Gerar (Gen 26:2–6) and Jacob to travel to Egypt (Gen 46:3–4), and all three were specially blessed in the land of their sojourn. The intention was always to sojourn only for the duration of the famine (cf. NIV: “went to live for a while,” Ruth 1:1). And a husband and father has a primary duty to provide for his family (see Gen 42:1–2). (CC)

Thus, Elimelech probably left Judah only after having exhausted all available resources there, that is, after having to sell the usufruct of his land inheritance until the next Jubilee (see Lev 25:13–16). But instead of going westward like the patriarchs to escape a famine, he went eastward to Moab where there was no famine, and perhaps because hostile Philistines may have been blocking the way west to Egypt. Besides, after the victory of Ehud (Judg 3:30), Moab was dominated by Israel for a long time. (CC)

Literally, “in the fields”; for the entire territory was conceived to have been divided into fields for agricultural purposes. (Kretzmann)

It may well have been that importations of grain from Egypt were cut off by the hostility of the Philistines, and that the inhabitants of Judah, therefore, were almost obliged to turn to the country east of the Dead Sea, although the Moabites belonged to the ancient enemies of Israel. (Kretzmann)

1:2 *Elimelech*. Means “(My) God is King” (see note on Jdg 8:23). (CSB)

Although not explicitly developed in the narrative, the name Elimelech (“my God is King”) could have pricked the ears of the astute Israelite listener who knew that Bethlehem was the hometown of David, Israel’s greatest king, who is the goal and last word at the end of the story (4:17, 22). Some two centuries after David, in the eighth century B.C., God revealed that Bethlehem would become the hometown of the Messiah/Christ, the “Ruler” whose origins are from eternity (Micah 5:1 [ET 5:2]). It appears ironic that a man named Elimelech (“my God is King”), with a wife (Naomi, נְאוֹמִי) whose name means “pleasant,” must flee the land that is “pleasant” (רֶגֶל נְאוֹמִי, Gen 49:15) and where his God is King (Judg 8:23). (CC)

It frequently happens in biblical narrative that a choice is limited to two alternatives, one proving to be favored. This is repeatedly the case when two brothers are involved, for example, Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob. Here in Ruth the two brothers take wives, Orpah and Ruth (cf. Leah and Rachel). Since it was Mahlon who married Ruth (4:10), he is the favored one. (CC)

Naomi. See NIV text note on v. 20. (CSB)

Ephrathites. Ephrathah was a name for the area around Bethlehem (see 4:11; Ge 35:19; 1Sa 17:12; Mic 5:2). (CSB)

David was an Ephrathite from Bethlehem (1Sm 17:12). (TLSB)

In Micah 5:2 (Matthew 2:6) “Bethlehem Ephratha” is described as one of the “clans of Judah.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

1:3-4 “Her Two Sons ... Took for Themselves Moabite Wives” (1:3–4)

The account does not state the circumstances of Elimelech’s death, which do not concern the main thrust of the narrative. Naomi certainly would have grieved deeply over the loss of her husband, although 1:3 omits that at this point in the story. The venting of her emotions makes a greater impact in the story at the point where it is included, namely, in connection with her return to Bethlehem (1:11–13, 20–21). (CC)

It is rare in the Bible for a man to be identified as the husband of his wife. But “Elimelech, the husband of Naomi” (1:3), plays no further living role in the book, and the focus from now on turns to Naomi. The shift from “his two sons” (1:1–2) to “her two sons” (1:3; cf. “without her two boys” in 1:5) signals the change in filial responsibility from the dead father to the living mother. In fact, from now on, all other principal characters stand in relation to Naomi: Orpah, Ruth, Boaz, the closer kinsman-redeemer, and Obed (1:5, 6; 2:1; 4:3, 17). Interestingly, the number “two” is mentioned for the sons in each of the first three verses. (CC)

Naomi, though now a widow, was not without hope, for she could count on her sons. With their marriages, the depleted family was restored with a possible future through continuing the family line. However, while the Law the LORD gave Israel prohibited the abuse of widows and the fatherless, these strangers in a foreign country might lack such protection. Since no mention is made of any attempt to return to Israel at this time, the text gives the impression that the survivors decided to remain in Moab until the famine in Judah ended (1:6). (CC)

Ever since their patriarchs, the Israelites—at least in principle, if often not in practice—supported the custom of endogamy, that is, marrying within their own people in order to preserve their faith in God and his gracious covenant (Gen 24:1–9; 26:34–35; 28:1–5; Judg 14:3). Since the conquest of Canaan under Joshua, the practice of endogamy was also meant to keep the Israelites’ land inheritance. Because no stigma was attached to an exogamous marriage to a convert—that is, marrying a non-Israelite who worshiped Israel’s God and accepted his covenant—the practice of endogamy was based primarily on religious confession and not on ethnicity. (CC)

Marriage with Moabites (Ruth 1:4) was not expressly forbidden in the Torah of Moses, although the stipulation that Moabite men could not be received into the congregation of Israel for ten generations (Deut 23:4–5 [ET 23:3–4]) would be a factor against it. Marriage with Canaanites was forbidden in Deut 7:1–4, but that passage deals only with the idolatrous inhabitants of Canaan proper who were to be liquidated—and any who escaped extermination were to be avoided (see “Patriarchal Parallels” in “The Motifs” in the introduction). However, Deut 7:1–4 could naturally be broadened to apply to Moabites and other pagans even though they were not expressly named. That broader application is affirmed in the postexilic era, when some Israelites had intermarried with “Moabites” (Ezra 9:1–2) and “women of ... Moab” (Neh 13:23). Ezra considered such intermarriage to fall under the LORD’s judgment (Ezra 9:11–14), and Nehemiah cursed the men who had married Moabitesses and other foreign women (Neh 13:23–28). Compounding the situation then was the probability that the Israelite men who married foreign

women had first divorced their Israelite wives. That would explain why the LORD through the prophet Malachi, who was a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah (fifth century B.C.), so strongly condemned the Israelites' infidelity and divorce of their Israelite wives, who were their partners in his covenant (Mal 2:11, 14–16). The Israelite men, by marrying foreign wives, could capitalize on economic gain by commercial trade with foreigners. However, they should have remained faithful to their marriage covenant and refrained from fellowship and intermarriage with pagans, including the Moabites, who were idolatrous (Num 25:1–4; Judg 10:6–7), for intermarriage with unbelievers results in idolatry (Gen 6:1–5; Judg 3:5–7; 2 Cor 6:14–18). (CC)

This is a principle that all Christians today should take seriously and so refuse to marry any non-Christian. For it was intermarriage with unbelievers that eliminated the true faith from nearly all of Adam's descendants (Gen 6:1–9) and estranged even wise Solomon from the LORD (1 Ki 11:1–10; Neh 13:26). (CC)

Yet, the wrong of the sons in marrying idolaters is not condemned by Ruth's author. For historical narrative often expects the readers themselves to recognize the sin. Elimelech might have opposed and prevented his sons from marrying while in Moab, but after his death (Ruth 1:3), they did so (1:4). The author of Ruth may have avoided overt condemnation because it did not suit his purposes in writing. (CC)

Of course, without Elimelech, the reduced family was hard put. The famine in Judah continued, and so establishing themselves in Moab where there was food could well have seemed the lesser evil. Whereas going to a foreign country during a famine was parallel to experiences of the patriarchs, contrasts between Ruth and the patriarchal narratives include the early death of the father (Elimelech) and the marriage of the sons (Mahlon and Chilion) to idolaters. For both Isaac and Jacob, measures were taken for them to receive wives from their believing distant relatives in Aram Naharaim (Genesis 24 and 28–29). (CC)

Since Mahlon is named before Chilion (Ruth 1:2, 5), he probably was the firstborn. Hence one would expect Mahlon's wife, Ruth (4:10), to be named before Orpah, who must have been Chilion's wife, but the reverse is true in 1:4. As is common in Hebrew narrative, the less important of two persons, here Orpah, is mentioned first. (CC)

“About ten years” (Ruth 1:4) likely refers to the total time of Naomi's sojourn in Moab, not just to the length of the sons' marriages before the sons died, for that would be an exceptionally long time for two different marriages each to remain barren. Probably most of the ten years in Moab transpired before the death of Elimelech, the sons married their Moabite wives soon after his death, then the sons died not too long after their marriages, since they remained childless. The way 1:6 follows 1:5 suggests that Orpah and Ruth continued living with Naomi for only a short time after their husbands' deaths before Naomi decided to return to Judah. It is possible that Naomi may have heard of the end of the famine in Judah even before the deaths of her sons. It was those deaths that made it problematic for Naomi to remain in Moab, while the famine's end had made her return to Judah a viable option. (CC)

Orpah and Ruth were probably no older than teenagers, for youthful marriages were common. It is a repeated theme in Scripture that what was intended as a short-term visit in a foreign land

becomes a long-term sojourn (Jacob in Haran, Jacob's family and the subsequent generations of Israelites in Egypt, Moses in Midian, the Israelites in the wilderness). (CC)

1:3 Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died. Naomi's emptying begins (see v. 21). (CSB)

Lit, "my God is King." The true God and King, the protector of widows (Ps 68:5), will provide for Naomi. (TLSB)

1:4 They married. Prospect of continuing the family line remained. (CSB)

Moabite women. See Ge 19:36–37. Marriage with Moabite women was not forbidden, though no Moabite—or his sons to the tenth generation—was allowed to "enter the assembly of the LORD" (Dt 23:3). (CSB)

Intermarriage with Moabites was not prohibited as it was with the seven dispossessed peoples of Canaan: Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (Dt 7:1–3). The Moabites and the Ammonites were the descendants of the incestuous union of Lot with his daughters (Gn 19:36–38). Moabites were not to enter the assembly of worshipers "even to the tenth generation" (Dt 23:3; Ne 13:1). (TLSB)

Ruth. The name sounds like the Hebrew for "friendship." Ruth is one of four women in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus. The others are Tamar, Rahab and Bathsheba (Mt 1:3, 5–6). (CSB)

Tradition has linked "Ruth" with the Hbr word for "friend." (TLSB)

TEN YEARS – That was the total length of the sojourn of Naomi. Although the sojourn of this Jewish family in the Moabite country did not prove productive of the blessings which they had anticipated, as the undertaking evidently was not in accordance with the will of God, yet the result was one highly beneficial to at least one of the Moabite women, so that, by God's merciful kindness, it served a great end. (Kretzmann)

1:5 MAHLON AND KILION – Mahlon is related to common words for "sickness and disease." Kilion connects with "annihilation and end." (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Ironically, Moab, which became the haven when Bethlehem was barren and threatening death, itself became the scene of barrenness and death, first for Elimelech (1:3), and now for Mahlon and Chilion (1:5). The family that sought refuge from famine was decimated by death. (CC)

As usual in biblical historical narrative, the facts are related very tersely if they do not contribute to the central message. The point is not exactly when or why the men died, but simply the fact that they did. Again, no judgment is expressed, so it would be presumptuous to claim that their early deaths were punishment from God. Thus Ruth 1:5 stands in contrast to Gen 38:7–10, which states that the premature deaths of Judah's sons Er and Onan were the result of divine judgment.

The main point in Ruth is to show how God's people, exemplified by faithful Naomi and Ruth the convert, react to adversity in dependence upon him, according to the theology of the cross. Judging by the way Naomi later voiced her anguish (1:20–21), it is possible that she saw the events as divine judgment, but she did not renounce her faith in the LORD. Rather, as an expression of faith, she fully vented her grief to the LORD in a lament similar to those that psalmists, prophets, apostles, and even the crucified Christ directed to God. (CC)

To be deprived of both husband and sons and to be too old to remarry was the worst possible situation for a woman in ancient society; widows were very vulnerable. Naomi was deprived both of her motherhood and of the family line, for she belonged socially to that of her husband.⁹³ Her family had all but died out, and this worst fate left her alone and “empty” (1:21). No longer able to bear children (1:11–12), she could not remarry; her father would no longer be alive; and she would have no recourse to make a living. She is thus deprived of the blessings of old age. Naomi has three strikes against her: she is impoverished, vulnerable without a protector, and a stranger in a foreign land. An emotional effect is created here by simply referring to her as “the woman”—a woman who now stands alone (“the woman was left without ... without ...,” 1:5). (CC)

This crisis is not to be blamed so much on that society with a patriarchal structure having been male-dominated, for women, as always, could make their will prevail in the family and even in economics and politics. The Scriptures honor the God-ordained role of women.⁹⁵ God intended Adam to labor in Eden (Gen 2:5, 15) and fashioned Eve from him (Gen 2:21–23), so his headship over her was part of the good order in the original pristine creation. As before, also after the fall into sin, God assigned to the husband and father the primary responsibility of being the head and provider in the family (Gen 3:16, 19). That role of leadership was recognized in ancient Israelite society. As the elders in society and politics, the men had the duty to protect the women and provide for their needs. Crises arose for women, however, especially for widows without an immediate protector such as an adult son, when men neglected their duties or took advantage of vulnerable women. Their sins necessitated laws on the behalf of widows and divine warnings against their violators. (CC)

The deaths of three (all men) of the original six characters sets the stage for the first main scene and the relationships among the remaining three persons (all women). The suffering of famine and childlessness also reminds us of experiences of the matriarchs Sarah (Gen 12:10–13; 18:10; 21:1–2), Rebekah (Gen 25:21; 26:1, 7), and Rachel (Gen 30:1, 22–23; see also Judg 13:2–3, 24; 1 Sam 1:1–2, 19–20; 2 Ki 4:14–17), which were resolved by divine intervention. Will the LORD also intervene for Naomi? Will Naomi react longingly in grief over her losses as did Lot's wife (Gen 19:17, 24–26), or in hopelessness as did Job's wife (Job 2:9)? Or will she persistently trust in the providential grace of Almighty God as did Eve (Gen 4:1) and Hannah (1 Sam 1:1–11)? (CC)

Mahlon.† Ruth's husband (4:10). (CSB)

Naomi was left. Naomi's emptiness is complete: She has neither husband nor sons. She has only two young daughters-in-law, both of them foreigners and childless. (CSB)

God often lays a cross upon His children and chastises them severely, in order to bind them more securely to Himself. (Kretzmann)

1:1–5 Elimelech and his sons struggle during a famine and move to Moab to preserve their family. You, too, may struggle against unexpected changes in the economy or in your family. God gives you freedom in making family and business decisions, but He also gives you the blessings and guidance of His Holy Word. Whether you are prospering or struggling, look to the Word, wherein lies wisdom for this life and the promise of eternal life through Jesus. • Make my heart, Lord Jesus, captive to Your Word, which guides my family, my work, and my future. Amen. (TLSB)

1:6–22 The story of Ruth proper begins with 1:6, following the introduction that set the stage (1:1–5). Ruth 1:6 and 1:7, though, comprise a transitional passage that prepares for the ensuing dialogue by connecting to the beginning of the introduction (1:1). It started with an exodus from Judah toward Moab (1:1), which is answered with a return from Moab to Judah (1:6–7); it began with a famine (1:1), which is answered with a prospect of food (1:6); it began with a man choosing a future for his family (1:1), which is answered by the only survivor from that original family, a woman, choosing her future (1:6–7). One difference is that “return” is the new theme, and it (the Hebrew verb **שׁוּב**) occurs twelve times in 1:6–22. This, however, creates a sense of urgency and risk for the hearer who is knowledgeable about Israel’s history, for God told Moses to “return” to Egypt (**שׁוּב** in Ex 4:18–21) and Elijah to “return” to Israel (**שׁוּב** in 1 Ki 19:15) after each had fled for his life. (CC)

The traditional configuration of a family story concerns a father and his sons (e.g., Jesse and his sons, 1 Sam 16:1–13). But here, what began that way (Ruth 1:1–2) has been transformed into a story about a mother and her daughters-in-law. By mentioning twice that Naomi was accompanied by her daughters-in-law (1:6–7), a signal is given for latent tension in apparent unity. “Daughter(s)-in-law” (**בְּרִיּוֹת**) is the narrator’s term for referring to Orpah and Ruth (1:6–8) or Ruth alone (1:22; 2:20, 22) until the chorus of women uses it for Ruth in 4:15. In contrast, Naomi herself reveals a closer bond with Orpah and Ruth because she calls them “my daughter(s)” (**בָּנִי**, 1:11–13; 2:2, 22; 3:1, 16, 18). (CC)

1:6 *the LORD had come to the aid of his people.* At several points in the account, God’s sovereign control of events is acknowledged (here; vv. 13, 21; 2:20; 4:12–15). (CSB)

God’s people see His providence in everything. God had remembered to give food, particularly to Bethlehem, “the house of bread.” (TLSB)

The personal name of Israel’s God first appears in Ruth in this section: **יהוה**, YHWH, “the LORD.” Throughout the OT this personal name of the triune God, “the LORD,” helps to signal his intimate covenant relationship with his people. He is the Creator (Genesis 1–2), Redeemer (Exodus 11–15), and Sanctifier (e.g., Lev 20:8; 21:8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32). He is the only true God, who is one (Deut 6:4), and who at the same time is the triune God revealed more fully in the NT as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Because there is no firm proof that “Yahweh” is the correct vocalization for YHWH, it is better to employ the traditional rendering in English, “the

LORD,” which reflects that the LXX and NT rendered the divine name יהוה as κύριος, “Lord,” which the NT also applies to God incarnate, Jesus Christ (“Jesus is Lord,” Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3). (CC)

“The LORD had graciously visited his people” (Ruth 1:6) is the first of only two times in Ruth where direct action is attributed to the LORD himself (the other is in 4:13). Since the verb בָּקַר (“visit”) can be used of divine judgment as well as salvation by grace, the LORD’s visitation is both a warning not to presume on his holiness and a promise that he wills to bless. Because there is no mention here of repentance or prayer for help by Israel, the implied emphasis is on divine grace alone. בָּקַר (“visit”) often implies that God remembers to fulfill a longstanding promise (Gen 50:24; Ex 4:31). Because it may be used in connection with God creating conception in an infertile woman (Gen 21:1–2; 1 Sam 2:21), one may ask, “Will God also intervene in that way here?” (CC)

Israel’s believers saw the government of God in everything. They would have responded to the famine’s trial (Ruth 1:1) with penitence and prayer, imploring the LORD to remember and visit his people. God may allow suffering to continue for his saints for a time, but eventually, out of compassion, he provides for his people’s needs and promises to grant eternal deliverance from all trials. The fulfillment in Ruth 1:6 of God’s covenant promises to provide for his people (e.g., Ex 3:8; Deut 28:4–5) is reminiscent of how he granted food and saved lives repeatedly at the time of the patriarchs, especially through Joseph in Egypt (Gen 41:56–57; 45:5–7; 50:20; see “Patriarchal Parallels” in “The Motifs” in the introduction). Then as now, this return from exile (Ruth 1:6–7) marks a reversal in fortune, the hope that suffering will be followed by blessing. (CC)

food. Bethlehem (“house of food”) again has food. (CSB)

The end of the famine in Judah promised the return to normal life (1:6). The LORD must have sent sufficient “early rain” in autumn to enable the planting of barley and wheat, and the crops would have grown well with the aid of the “latter rain” in spring (Deut 11:14), anticipating a good harvest (Ruth 1:22). (CC)

We too are reminded by the LORD’s intervention of his involvement in our daily lives, which frees us from worrying over any material concerns to concentrate primarily on his kingdom, which comes through his Word and Sacraments (Deut 8:3; Mt 4:2–4; 6:11, 25–34). Man does not live by bread alone, but by “everything exiting the mouth of the LORD” (Deut 8:3), which is “the revealed will of God to preserve the life of man in whatever way ... : hence all means designed and appointed by the Lord for the sustenance of life.” Our Lord teaches us to pray for our “daily bread,”¹¹⁸ and also that he himself is the true bread of life (John 6). No doubt the author of Ruth, in saying that the LORD visited his people by giving them “bread/food” (לֶחֶם, 1:6) intends a play on the name of the town where the family would find physical and spiritual sustenance:

Bethlehem (בֵּית לֶחֶם, “house of bread/food”), which in the fullness of time would be the birthplace of the Messiah (Micah 5:1 [ET 5:2]; Gal 4:4). The pattern for the life of faith is set by our Lord Jesus Christ, who was called to suffer for a time, including hunger and thirst, then die, but on the third day was raised bodily to life eternal. (CC)

prepared to return home. Empty Naomi returns to the newly filled land of promise. (CSB)

Then Naomi Arose to Return (1:6)

Women now monopolize all the action for the rest of chapter 1 and command the center stage until the end of chapter 3, then again at the end of the action in chapter 4. In the second scene of chapter 1 (1:6–22), it is women who deal with kinship ties informally and privately in their interest of security, while in the first scene of chapter 4 (4:1–12), these are dealt with formally and publicly by men in their interest of posterity. (CC)

Moab is mentioned explicitly in 1:6, and 1:7 ends with Judah, thus summarizing in advance the movement in 1:6–22. Since the verbs (of which Naomi is the subject) in 1:6–7a (“she *arose*,” “and *returned*,” “for she *had heard*,” “so *she left*”) are singular in Hebrew, it is clear that the decision to leave Moab and return to Judah was that of Naomi alone. This was for two reasons: first, she had lost everything in Moab and was destitute and vulnerable there (see the commentary on 1:5), but, second, she might have at least the possibility of existence in Bethlehem. There she might be expected to take refuge in the household of her father or brother, but because that option is not mentioned, she likely had no living male relative who could have assumed her support. But, she could still hope for assured sustenance if a close relative of her husband would agree to redeem her husband’s inheritance, for this would include the obligation to care for her. (CC)

Despite her tragic situation Naomi still had the hope and faith in the LORD to arise and begin anew. This is the first of only three (also 1:18; 2:18) indirect narrator’s texts in Ruth, that is, passages where the narrator employs an indirect statement to describe a character’s perception (“had heard” in 1:6; “saw” in 1:18; 2:18) to give the readers insight into the mental process that took place in the character. Most often in Ruth such insight is provided by the characters’ direct discourse recorded in the narrative. (CC)

For it was understood that the younger women were merely to accompany her for some distance, perhaps to the boundary of the country. (Kretzmann)

1:7 BACK TO THE LAND OF JUDAH – As God provides sustenance for their livelihood, He will provide for Naomi’s future as well. Formerly, when Israelites left the Promised Land (e.g, Abraham and Isaac), they returned because of God’s promises. Ultimately, God’s promises regarding the land are fulfilled in Jesus, who gives all believers an eternal inheritance, “a better country, that is a heavenly one” (Heb 11:13-16). (TLSB)

“Her Two Daughters-in-Law [Left] with Her” (1:7)

The Oriental hearer would probably have understood that Orpah and Ruth were accompanying Naomi at least out of courtesy for a certain distance before turning back to their homeland. The preposition **אִתָּהּ**, “with her” (1:7), implies closely attached accompaniment, and 1:10 indicates that both daughters-in-law intended to go all the way with Naomi. This would have been the customary expectation, for a widowed daughter-in-law should find her refuge in the household of her husband, that is, of her father-in-law or of her husband’s closest male relative. However, this

would be problematic for widowed Moabitesses whose deceased Israelite husbands had no close male relative. Perhaps the daughters-in-law may have associated Moab with the source of their misfortune. After all, the “essence of home is in persons, not in locality.” The narrator begins 1:7 with the focus exclusively on Naomi (“So she left the place where she had been”) but appends “and her two daughters-in-law [left] with her,” which implicitly raises this question in the mind of the hearer: “Why are the daughters-in-law returning with her?” This prepares for the arguments over this issue in 1:8–17. (CC)

Since all three women started out together (1:6–7) but Orpah later turned back home (1:15), they must have traveled some distance before the dialogue reported in 1:8–17, perhaps up to a half-day’s journey. It would have been more dramatic for the parting conversation to have taken place at the Moab-Israel border, the decisive point of no return, but Naomi would hardly have let her daughters-in-law accompany her for at least a full day before urging them to turn back. She delayed imploring them to return until they had traversed a distance, for if she had done so before leaving their home in Moab they might have prevailed upon her to stay with them there. (CC)

1:8 *Go back.* Desolate Naomi repeatedly urges her daughters-in-law to return to their original homes in Moab (here; vv. 11–12, 15); she has nothing to offer them. (CSB)

Formula used in two other OT contexts (2Sm 2:6; 15:20). Naomi uses the personal name Yahweh, which refers to God’s involvement in human affairs. (TLSB)

“Go, Return, Each to Her Mother’s House!” (1:8a)

Much of the action in biblical narrative is reported in dialogue, which is the principal literary feature of the book of Ruth. This helps draw the hearers and readers into the action of the story. (CC)

Naomi’s first speech is phrased in chiasm:

- A Returning to the mother’s house (1:8aβ)
- B Praying for fidelity from the LORD (1:8bα)
- C The young widows’ loyalty holds the central focus (1:8bβ)
- B’ Praying for favor from the LORD (1:9aα)
- A’ Finding rest in a husband’s house (1:9aβ) (CC)

By urging her daughters-in-law to return, each to her mother’s house, Naomi released them from their attachment to her for remarriage. It may seem strange that Naomi urged them to return to their mothers rather than to their fathers (cf. the reference to Ruth’s “father” in 2:11), because even a young widow was under the ultimate authority of her father or father-in-law (see Gen 38:11, 14, 24; Lev 22:13). (A childless widow would return to her father’s house if he still lived, but if no relative could or would care for her, she could only rely on charity.) This provides a contrasting link with the Tamar story, where the father-in-law sent the young widow to her father (Gen 38:11). Here the mother-in-law sends the young widows to their mothers. Some commentators explain “mother’s house” in Ruth 1:8 as being the place where matters of marriage were discussed and planned under the authority of the mother (cf. Gen 24:28, 67; Song 3:4; 8:2). (CC)

Some references to a “mother’s house” occur in contexts that involve strong women; Rebekah, for example, ran first to “her mother’s house” (Gen 24:28) instead of to her “father’s house,” about which Abraham’s servant had inquired (Gen 24:23). The Shulammitte bride in the Song of Songs often plays an active role in yearning for, pursuing, and initiating intimacy with Solomon, her husband. She desires to bring him into her “mother’s house” (Song 3:4; 8:2) to celebrate love there. This may express her realization that her life began in the womb of her mother through her parents’ love; her desire to return to a state as in Eden, where human life originated and where the first man and woman enjoyed love freely and unclothed with God’s blessing; and her desire to enter the eternal paradise made possible by God’s love. This may well relate to the mother’s house as the place for consummating a marriage (Isaac took Rebekah into “the tent of Sarah, his mother,” Gen 24:67; cf. Song 8:1–5). (CC)

In Ruth 1:8, the “mother’s house” also relates to the concerns of women who are bereft of husbands and who, by necessity, are themselves taking the initiative. It is a place of safe haven in time of crisis. It is significant that in the same context, Naomi appropriately refers to the “house” of each woman’s future “husband” when she speaks of “security” (Ruth 1:9), which husbands had the duty to provide. (CC)

The biblical depictions of the “mother’s house,” and also of the father’s, contribute to the Christian view that all human life, which begins at the moment of conception, is a sacred creation and gift of God. It is the responsibility of all fathers and mothers, and of society as a whole, to protect and nurture every child from conception to birth and throughout life. Tragically, with the modern acceptance of abortion and even infanticide (not to mention the neglect and abuse of children), the mother’s womb and “house” have become a place of death, particularly when the father reneges on his responsibility to provide “security” for his offspring. Likewise, the destruction of a human embryo (regardless of the medical purpose) is the unjust taking of a human life and thus murder, a violation of the Fifth Commandment (Ex 20:13; Deut 5:17). (CC)

Despite her own terrible grief, Naomi still thought of the welfare of her daughters-in-law, wanting only the best for them. She did not want to burden them by remaining with them in Moab as a foreign widow without sustenance. As long as she remained in Moab, they would be under her authority and be compelled to stay with her. But by returning to Judah and imploring them to remain in Moab, she was willing to sacrifice their companionship and support for their own sake. They could hope to have a better future there, for a young widow who had married a foreigner would return to her own parents, who could arrange a new marriage for her. So, Naomi exhorted them out of selfless loving concern. It may appear ironic that Naomi prayed that they would find “security” with new husbands (1:9) after all three had experienced the greatest insecurity through their husbands’ deaths. (CC)

show kindness. See 2:20; 3:10. (CSB)

Hbr *chesed*, which may be translated “in faithfulness.” The theme of faithfulness or kindness is central to the story and its application (cf 3:10). In showing kindness, the Lord’s ultimate aim is that His people repent and turn to Him. (TLSB)

“May the LORD Practice Faithfulness with You” (1:8b)

Naomi demonstrated that she had not lost her faith in the LORD. Her family had lost their means of making a living in Judah due to a famine, and she had lost all her immediate family—her husband and both sons—in Moab. Nevertheless, she did not take such advice as given by Job’s wife, “Curse God and die!” (Job 2:9). For she believed that it was the LORD—the same God who had permitted her misfortunes—who now provided food for his people in Judah (Ruth 1:6), and who would also provide for her again there. (CC)

By returning to Bethlehem alone, Naomi would no longer be in a position to practice **חֶסֶד** (*hesed*, “faithfulness”) with Orpah and Ruth, but she exhibited her faith in the LORD by trusting him to do so with them. This is one of the rare occasions in Scripture where an Israelite prays that the LORD may practice his faithfulness in his relationship with non-Israelites, who had no formal covenant relationship with the LORD besides through their former marriages to Israelites, and who had no legal commitment to Naomi, the Israelite petitioner. What Naomi desires is for her daughters-in-law to enter a covenant-like relationship with the LORD through faith and trust in him, and for him to be faithful to them by providing for their needs—and this even if they continue to live in Moab. (CC)

Naomi’s prayer also may have been a polite and formal way to end a close relationship (see 2 Sam 15:20), in this case freeing the young widows from all responsibility toward their mother-in-law. The prayer raised the expectation that it may be answered. (CC)

The important Hebrew term **חֶסֶד** (*hesed*, “faithfulness”) is often rendered “kindness” in Ruth 1:8, but the overriding emphasis in the book of Ruth is on *hesed* reflects God’s own mercy, love, and everlasting faithfulness as the believer responds by living in fidelity within the covenant relationship that joins him to God and to other members of God’s people. *hesed* goes beyond legal obligation, since it is that loyalty and love that flow from God’s grace—ultimately in Jesus Christ—that both establishes and sustains the covenant. (CC)

The concept of divine faithfulness deals with the LORD’s concern for his people, based on his gracious covenant relationship with them, wherein his faithfulness to his own promises evoked and sustained their response of covenant loyalty to him.¹³⁴ God practiced faithfulness unconditionally with his people, even when they were unfaithful to the covenant, out of faithful commitment to his covenant promises, particularly to the patriarchs and to David. The sinful recipient experienced such divine faithfulness as free grace, since it was fundamentally God’s *fidelity* to his promises, that is, to himself—the only person whom the believer could confidently trust. (CC)

Significantly, in biblical usage **חֶסֶד** (*hesed*, “faithfulness”) is practiced by both God and believers. “Divine will and human action go hand in hand,” which is a major theme in the Ruth story. Even “simple human actions fulfill the aims of covenant,” sometimes “above and beyond the call of duty.” As with love (Rom 5:8; 1 Jn 4:10, 19), fidelity is learned by people from God’s gift of it to them. For God first lovingly delivered the Israelites from Egypt in faithfulness to the patriarchs and to his promises before he called them to love and obey him faithfully (Ex 20:2–6; Deut 6:3–12; 7:7–11; Josh 23:10–11). (CC)

In the realm of human relationships, **חֶסֶד** (*hesed*, “faithfulness”) often was invoked by someone in need appealing to another who was in a position to help and who was united with the petitioner by an intimate relationship or covenant (1 Sam 20:8, 14–15; 2 Sam 9:1, 3, 7). Such a relationship, which is relevant in Ruth 1:8, could involve the “joint obligation between relatives, friends, host and guest, master and servant,” in which case the term meant “closeness, solidarity, loyalty, ... faithfulness” (*HALOT*, s.v. **חֶסֶד** II, 1 and 1 a), also where the responsibility was not based on intimacy but on a recognized obligation. (CC)

In Ruth 1:8, the fidelity that Orpah and Ruth had previously displayed toward their husbands and Naomi refers to the positive behavior of the women appropriate to their family status, since they had been married to Israelites. Indeed, since the objects of the LORD’s concern in 1:8 are the spouses of Israelites whom the LORD had taken unto himself, it is much more fitting to speak of “faithfulness” and “loyalty” in marriage, as Scripture consistently does, rather than merely of “kindness.” Thus, a husband was expected to abandon his attachment to his parents and commit himself (“cling”) to his wife (Gen 2:24), and Abraham requested Sarah to demonstrate her obedient loyalty (*hesed*) to him (Gen 20:13). This last situation presents for Orpah and Ruth a matriarch’s example of a wife’s faithfulness. Further, as they had practiced this “faithfulness” with their husbands, so they likewise did also with their husbands’ mother. (CC)

The LXX and Vulgate, early translations of the OT, perceived **חֶסֶד** (*hesed*) to have the connotations of “grace,” “love,” and “mercy” because God’s fidelity to his promises often caused him to bring aid to his people even though they had been unfaithful to him. While *hesed* often is used together with terms that carry the sense of mercy, that does not prove that it must be synonymous, for pairs of terms with different nuances often complement each other as, for example, “his brethren” and “the gate of his place” (Ruth 4:10), “prosper” and “become famous” (4:11), “faithfulness and truth” (Gen 47:29). Thus, **טוֹב וְחֶסֶד** (*tov waḥesed*, Ps 23:6), commonly rendered “goodness and mercy,” may better be given as “goodness and faithfulness.” It may be postulated that weaker renderings of **חֶסֶד** (*hesed*) such as “goodness” and “kindness” are based more on what the interpreter presumes from the context than on what the term itself in its context conveys. (CC)

There is also first expressed here in the book an emphasis on reward: as the young widows had practiced faithfulness, so may they receive it from the LORD. This is not, of course, meant simply as *quid pro quo*, for they first received and learned *hesed* from the LORD. Whoever practices toward others what God has given, receives it in further measure from God, whether in this life or in the everlasting life.¹⁴³ Thus, Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion, who may not have enjoyed many earthly pleasures, at least had the assurance of life after death (see below on Ruth 1:17). In this life, although each case involved a sacrifice, Naomi was rewarded with a grandson and the continuation of her family, Ruth with a husband and child, and Boaz with a wife and heir. (CC)

If the deceased husbands of the young widows had received such endearing loyalty as Naomi implies in 1:8b, their love for their wives must have encouraged it. This reflects, in turn, on the probably deep religious faith in the living God of Elimelech and Naomi that was mirrored in marriage and family life (see “Sexuality” in “The Relevance” in the introduction). This faith was

already evident in the family life of the patriarchs. Ancient Israel, with its faithfulness and love in home and family, distinguished itself from the sensual practices of the Canaanite nature religion and culture, which was well exemplified by the whoredom and idolatry to which Moabites tempted Israelites (Num 25:1–3) and also by the sacrifice of offspring (2 Ki 3:26–27). Faith, love, and higher morality helped attract Orpah and Ruth to Israel and the true God. Such living of true faith overcomes national and cultural divisions (see “*Philoxenia*” in “The Motifs” in the introduction). The heathen in the ancient world normally presumed that a god’s authority was limited to his home country, where he was worshiped, so it is especially significant that the God of Israel asserted his universal power even in the lands of other gods. (CC)

It is the LORD himself who gives all good things, even, in human relationships, a wife (Gen 3:12; Prov 18:22; 19:14), and if a wife then also a husband (Ruth 4). God has ordained marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman (Gen 1:27; 2:22–24; Mt 19:1–12; 1 Corinthians 7). He also leads believing partners to each other and grants them the mutual love and fidelity that characterizes the union of Jesus Christ with his body and bride, the Christian church (see Eph 5:21–33). (CC)

The same word is in the psalms refrain, “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, and his mercy endures forever” (e.g., Psalm 136). It occurs 256 times in the OT, and lies behind “grace” in the NT. In Ruth, it occurs again in 2:20 and 3:10. The theme is that human “kindness/mercy/faithfulness” is a reflection of God’s prior grace. Those who appropriate God’s gift of grace through faith are blessed by him, and this blessing of grace even extends past this earthly life (Ruth 2:20). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

1:9 REST – Humanly speaking, opportunity for this was bleak. (TLSB)

“May the LORD Grant to You That You Find Security” (1:9)

Although a young widow would be cared for in her father’s household, only with her own husband could she, as with any woman in that society, find ideal and lasting security, stability, happiness, honor, and fulfillment, which are summed up by מְנוּחָה (*menuḥah*), “security.” In other OT passages this term usually denotes a literal “resting place” (e.g., Num 10:33; Ps 23:2), a permanent home that is a positive alternative to wandering (Deut 12:9; Ps 95:11). This term may also refer to a place of quiet (Is 28:12; 32:18), such as a home (Ruth 1:9; cf. 3:1), which Orpah and Ruth had found with Chilion and Mahlon, thus, not just “rest” but even “security.” Similarly, the land of Israel, while it was possessed in faith, was the earthly home and *menuḥah* for Israel with blessings as the result of divine promises. For all believers in the OT era as well as the NT era, this “security” is fulfilled through the Messiah, Jesus Christ,¹⁵⁰ both physically and spiritually, in this earthly life as well as in everlasting life in the new creation. (CC)

Ruth 1:9 is the first of three times (see also 1:11 and 1:13) that Naomi impresses upon the young women the necessity of finding new husbands. Her kissing them in this context meant that she was taking final leave of them (Gen 31:28; 2 Sam 19:40 [ET 19:39]; 1 Ki 19:20). Kissing and loud weeping is the Oriental expression of sorrow (Gen 21:16; 27:38; Judg 2:4; 21:2; 1 Sam 11:4; 30:4). (CC)

“Return, My Daughters!” (1:10–13a)

Although the pledge of Orpah and Ruth to Naomi, “No, with you we shall return to your people!” (1:10), could sacrifice their future in order to serve her, they did not at that point mention accepting her God. That was evidently more than Orpah was prepared to leave. (CC)

Naomi commenced her second argument with a firm but tender address, “my daughters” (1:11), which she will use twice more in 1:12–13. This does not imply that she is here recognizing them as her own daughters instead of just daughters-in-law; rather, she addresses them endearingly as an older relative. Naomi’s repetition of questions and statements in 1:11–13 amounts to intensification, stressing repeatedly her inability to provide husbands, which is an important concern in the story (cf. the intensifying blessing in 4:11–12). This address is replete with familial terms: “husband(s)” four times, “daughters” three times, and “sons” twice. (CC)

Naomi’s first argument (1:8–9) was restrained. Since she did not understand why her way must be their way, she now launches into a strong, impassioned appeal, strengthened with rhetorical questions and a hypothetical case. Naomi’s argument is couched in imperatives and questions. Questions are fully exploited throughout the short story of Ruth—sixteen in all, which engage the readers by eliciting internal responses from them. The first question, “Why should you go with me?” (1:11b), appears superficially to ask for information. However, it is really a corrective statement that makes a negative declaration in keeping with the preceding imperatives. Hence it conveys the sense “Do not go with me!” Thus, it does not expect a direct answer (see 1:21; also Gen 42:1; 44:4; Ex 2:20; 1 Sam 1:8). (CC)

By using the form of a question, Naomi engaged the attention of her addressees, maintained an opportunity for exchange, permitted herself to be ironic or even absurd, let herself express her emotion, and allowed herself some ambiguity in order to test their reaction. The first is followed by a second question (1:11c), two imperatives (1:12a), a statement (1:12b), a hypothetical case (1:12c), two more forceful questions (1:13a–b), and finally two statements (1:13c–d). Orpah and Ruth understood full well the implications of this rhetoric and responded with weeping, and Orpah also with her farewell (1:14). (CC)

After praying that her daughters-in-law would find new husbands in Moab (1:9), Naomi in her argument in 1:11–13 refers to the improbability that she could have more sons who would marry the young widows. She appears to allude to the practice of the levirate (brother-in-law) marriage, by which a man would be expected to marry his brother’s childless widow in order to father a son who would be the deceased husband’s heir (Gen 38:8; Deut 25:5–6; Mt 22:24–28). However, her hypothetical case does not really envision customary levirate marriage, in which the brothers involved had the same father.¹⁶¹ In any event, due to her age she gave no serious consideration to this, but was only emphasizing the hopelessness of Orpah and Ruth accompanying her. In ancient Near Eastern society, a widow like Orpah or Ruth who lacked a father-in-law and a son was free to remarry as she wished (cf. 1 Cor 7:8–9). (CC)

Although Naomi’s chief concern was for carrying on the family name and inheritance (see chapter 3), she was giving up any hope of this for the sake of the young widows’ marital future. Nevertheless, her absurd portrayal of yet bearing sons to replace Orpah and Ruth’s deceased

husbands introduces a thought to which the story returns later with other circumstances: Naomi's denial of the possibility of a levirate marriage serves to plant the idea in the audience's mind (though the union of Ruth and Boaz will not be a customary levirate marriage). (CC)

Considering the rigors of ancient life, Naomi could well have reached menopause even if she were no more than forty, which would explain her statement, "I am too old to belong to a husband" (1:12). Since she could conceive no further sons (and hence no husbands for Orpah and Ruth), her exaggerated rhetorical question, "Suppose I say, 'I have hope, and also I will belong to a husband tonight ...'" points to the impossibility of the supposition. For her to have a husband immediately—"tonight"—heightens the improbability of the entire scenario. By bringing up a ridiculous proposal, Naomi avoided the more obvious solution: that they marry Israelite men. This she probably overlooked intentionally because it would be logically improbable for Moabite widows to find decent Israelite husbands in Naomi's small hometown. Considering the incest of Lot's elder daughter, the matriarch of the Moabites (Gen 19:30–38) and how Moabites once enticed Israelites into adultery, idolatry, and death (Num 25:1–5), Moabite women may have been perceived as dangerous. As an Israelite, Naomi, the only one who loved Orpah and Ruth enough to provide them husbands, could not arrange for their remarriages in Moab; nor, as only their mother-in-law, could she arrange remarriage for them as Moabites in Israel if they returned with her. Understandably, she vented her frustration. (CC)

Each improbable condition presented in Ruth 1:11–13 is more unlikely than the previous one. By her choice of Hebrew verb forms in her conditional statements, Naomi presented them as realistically as possible, thus emphasizing the absurdity for the maximum effect. Since our story is somewhat analogous to that of Tamar, one might hear an echo in Ruth 1:13 of Judah's request for Tamar to wait until his youngest son would be old enough to marry her (Gen 38:11), although Naomi's situation is different because she had no further sons and believed she never could bear any more. Her hypothetical case is a reversal, a flashback to her early motherhood: if only she could do it all over again! (CC)

That would be impossible. But with the LORD, the impossible is possible: even a virgin can conceive (Is 7:14; Lk 1:30–38), the dead can be raised (Jn 11:21–27), and sinners can be justified (Mt 19:23–26; Rom 3:21–24; 4:5; 5:6–8). (CC)

1:10 GO BACK WITH YOU – They found the parting so hard that they preferred to stay with Naomi on her solitary walk through life. (Kretzmann)

The faith of Naomi and her sons inspired her foreign daughters-in-law to have faith in the God of Israel. (TLSB)

1:11-12 *Have I yet sons in my womb.* Hyperbole. Naomi was referring to levirate marriage (Lat *levir*, "brother-in-law"). Elimelech's brother would be legally obligated to marry Naomi to perpetuate Elimelech's name and posterity (vv 12–13). Naomi ironically described a legal and logical possibility that would never be fulfilled: following Dt 25:5–6, Naomi's brother-in-law would marry her so that she could give birth to sons, who in due time would marry the two older widows Ruth and Orpah. (TLSB)

1:11 *sons, who could become your husbands.* Naomi alludes to the Israelite law (Dt 25:5–6) regarding levirate marriage (see notes on Ge 38:8; Dt 25:5–10; see also Mk 12:18–23), which was given to protect the widow and guarantee continuance of the family line. (CSB)

She was not pregnant with possible sons, who would then be able to perform the duty of levirs toward Ruth and Orpah, Deut. 25, 5; Gen. 38, 8. (Kretzmann)

By law (Genesis 38 and Deuteronomy 25:5) the Oprah and Ruth would have been entitled to marry other sons that Naomi might have borne. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

1:12 *I am too old.* Naomi can have no more sons; even her womb is empty. (CSB)

1:13 MORE BITTTER FOR ME – Or, “much more bitter for me than for you.” Cf v. 20) (TLSB)

the LORD’S hand ... against me. See notes on vv. 5–6; see also vv. 20–21. (CSB)

Naomi affirmed God’s participation in the events. Her statement is a confession of faith and sorrowful resolve much like Job’s (Jb 1:21). (TLSB)

1:13d “The Hand of the LORD Has Gone Forth against Me!”

Naomi moves from concern for the young widows to her own suffering with “the bitter outcry of her wounded heart.” Comparing herself to them, she is far worse off, for there is no future for her, that is, no future family. A childless widow too old to bear children has lost the ideal hope of carrying on her family. Thus, whoever accompanies her must share her fate. She surely experienced much shame for having failed in her duty to provide a living heir for the family inheritance by helping her widowed daughters-in-law to remarry. (CC)

Naomi recognized that God is sovereign over all things and events. Indeed, nothing happens by chance. It often appears in Scripture that God is ultimately the source of all that happens, controlling everything with absolute causality.¹⁷³ Like Job (19:21), Naomi indeed blamed God for her misfortune (see below on Ruth 1:20–21). But also like Job (2:10), this did not involve renouncing her faith in the LORD (see above on Ruth 1:8–9). Her outcry gave vent to her bitterness, but not to unbelief or hopelessness. For she still trusted that the LORD would provide for Orpah and Ruth in Moab, and even for herself in Bethlehem. (CC)

God governs all things for the good of those who love and trust in him (Ps 37:25. He also can offer them occasions to solve their difficulties, that is, he lets them take advantage of occasions that he grants them (Eccl 3:1–8, 11). If God has permitted tragic events, he is also the one hope for turning them around from grief to joy. Thus, despite apparently hopeless circumstances, believing Israelites nevertheless trusted in the LORD alone for deliverance from all evil (see especially Psalms 46; 73; 142). Thus Jesus, the Messiah, has taught the new Israel, his church, to pray, “Deliver us from evil” (Mt 6:13), trusting that his death and resurrection have already accomplished their final deliverance. (CC)

1:14 Orpah's departure highlights the loyalty and selfless devotion of Ruth to her desolate mother-in-law. (CSB)

Naomi's words convinced Orpah to seek security through her own efforts. Ruth was willing to face a life of poverty, lack of marriage, childlessness, and prejudice in Israel. She could not live without Naomi and the God of Israel, even if she was to be treated as a second-class citizen in the Promised Land. (TLSB)

“Orpah Kissed Her Mother-in-Law, but Ruth Clung to Her” (1:14)

In 1:9, Naomi kissed Orpah and Ruth, and then they wept. But in 1:14 the order is reversed, although understandably, producing a chiasm that brackets the episode of persuasion. Here Orpah, by kissing Naomi, made known her decision to return home and part finally from her mother-in-law. Orpah appears to have been one easily influenced by others, for her earlier act to accompany Naomi had probably been primarily the decision of Ruth, who was determined to continue with Naomi. Now, Orpah is swayed by Naomi's arguments to give up and turn back to Moab. (CC)

In Hebrew narrative, something can be stated or occur three times for complete emphasis, and then the drama can move on. See, for example, 1 Sam 3:4–8, where the LORD called Samuel three times. Compare also Peter's threefold denial of Christ and Christ's threefold restoration of him to his apostolic office (Mt 26:31–35, 69–75; Jn 21:15–19). Thus, after Naomi's third plea for Orpah and Ruth to “return/go back” (שׁוּבָה, 1:8, 11, 12), Orpah did so. (CC)

Although both Orpah and Ruth had love for Naomi, Orpah's love for herself was stronger, while Ruth's love for Naomi, kindled by the love of Naomi and her LORD, prevailed. Previously in the narrative the two young widows had been portrayed together, but now they decide differently. Naomi had addressed the same appeal to both Orpah and Ruth, but their reactions are opposite. Orpah made the choice that was natural and logical for a sinful, self-interested person. That Naomi had neither husband nor son strengthened Orpah's desire to depart in order to become a wife and mother. But by the LORD's grace, Ruth responded to Naomi's destitution with the desire to remain Naomi's daughter. “A love like that of Ruth has scarcely entered the thoughts of poets,” for hers was directed not to a child or a husband, but to her mother-in-law and her LORD. Rather than allow Naomi to suffer alone, Ruth would share her plight. Reminding ourselves of Robert Frost's poem “The Road Not Taken,” the road of our three women had a different fork for each one: the one Naomi chose led back to her home, and Orpah chose the fork back to hers, but Ruth chose the one that took her into a foreign land, the one “less traveled by” that would change her life unalterably. (CC)

Hebrew narrative often assumes that the reader will infer whether the characters acted rightly or wrongly based on the consequences and outcome in the story. The narrative does not overtly condemn Orpah for leaving Naomi; rather, she obeyed Naomi's imperatives. According to human reason and logic, Naomi saw hope for a positive earthly life for her daughters-in-law only in their native Moab. Orpah made the understandably sensible, expedient choice. (CC)

Indeed, Orpah went with Naomi's invocation of the LORD's blessing (1:8–9). The most positive construal would be that Orpah, by returning, would have the opportunity to witness to her own people, the pagan Moabites, about the LORD's love and fidelity, so they too might believe and be saved (cf. Jn 4:28–30, 39). However, in Ruth 1:15 Naomi clearly states that Orpah had returned not only to her people, but also to her Moabite "god(s)," and hence had turned back from the LORD as well as from his people. Whatever faith in the LORD Orpah previously may have had withered (cf. Lk 8:7, 14), and so she would perish eternally. Since Orpah's self-interest cut short her role in salvation history, she stands as a foil to Ruth, who will boldly confess her faith in the LORD and her allegiance to his people (Ruth 1:16–17; contrast 1:15) and become an ancestress of King David and the eternal King, Jesus Christ (Mt 1:5). So too later, the primary redeemer, who remains nameless, will decline to marry Ruth and will be a foil to Boaz, who does marry her and who, like Ruth, is named in the genealogy of the Messiah (Mt 1:5). (CC)

Orpah in the story is a minor character who is less important in her own right than in helping to characterize Ruth. At first appearing similar, their deep difference is suddenly revealed dramatically in the parting of their ways (cf. Mt 24:38–41). Orpah symbolizes those who may consider trusting in the one true God, but who are persuaded not to by their outward circumstances and sinful human reason, which is opposed to God. As Oswald Chambers noted: "Never let common sense obtrude and push the Son of God on one side. ... Never enthrone common sense. ... Common sense never yet detected the Father and never will."¹⁸⁴ Like Lot's wife (Gen 19:26), Orpah is one of the many who, for lack of faith at the critical moment, miss out on the kingdom of God. (CC)

This raises the ancient question: when people hear the same Word of God, why do some believe, while others do not? Inevitably this involves the doctrine of election. While Scripture does not fully answer this question, it does reveal that God desires all people to be saved (1 Tim 2:4). For those such as Ruth who do believe, their salvation is entirely due to God's gracious election, call, and gift of faith through the Gospel, and not to any personal virtue, receptivity, or meritorious trait. For those who reject the Gospel, the entire responsibility for their perdition is theirs alone. Thus the response of Orpah cannot be attributed to God having predestined her to unbelief. Rather, she acted in what she perceived was her own self-interest in seeking a better earthly life (cf. Mt 19:22; Lk 8:14). Nevertheless, Ruth 1:14 marks the end of Orpah's participation in salvation history. Both Orpah and Ruth were "called" through Naomi's earlier witness to the LORD, but, as Jesus stated, while "many are called," yet "few are chosen" (Mt 22:14). (CC)

As Naomi told Orpah and Ruth to expect the worst (1:11–13), we learn "the duty of absolute frankness in our dealings with each other." This frankness revealed that Orpah's commitment to Naomi was only superficial, while Ruth's was deeply rooted. If Naomi had any doubt about Ruth, it would be dispelled by Ruth's faith in the LORD and commitment to her (1:14b–17). Loyalty proves itself in a crisis. Jesus was also honest and serious, not sentimental, with his disciples about the difficulties they would have in following him, since he spoke of the cross and death (e.g., Lk 9:23–27). His cross is the epitome of commitment, and only by the power of the Spirit can we share that sacrificial mind of Christ, confident of the resurrection (Phil 2:1–11). Thus the difference between Orpah's self-centered amiability and Ruth's self-forgetting devotion was that the LORD's Spirit worked in Ruth her willingness to make the big sacrifice. (CC)

In contrast to Orpah, Ruth did the extraordinary and unexpected; in fact, she acted contrary to Naomi's command. While Orpah's obedience separated her from Naomi, Ruth's disobedience attached her ("clung," Ruth 1:14) to Naomi. This closest physical position of two women in Scripture (cf. the same verb in Prov 18:24) indicates the intensity of Ruth's relationship to Naomi. Until now, like Mahlon and Chilion, Orpah and Ruth were undifferentiated from each other, simply the "daughters-in-law" (Ruth 1:6), but now they act differently and become individual characters in the story. This rather long parting scene (1:8–18) serves in the story to emphasize the destitution of Naomi and the sacrifice of Ruth. Ruth here underwent "role dedifferentiation," adding a new role in response to a crisis. Whereas Orpah fulfilled her role expectations by returning to her home, that Ruth assumed a new role is signaled both by her commitment to Naomi and the term "cling" (1:14), which properly describes a husband's attachment to his wife (Gen 2:24; see the textual note on it in Ruth 1:14). Ruth's clinging to Naomi meant that she assumed the male role of caring for her—that is, of a son to replace her lost sons—which Naomi then accepted (Ruth 1:18). (CC)

1:15 *her gods*. The chief god of the Moabites was Chemosh. (CSB)

Orpah had believed and worshiped as her husband did. She now renounced her faith in the God of Israel, thinking she could better care for herself than could the Lord. (TLSB)

"Your Sister-in-Law Has Returned to Her People and to Her God(s)" (1:15)

The speaker in 1:15 must be Naomi (just as she must be the unnamed actor in 1:6). Although Hebrew is generally explicit in identifying a speaker, the storyteller often takes advantage of this not being a necessity, since it is obvious from the context and content, for each character is identifiable by the way he or she speaks. By omitting the identification of the speakers, more importance is thereby attached to the speeches, forcing the hearer to pay strict attention. Even though Naomi had rejected levirate marriage as a possibility (1:11–13), when she employs the term "sister-in-law" in 1:15, the hearer's attention is again subtly drawn to that option because this Hebrew term is otherwise used only in that connection in Scripture (see the textual note on it in 1:15). (CC)

In the ancient Near East, nations were distinguished by ethnicity ("her people," 1:15), territory ("land of Judah," 1:7), language ("Judean," i.e., Hebrew, 2 Ki 18:26), government ("king of Moab," Judg 3:12), and religion ("her god(s)," Ruth 1:15). It was self-evident to the heathen that a national god must be worshiped in his own country (see Micah 4:5), although one might sacrifice to one's own god in a foreign land (2 Ki 5:17) or even to a foreign god in one's own land (1 Ki 11:5–7). Although a god's power might not be limited to his own proper country, it may well be limited elsewhere by other gods. (CC)

That contrasts with the LORD, the one true and triune God, who revealed to ancient Israel that he is the Creator and Lord of all the earth and the only real God.¹ Thus, it was criminal for an Israelite to worship another god, whether in Israel (Ex 20:3–5; Deut 6:10–15) or elsewhere (e.g., Daniel 3 and 6). The LORD alone is efficacious everywhere; he could bless Ruth and Orpah in Moab (Ruth 1:8). He also is to be worshiped everywhere. Prayer in his name and confession of faith in him by name are acts of worship that took place before the return to Israel (Ruth 1:8–9, 16–17). (CC)

While the Hebrew could be rendered either “god” or “gods” (see the second textual note on 1:15), that Orpah returned to “her god” (singular, 1:15) fits well as the counterpart to the singulars “your God” (1:16) and “the LORD” (1:17), which refer to Israel’s God, who is one and yet is triune (Deut 6:4; Jn 10:30; 17:22). Although the Moabites were surely polytheists like the other neighboring peoples (Judg 10:6), the Scriptures repeatedly stress their principal god, Chemosh. On the other hand, the rendering “her gods” (Ruth 1:15) provides a contrast between Orpah as a polytheist and Ruth as a believer in the one true God. Either way, when Naomi referred to Orpah’s “god(s),” this does not mean that Naomi believed that a Moabite or any other heathen god was real as a god, but only that it was a real object of worship in the Moabite community. (CC)

Nevertheless, her statement here appears to be in conflict with her prayer for the LORD’s blessing on Orpah and Ruth in Moab (1:8–9). There, she expressed her own faith in the LORD, whereas she here stated what would be expected of a Moabitess who “returned to her people” (1:15). It is possible that Orpah previously may have been willing to accept the God of Israel, since in 1:10 she had pledged to return with Naomi to “your people” (Israel). However, she must have understood that the Moabites, whom she chose in 1:14, were separated from the Israelites not only by geography and ethnicity but also by the gods they worshiped. Thus, although the LORD could bless her in Moab (1:8–9), we have no indication that Orpah herself joined in that prayer in faith, nor that she believed in, worshiped, or witnessed to him. (CC)

We can only presume that Orpah, in doing what was expedient and expected for herself, renounced her prior attachment to Naomi and her LORD. Indeed, the Hebrew verb שׁוּבָה (“your sister-in-law *has returned* . . . ,” 1:15) can, depending on the context, mean “*turn back* from God, = *apostatize*” (BDB, s.v. שׁוּבָה, Qal, 6 a). Orpah declined to rely on the LORD in faith and removed herself from receiving his blessings of grace or acknowledging them as such. There is no evidence that she retained any faith in the LORD, and without the company of other worshipers of the LORD, she would have easily reverted to the worship of Chemosh. Although it is not impossible for an individual alone to worship the LORD (see 2 Ki 5:15–19), Scripture often underlines the importance of worshiping God in a community of believers, “the communion of saints” (Apostles’ Creed). (CC)

1:16-17 Poetry. Note the structure:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| A <i>Do not urge me to leave.</i> | Plea against separation. |
| B <i>For where you go I will go.</i> | Promise of family loyalty. |
| C <i>Your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.</i> | Confession of faith. |
| B’ <i>Where you die I will die.</i> | Promise of family loyalty. |

A’ *If anything but death parts me from you.* Oath against separation.(TLSB)

Ruth's Confession of Faith (1:16–17)

Naomi's final argument toward Ruth was to follow Orpah's example (1:15). This must have been one of Ruth's greatest temptations, to give in to peer pressure (cf. Mt 19:29; Lk 14:26; Jn 6:66–67). But this crucial attempt to dissuade Ruth proved to be the final provocation that evoked from her precisely the opposite response: the LORD brought about her full renunciation of her past relationships and her outpouring of total commitment to Naomi and her LORD. With the exquisite wordplay between "her god(s)" (Ruth 1:15) and "your God is my God" (1:16), Ruth placed herself in contrast not only to Orpah but also to Naomi, who had directed her back to Orpah's god.

Ruth's confession of faith and commitment (1:16–17) has been praised as "one of the most beautiful confessions of love in all literature, unique for its touching simplicity as well as its poignant sincerity," "the noblest expression of friendship,"²⁰⁴ "a classic expression of faithfulness," and "the most moving declaration of loyalty in the Bible."²⁰⁶ In effect, she declared: "May a fatal judgment strike me if I am not true to this vow!" Yet, its keystone is her confession of faith, which the LORD had worked in her, for the LORD God himself is the true ground of the love she both experienced and learned to demonstrate (see Deut 5:6, 10; 6:4–5; 1 Jn 4:19). Her conversion rectified the error of Mahlon in marrying an unbeliever.

With Ruth's vow (1:16–17), the narrator attains his poetic heights; form, repetition, and parallelism serve as intensifiers. Dramatic emphasis is provided by repeating her first statement with a synonymic equivalent, followed by two instances of verbal repetition, two nominal clauses, another instance of verbal repetition, and another equivalent, which is then further expanded with an oath and one last equivalent. Ruth's declaration is composed with the two-line parallelism of Hebrew poetry in five couplets in a chiasmic structure:²⁰⁹

- A Plea against force: "Do not press me to forsake you, to return [turn away] from [following] after you!" (1:16a–b)
- B Promise of accompaniment in life: "Because, to wherever you go, I shall go, and wherever you lodge, I shall lodge!" (1:16c–d)
- C Promise of ethnic and religious identity: "Your people is my people, and your God is my God!" (1:16e–f)
- B' Promise of accompaniment in death: "Wherever you die, I shall die, and there I shall be buried!" (1:17a–b)
- A' Oath against separation: "Thus may the LORD do to me, and do even more so, if death will separate me and you!" (1:17c–d)

The resolve of Ruth was not weakened by Orpah's decision and Naomi's challenge, but strengthened, for her first recorded speech opens with a command of her own. Since the first speech of a person in a Hebrew narrative is important in revealing the person's character, Ruth reveals herself as decisive in faith. As a narrator emphasizes differences between characters through contrasting speeches, so Naomi's loquaciousness (1:8–15) is challenged by Ruth's forceful, staccato doublets. The verbs "go" and "lodge" are opposites (daytime travel versus staying in place overnight) that form a merism: two contrasts that are intended to include everything between them as well.²¹² Wherever Naomi is headed, Ruth is at her side. She will stay with Naomi in all of life and even in death. Because Ruth strengthened her promise with a solemn vow invoking the LORD, Naomi could offer no further objections. In effect, Ruth entered into a sacred covenant with Naomi.

"Your People Is My People, and Your God Is My God" (1:16e–f)

Ruth was not uninformed about Israel's God (Ruth 1:17; 2:12). She had experienced Naomi's affection and concern for others, the fruit of her faith in the LORD. Thus, through her love in action, Naomi in effect had "evangelized" Ruth (see "Naomi: Evangelism by Love" in "The Relevance" in the introduction). Like a true "daughter" ("my daughters," 1:11–13) of her mother-in-law, who was her mother in the faith, Ruth loved Naomi and her God. Naomi's grief and bitterness did not obscure her faith from Ruth, but showed Ruth that her faith transcended her misfortunes. So too for us, denying our suffering is not the way to share the Gospel; rather, by living under the cross we show the power of the Gospel with its promise of the resurrection. (CC)

Lacking a father-in-law, husband, and son, Ruth was free to return to her original family in Moab, as did Orpah. But through faith she was inwardly bound to Naomi's family. Unlike Lot's wife (Gen 19:26), she would not look back with regret on the life she left behind (Lk 9:61–62). Jesus warns us that commitment to him may mean final separation from one's family (Mt 8:21–22; 10:37; see also 1 Ki 19:19–21; Jer 12:6). Such a heart-rending break is necessary when one from an unbelieving family is called to faith in Christ. In this present age of intensified persecution of Christians in many countries of the world, such a separation becomes harsher but no less necessary. (CC)

In the chiasmic structure of Ruth's speech in 1:16–17 (see above) the centerpiece, which receives the greatest stress, is her declaration of ethnic and religious identity with Naomi, for she is a true convert to the God of Israel. She professed a change in identity, from Moabite to Israelite. In the OT era, religion was bound up with national identity (Micah 4:5), and to convert to Israel's God meant to become an Israelite (Ruth 2:11) in both horizontal and vertical dimension. Thus the NT speaks of Christians (Jewish and Gentile believers alike) as true Israelites and the true Israel (Romans 9–11; Gal 3:26–29; 6:16). Ruth stated simply, "Your people is my people, and your God is my God" (Ruth 1:16e–f). The present tense is more appropriate for the stress here than the future tense, although the nominal statements lack any Hebrew verb. In order to indicate identity, Hebrew does not need to employ the verb "is," which could be mistaken for a weaker "may," "will," "can," or "could be." A couplet with a noun as subject and another noun as predicate is the strongest and simplest way to convey identity in the sense of "has indeed become, truly is." Ruth declares that she already considers Naomi's people to be her people and Naomi's God to be her God. (CC)

Ruth sacrificed her cultural future with her original family, country, religion, and female status (including potential marriage and motherhood) to join herself to Naomi, who had nothing to offer her. In effect, Ruth declared that she was assuming the role of a son who, bound to care for his widowed mother, stayed in his father's household (see Gen 45:10–47:12; Ex 20:12; Tobit 4:3–4). In contrast, a widow who went to the house of her father or father-in-law did so for her own sake (see Genesis 38). Ruth made this sacrifice for Naomi primarily because she preferred a precarious life in the community of Israel's God to a secure life in that of Moab's gods. (CC)

Still, she was not venturing into a void, but into the sphere of the LORD. In so doing, she joined the non-Israelites Jethro and Rahab, who had also confessed their loyalty to the LORD (Ex 18:10–11; Josh 2:8–11; Heb 11:31). By invoking the personal name of Israel's God, "the LORD" (יהוה),

YHWH, 1:17), Ruth indicated her faith in him. Thus “Ruth is a prophecy ... of the entrance of the heathen world into the kingdom of God.” (CC)

1:16 This classic expression of loyalty and love discloses the true character of Ruth. Her commitment to Naomi is complete, even though it holds no prospect for her but to share in Naomi’s desolation. For a similar declaration of devotion see 2Sa 15:21. (CSB)

WHERE YOU GO I WILL GO – She was willing to promise her faithfulness for the future despite its uncertainty and lack of tangible hope. She committed herself to Naomi’s home, people, God and even her place of death and burial. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

1:17 *May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely.* See note on 1Sa 3:17. Ruth, a Gentile, swears her commitment to Naomi in the name of Israel’s God, thus acknowledging him as her God (see v. 16). (CSB)

Common oath formula calling the Lord as witness (1Sm 14:44; 2Ki 6:31) (TLSB)

“Thus May the LORD Do to Me ... If Death Will Separate Me and You!” (1:17)

The highest stage of Ruth’s devotion to Naomi was in confessing her God, “the LORD,” to be the true God, implying the highest unity in the Spirit (cf. Ps 133:1; Jn 4:23–24; Eph 4:3). That confession is the right one that points to the service and worship of the true God, in whom we find mercy, every blessing, and the promise of resurrection to everlasting life.²²⁶ Thus, the climax of Ruth’s declaration to Naomi comes in her oath (see the textual notes on 1:17). She called upon the LORD as witness and guarantor of her pledge never to separate from Naomi as long as they both live in this earthly life, and, moreover, to remain by her even after death and burial. Thus even if one should die before the other, the separation would be only temporary, for they would be buried in the same family plot (“there I shall be buried,” 1:17) and reunited. (CC)

Those believers who shared the same burial ground professed their union in faith in Israel’s God. For believers to be buried in community also implies their reunion after death in everlasting life through the LORD. This is evident in the expressions “be gathered to his people/fathers” and “sleep with his fathers” (e.g., 1 Ki 2:10; 11:43; 14:31). Considering God’s revelations already in the OT of life after death,^p including the assumptions of Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2), and the resurrections performed through Elijah and Elisha (1 Ki 17:17–24; 2 Ki 4:32–37), even through Elisha’s dead bones (2 Ki 13:20–21; cf. Ezek 37:1–14), OT believers knew that they would be united in God’s presence with all believers beyond death. In their contexts, “he [God] will take me” (Ps 49:16 [ET 49:15]) and “afterward you will take me into glory” (Ps 73:24) refer to eternal life and imply bodily resurrection, and they have the same verb (קָחָהּ, “take”) used for the ascensions of Enoch and Elijah (Gen 5:24; 2 Ki 2:3, 5, 9, 10). As Jesus explains in a syllogism (Mt 22:31–32), the confession that the LORD is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob includes the belief in the bodily resurrection and life in the new creation. Thus not even death can separate believers from their LORD, nor permanently from each other, as the NT too affirms (Rom 8:38–39; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thess 4:13–18; see also “Fulfillment” and “Naomi: Evangelism by Love” in “The Relevance” in the introduction). When a Christian is

buried bodily (rather than cremated), it is a testimony that God will raise up believers from death bodily. (CC)

The narrator takes advantage of the obvious parallel between Ruth and Abraham in their forsaking everything from their past for a new future in a strange land. However, it is also evident that Ruth's break was more perilous than Abraham's. He was directly called and led by the LORD, and he took with him his wife, many servants, and movable possessions (Gen 12:1, 4; 13:2, 5–6; 14:14). In contrast, Ruth lacked an overt divine call and had neither possessions nor a support group beyond a destitute old widow. It may be said that she made the most radical personal decision in faith in the OT. (CC)

Ruth is the model for many converts to Christ throughout the history of the church, including the present, who thereby cross cultural as well as religious barriers and often alienate their families and ethnic or national people, but who are united in Christ with Christians of all backgrounds. Likewise, husband and wife who are united with each other through faith in Christ are empowered to reconcile differences of nationality, culture, and race, as challenging as that may be. (CC)

Naomi's three attempts to dissuade Ruth (1:8–9, 11–13, 15) had the effect of enabling Ruth to make her decision without pressure other than that from her love, engendered by Naomi's and the LORD's. Ruth's oath, in appealing to "the LORD" (1:17), indicates that she had undergone a genuine conversion in which she renounced her former Moabite religion and through faith was incorporated into the Israelite religion—the one true faith in its OT form. Thus Ruth's confession and vow could be compared to parts of the liturgies for Holy Baptism and the Christian rite of confirmation. The liturgy for Baptism includes a renunciation of "the devil and all his works and all his ways" and the three questions "Do you believe ... ?" that are answered by the three articles of the Apostles' Creed.²³⁵ Thus the one baptized forsakes the old life of bondage to sin and death and embarks on the new life in Christ by the power of his resurrection (1 Pet 3:21). In the Christian rite of confirmation, the reaffirmation of the renunciation and of the three questions and answers from the baptismal liturgy are followed by this question and answer, which may be compared to Ruth's vow (Ruth 1:16–17): (CC)

P: Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?

R: I do so intend with the help of God.

Amazing is Ruth's total commitment to no one other than her mother-in-law. Although the relationship between son-in-law and mother-in-law is made much light of today, it is rather the conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law that has been historically proverbial in various cultures. Another biblical example of in-law harmony is implied by Peter and his mother-in-law (Mt 8:14–15), where the term for "mother-in-law" is *πενθερά*, the same term used for Naomi in the Septuagint (e.g., Ruth 1:14; 2:11, 18–19). Origen exhorted daughters-in-law to respect the parents through whom life was given to their husbands. Augustine's mother, Monica, so patiently endured the hostility of her mother-in-law that her love conquered this tension and converted it into a harmonious relationship. (CC)

Naomi “cherished no vanity, sought no strife, and did not wish to rule; hence she had peace and love.” In respect to her daughters-in-law, she witnessed to the God of Israel by her words and her conduct (see 1 Pet 3:1). “As long as the Church is called Naomi, there is no lack of adherents.” “Only love opens the fountain of faith, but faith sanctifies and confirms love.” Her love was “the love of those whom God by his mercy has won for himself, and who love God in their brethren. . . . Confession, martyrdom, prayer, and every brotherly thought or deed, spring from the love of the converted heart.” (CC)

Although directed to Naomi, Ruth’s complete promise (1:16–17) is appropriate for husband and wife to repeat to each other at a wedding, “till death us do part,”²⁴¹ even though Ruth’s vow extended beyond death. For the mutual commitment of husband and wife, as desired by the Creator who made them in his image, is complete in all aspects of their life: temporal (for the rest of their lives on earth), emotional, physical, parental, mental, and spiritual—with Jesus Christ at the center, inspiring them and holding them together, even as it was “God . . . the LORD” (1:16–17) who held Naomi and Ruth together. (CC)

She even pledges her faithfulness with an invocation of the Lord (Yahweh), the God of Israel – not Chemosh, her own people’s god. Ruth had no idea what the future held,, but the Lord had a plan which included a place for her among the ancestors of David and ultimately of Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

She will not be swerved from her intention to cast her lot with that of Naomi. It was not the affection of a daughter to her natural mother nor that of a wife to the husband of her choice, but it was her love toward Naomi which had knit their hearts together. And the highest stage of the devotion which she yielded to Naomi for life was reached in the confession that she had found the God of Israel to be the true God, a fact which implied the highest unity of spirit. (Kretzmann)

1:18 Much like a present-day confirmand, Ruth satisfactorily confessed her faith in the Lord. Observing the faithfulness of Elimelech, Naomi, and Mahlon to the Lord and His covenant, Ruth was drawn to the God of Israel, forsaking her gods and people. (TLSB)

Naomi “Stopped Urging Her” (1:18)

This does not mean that Naomi no longer spoke to Ruth at all for the rest of their several-day trip to Bethlehem, but merely that she ceased to argue with her (see Acts 21:10–14). Because the dialogue ceased when Naomi refrained from answering, the story had to move on to the next episode. Naomi’s silence here implies that she has not yet grasped the import of Ruth’s solidarity with her. It was already obvious that Naomi loved Ruth and was greatly concerned for her (especially Ruth 1:8–9). Since the point had been made in the story that Ruth prevailed over Naomi here, nothing more need be said. This is the second of only three verses in Ruth where the narrator states what a character thought without expressing it in a direct quotation. (CC)

1:6–18 Ruth refuses to stay in Moab when Naomi determines to go back to Bethlehem, even though her sister-in-law stays in Moab. Ruth boldly confesses her faith in the Lord and her commitment to her family. What an incredible example of godly priorities: the Lord and family

come first! • Thanks be to God that He put us first and made us family through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus, who crossed heaven and earth to save us. Amen. (TLSB)

1:19 WHOLE TOWN WAS STIRRED – More than 10 years had passed since Naomi had left in far better circumstances than when she returned (v 4). (TLSB)

“They Entered Bethlehem” (1:19)

Ruth 1:19–22 may be seen as one of three interludes between major scenes that retard the pace to heighten suspense and add color. (The other two are 2:18–23 and 3:16–18.) These closing episodes to major scenes are indeed essential to the plot and movement of the story, for alternating such shorter episodes with the longer ones aids the attention and interest of hearers and readers. It is best to see these interludes as transitional episodes that both close off the preceding scene and prepare for the next one (as especially 1:22 does). This closing episode begins with movement (1:19), as did both the prologue (1:1) and homecoming (1:6). It then matches 4:14–17 as both have exchanges between Naomi and the women of Bethlehem. The exchange here (1:20–21) underlines the hard and apparently hopeless situation of Naomi, and thus also of Ruth. Indeed, it may well be incomparable in “force, vitality, pathos.” (CC)

The narrator did not find it expedient for the story to relate any details from the women’s journey after the vague description in 1:7. From Moab they would have descended into the Jordan Valley, lying 1,290 feet below sea level at the spot where the river flows into the Dead Sea; crossed the river and the lush narrow strip on either side today known as the *Zor*; then ascended, crossing the rugged wilderness of the valley known as the *Ghor* and proceeded on to Bethlehem in the hill country of Judah, 2,300 feet above sea level. (CC)

Ruth 1:19b–22 may represent a modified chiasmic structure in which part B introduces C–D, and B’ introduces D’–C’:

- A Naomi and Ruth’s entrance into Bethlehem (narrative, 1:19b)
- B Naomi objects to “Naomi,” meaning “pleasant” (1:20a)
- C Shaddai made her life bitter (1:20b)
- D She left full, but the LORD brought her back empty (1:21a)
- B’ Why should they call her “Naomi”? (1:21b)
- D’ The LORD has testified against her (1:21c)
- C’ Shaddai has afflicted her (1:21d)

A’ Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem at the harvest (narrative, 1:22) (CC)

Every Near Eastern village is astir (“excited,” abuzz with conversation, 1:19) at the arrival of strangers or long-absent returnees. It was natural for Naomi and Ruth to have been greeted by the women of the town, who would have been tending to their household duties while the men were in the fields busy with the harvest. Of course, even if men had seen them and recognized Naomi, it would be unseemly for them to strike up a conversation with women to whom they were not closely related; they would have sent their wives to investigate. (CC)

As a natural background and adding realism, these unidentified women serve as a chorus (and will again in 4:14–15, 17, as also the men do in 4:11–12). A closely knit group of women speaking in unison also plays a prominent role in the Song of Songs²⁴⁹ and foreshadows the

choruses in Greek plays. Probably the women were “excited” in both a positive, joyful way and also in a negative, shocked way over the sudden appearance of Naomi after the lengthy absence of ten years (1:4) but without her husband and sons. They addressed each other by a rhetorical question with the force of an exclamation: “This [really] is Naomi!” (see, e.g., 1 Sam 21:12 [ET 21:11]; 1 Ki 18:7, 17). It was also a realization that Naomi’s return forced them to find a niche for her in their community, to define her socially anew. (CC)

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. ³ Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. ⁵ Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. ⁷ Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. ⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. ¹¹ Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

2:1 *my son*. See note on 1Ti 1:2. (CSB)

2:2 *in the presence of many witnesses*. Refers to Paul’s preaching and teaching, which Timothy had heard repeatedly on all three missionary journeys. (CSB)

Paul taught and publicly affirmed Timothy’s calling as a pastor. (TLSB)

faithful men. Timothy must now teach and affirm other men who are qualified for the pastoral office. (TLSB)

2:3–6 Paul gives three examples for Timothy to follow: (1) a soldier who wants to please his commander; (2) an athlete who follows the rules of the game; and (3) a farmer who works hard. (CSB)

Paul uses three analogies to help Timothy understand his pastoral task: the Christian is like a combat soldier, a competing athlete, and a hardworking farmer. (TLSB)

2:3 *suffering as a good soldier*. Faithful to follow the command, regardless of the suffering involved. (TLSB)

2:4 *civilian pursuits*. Soldiers remain focused on combat duty, undistracted (e.g., Uriah; 2Sm 11:6–13). (TLSB)

one who enlisted him. God (cf 1:1). (TLSB)

2:5 *crowned.* In ancient times, victorious athletes would receive a laurel crown. (TLSB)

2:6 *to receive a share of the crops.* In this illustration, as in the previous two (soldier, vv. 3–4; athlete, v. 5), the main lesson is that dedicated effort will be rewarded—not necessarily monetarily, but in enjoyment of seeing the gospel produce changed lives. (CSB)

In a family or community effort, a hard worker has first claim on the results. (TLSB)

2:7 *give you understanding.* Working through His Word, the Lord opens eyes (Ps 119:18) and minds (cf Lk 24:45) to understand the Scriptures. (TLSB)

2:8 REMEMBER JESUS – mnamoneue – “keep in mind, think of.” Paul urges ongoing reflection upon God’s salvation story, which centers on the death and resurrection of Jesus. He also draws on OT vocabulary of “remember” where God promises to remember his own covenant promises of grace and so act mercifully toward his people (Gen 8:1; 9:15; Lev 26:45; Ezek 16:60-63). God’s people are also to remember His saving acts (Deut 8:18; Ps 105:5) by participating in celebrations of them (Ex 13:3, the Passover; Ex 20:8, the Sabbath; cf. Deut 5:12) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

Such remembering involves knowledge and a vicarious experience. Though the Word and Sacraments, God’s people themselves actually become part of the salvation story. Jesus often urged his followers to remember. In the Words of Institution he twice told them to celebrate his Holy Supper “in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:24-25) In Mt 16:9, Jesus encourages the disciples to remember the five loaves with which he fed thousands. In Jn 15:20 Jesus counsels his followers to “remember the words I spoke to you” as he anticipates that they, too, will face persecution as they follow him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

raised from the dead, descended from David. Christ’s resurrection proclaims his deity, and his descent from David shows his humanity; both truths are basic to the gospel. Since Christ is God, his death has infinite value; since he is man, he could rightfully become our substitute. (CSB)

2:9 I AM SUFFERING – Paul’s entire ministry was one of suffering for the sake of the gospel (Acts 9:16; 2 Cor. 11:24-29), and now he finds himself in chains. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

chained like a criminal. Apparently Paul was awaiting execution (see 4:6). (CSB)

bound with chains. Not merely under house arrest, as in Ac 28:30, but in a dungeon. *not bound!* The living and active Word (Heb 4:12) cannot be imprisoned or chained—it accomplishes God’s desires (Is 55:11). (TLSB)

2:10 THEREFORE – *dia touto* – “therefore, for this reason,” points both to the preceding and the following. Looking back, Jesus, the seed of David, is risen; the promise has been fulfilled, God’s new covenant has been established, and God’s Word is not chained but is spreading and bringing many to faith. Looking ahead, Paul is ministering on behalf of the elect - God’s chosen in Christ – in order that they may obtain eternal glory. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

I endure everything for the sake of the elect. No suffering is too great if it brings about the salvation of God’s chosen ones who will yet believe. (CSB)

All Christians. (TLSB)

Being assured of God’s salvation does not lead to inactivity on Paul’s part. Endurance is no passive experience but is a spiritual self-discipline which enables one to stay on course, to keep one’s eye on the goal, and ultimately to obtain the victory. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

in Christ Jesus. See note on 1:13. (CSB)

eternal glory. The final state of salvation. (CSB)

The fullness and conclusion of Christ’s salvation, when the resurrected elect will live eternally with Him. (TLSB)

2:11–13 Probably an early Christian hymn. The point to which Paul appeals is that suffering for Christ will be followed by glory. (CSB)

2:11 *trustworthy saying.* See note on 1Ti 1:15. (CSB)

If we died with him, we will also live with him. The Greek grammatical construction here assumes that we died with Christ in the past, when he died for us on the cross. We are therefore assured that we will also live with him eternally. (CSB)

2:12 *If we endure, we will also reign.* Faithfully bearing up under suffering and trial will result in reward when Christ returns. (CSB)

Life as a Christian does not exempt us from trial but calls us to endure. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

If we disown him. See Mt 10:33. (CSB)

2:13 HE WILL REMAIN FAITHFUL – God remains true to himself. He is love. He will remain faithful even if we are not. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 4)

God is love (1Jn 4:8), and He loves faithfully because it is part of His nature—even if no one should love Him in return. “He is unchangeable in will and essence” (FC SD XI 75). (TLSB)

2:1–13 Using several comparisons (solider, athlete, and farmer), Paul calls Timothy to find other faithful men who are able to share in the pastoral office. Christians—including pastors—need one another, bearing one another’s burdens. Paul describes his love for others with the words “I endure everything for the sake of the elect.” These words also describe Christ’s love for all people. He bore all things for us, so we would not be crushed beneath our overwhelming load of sin and death. • Thank You, Lord, that You bore all things for me. Give me strength and love to help my neighbors bear their burdens. Amen. (TLSB)

¹¹ Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance ¹³ and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. ¹⁵ One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹ Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

I. H. Marshall agrees with most interpreters when he says of the structure of Luke’s gospel: “With considerable hesitation we regard a new section as commencing at 17:11.” Since Jesus first turned his face to go to Jerusalem at 9:51, there has been only one other such notice, at 13:22. Lk 17:11 is the third mention of the fact and place of Jesus’ journeying to Jerusalem. (CC p. 650)

After 13:31–35 the evangelist has made scant mention of Jesus’ destination in Jerusalem. “Today and tomorrow and the coming day” (13:33) are not three literal days, but Jesus is close *in time* to his destiny, even if not necessarily close in distance. See comments at 13:31–35. (CC p. 650)

(The final travel notice in 19:28 immediately precedes his arrival in Jerusalem.) From the gospel itself there is no reason to believe that Jesus has left the Galilee-Samaria border. Jesus clearly intends to move toward Jerusalem (9:51) and seems to enter Samaria immediately following his announcement (9:52). He apparently travels to Bethany,

Lk 10:38–42 does not actually name Bethany as the home town of Mary and Martha, but Jn 11:1; 12:1–3 does. Luke refers to Bethany only in Lk 19:29; 24:50. (CC p. 650)

which is on the outskirts of Jerusalem, but there are no references to any specific place until the evangelist announces that Jesus is “passing through the middle of Samaria and Galilee” (17:11). If the gospel is strictly chronological, then it would imply that Jesus, after moving quickly and with determination to the very vicinity of the Holy City, returned north to the border of Galilee and Samaria. (CC p. 650)

In fact, following the report of Jesus’ repast with the sisters in Bethany (10:38–42), Luke offers large discourses that could be told in one sitting. (i.e., Lk 11:1–36, 37–54; 12:1–13:21; 13:23–14:2; 14:25–17:10) The impression that is given in this “journey” to Jerusalem is that it occurs over a brief period of time and in very few locations. At this point, Jesus seems to be moving from north to south through the middle of Galilee (in the north) and Samaria (in the south), not along the Jordan River. Thus the sixth and penultimate discourse in Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem (17:11–18:34) may very well have been told in one sitting in the village in Samaria where Jesus cleansed the ten lepers. (CC p. 650)

The previous parable (17:7–10) concluded with a hint that the apostles would suffer as part of their service to Jesus, their suffering Master. By immediately following the allusion to suffering with a clear reference to Jesus’ journey to the city of his passion, Luke shows that the following healing miracle (17:12–19) and Jesus’ teachings about the last things (17:20–37) occur during the last leg of Jesus’ movement to Jerusalem, to the Passover, and to the cross, yet while he is still in Samaria, a crucial locale of the apostolic mission in Acts. (CC pp. 650-651)

Dillon, *From Eye-Witnesses*, 251–52, offers these insights into Luke’s accent on Samaria and Samaritans:

Let us observe, first, that three pericopes ... have a *Samaritan color*, and all three are located in the “journey section” of the gospel: the Samaritan rejection story (Lk 9:52–56), the “good Samaritan” parable (Lk 10:29–37), and the miracle of the ten lepers (Lk 17:11–19). Except for Mt’s mission directive to avoid Samaritan cities (Mt 10:5), which Luke does not reproduce, these are the only reference to Samaria and the Samaritans in the Synoptics. ... In all three instances, special importance is attached to the Samaritan identity of persons involved in the story: the inhospitable townsfolk (οὐκ ἐδέξαντο αὐτόν) whom the Master would not allow his ἄγγελοι [“messengers”] to afflict with Elia’s “samaritan” curse (Lk 9:54 = 2 Kgs 1:10–12), the parable’s model of ministering to the unfortunate, and the one leper won over by his cure. All these suggest that Luke’s tradition accords the outcast Samaritans a special status; and that status is clearly not without pertinence to the *Christian mission to Samaria*, whose great success through the superior *thaumaturgy* [miracle working] of Philip (Acts 8:5–25) supports its pivotal position in the Acts history as *threshold of the mission to the Gentiles* (emphasis Dillon). (CC p. 651)

17:11 ONE HIS WAY TO JERUSALEM – πορεύεσθαι—This is part of Luke’s journey vocabulary and links this notice with his other similar notices at 9:51; 13:22; and 19:28.

See comments at 1:39. (J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 845, notes that “Eight of the opening nine words are to be found in a similar configuration in 9:51.”). (CC p. 648)

border between Samaria and Galilee. From this point Jesus seems to have journeyed to Perea, where he ministered on his way south to Jerusalem (see notes on 9:51; 13:22). (CSB)

διὰ μέσον Σαμαρείας καὶ Γαλιλαίας—This is doubtless the correct text but a difficult phrase to translate because of the accusative that follows the prepositional phrase διὰ. Normally this means “because of,” but BAGD and BDF record the rare occasions where it has a local meaning, “through” (BAGD, B I; BDF, § 222). It could mean either “through the middle of,” a north to south movement, or “between,” an east to west movement along the border, as W. Arndt suggests (*Luke*, 370–71). See comments below and at 13:31–35. (CC p. 648)

Luke is highlighting the fact that Jesus was deliberately going the long way to Jerusalem. He wanted to minister to as many people as possible on his way to Jerusalem. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

17:12 INTO THE VILLAGE – Jesus deliberately went into this village, almost certainly because he wanted to encounter people to whom he could minister. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

εἰς τινα κώμην— Luke’s reference here to “a certain village” gives no help in placing Jesus in a specific location. (CC p. 648)

THEY STOOD AT A DISTANCE – According to the requirements of the Law (Lev 13:46; Num 5:2-4), these 10 lepers would have been outside of the village, and would have had to warn Jesus that they were unclean before they approached him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

The law required the separation of lepers from the community (cf Lv 13). (TLSB)

17:13 JESUS MASTER – ἐπιστάτα—This title is only found in Luke’s gospel, and this is the only time it is used by someone other than the disciples. See comments at 5:5. (CC p. 648)

HAVE PITY ON US – Their cry eleison is carried on in our present day (kyrie). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

Adopted in the Church’s liturgy as a cry for salvation. (TLSB)

The frame of this cleansing miracle shows that the occasion for a Samaritan’s worship of Jesus begins with an appeal by ten lepers for mercy (A—17:12–13; ἐλέησον, “have mercy,” is an imperative). This is a cry for salvation. A leper has already appeared in Luke’s gospel as one of the first outcasts that Jesus healed during his Galilean ministry

(5:12–16). Now there are ten, and the cry is not for cleansing (5:12) but for mercy. This introduces the theme of salvation, which will give rise to worship. Correspondingly, the account ends with Jesus announcing that the Samaritan’s cry for mercy was heard as a cry of faith and salvation has been granted (A’—17:19). Jesus’ command, “Arise, journey,” could be understood as an invitation for the cleansed leper to rise and journey with him to Jerusalem. There the leper might see the basis for his cleansing: the atonement, where Christ shows God’s ultimate mercy by cleansing all humankind from the leprosy of sin that plagues the fallen creation. This is Lukan vocabulary for God’s gracious visitation of release for those who are in bondage to sin, death, sickness, and demon possession. The lepers begged for mercy as they saw Jesus approach their city; mercy wrought their salvation, salvation that comes through faith. (CC p. 652)

17:14 HE SAW THEM – ἰδών—Jesus responds to the lepers when he sees them. Only then does he tell them to go see the priests. In the very next verse (17:15), the Samaritan leper, seeing (ἰδών) that he was healed, returns to worship Jesus. J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 846, notes that “ἰδών, ‘seeing/saw,’ propels the action as it did in v 14.” J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1155, also says “in the Lucan story this [seeing] is an awakening; his eyes of faith were opened.” On eyes and sight as a metaphor for seeing God’s salvation in Jesus, see comments at 2:21–40. (CC pp. 648-649)

GO – πορευθέντες—Here is another example where a participle functions as an imperative. See comments at 7:22 and 13:32. (CC p. 649)

But what intervenes between the cries for mercy and the announcement of salvation through faith? As the story narrows toward the climax of the thankful Samaritan’s worship of Jesus, the miracle of cleansing comes first (B—17:14). The occasion for the miracle is that Jesus “sees” the lepers and then speaks to them. Jesus responds to their imperative plea for mercy with an imperative of his own: “Go [πορευθέντες functions as an imperative], show [the imperative ἐπιδείξατε] yourselves to the priests.” These are the same instructions he gave to the first leper whom he cleansed (5:14), only then he had first performed the miracle of cleansing (5:13) and then given the command. (CC p. 652)

show yourselves to the priests. Normal procedure after a cure (see Lev 13:2–3; 14:2–32). (CSB)

To verify the healing (Lv 14). (TLSB)

πορευθέντες ἐπιδείξατε ἑαυτοὺς τοῖς ἱερεῶσιν—This same instruction was given to the first leper Jesus cleansed in Luke’s gospel (5:14; ἀπελθὼν δεῖξον σεαυτὸν τῷ ἱερεῖ). See comments at 5:12–16. Here “priests” and the Greek commands are plural, and the command to offer sacrifice (cf. 5:14) is implied, not stated. (CC p. 649)

The fact that Jesus told them to show themselves to the priest was normal procedure after a cure from leprosy. (Lev. 13 and 14) The Greek word *lepra* signifies a dreaded condition of the skin, including what is now regarded as leprosy, as well as certain other

types of infectious skin diseases, resulting in a person' being regarded as ceremonially unclean and thus excluded from normal relations with other people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

The key issue in ancient Israel was not the virulence or contagiousness of the disease, but the religious and social dimension. Those who had been diagnosed as lepers by the priest were required to separate themselves from the community. This was not for medical but for religious reasons. Biblical lepers were treated not as ill but as ritually unclean. The priest had no technique for healing lepers; he only determined whether or not they had been healed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

THEY WERE CLEANSED – ἐκαθαρίσθησαν—This word is taken from the vocabulary of Leviticus. It describes what happens when sickness comes up against the one who releases from bondage, and it is repeated by Jesus at the end of the story (17:17). This verb and the related noun are also key terms in the first healing of the leper (5:12, 13, 14) See comments at 5:12.. (CC p. 649)

Lepers were regarded as “unclean” due to association with the death of the affected body parts. (TLSB)

In cleansing lepers Jesus teaches a number of things that would be insightful for those who are catechizing Gentiles and for their Gentile catechumens. First, the miracle is a sign that the messianic era of salvation is present in Jesus (7:22). Second, the cleansing comes from Jesus, whose holy flesh reaches out in compassion and mercy to a leper. The one who is “clean” crosses over the boundary to one who is “unclean” in order to make him clean. The border between Galilee and Samaria also separated those who were “clean” (Jews) from the “unclean” (Samaritans). Third, Jesus supersedes the OT holiness code (Leviticus 12–26) with his own holiness. The cleansing of these ten lepers, however, is connected to a fourth circumstance. Jesus sends them to the priests *to be cleansed spiritually*. (CC pp. 652-653)

Lev 14:1–32 states that a healed leper is to show himself to the priests and offer sacrifice. Jesus' purpose in sending these lepers to the priests is to fulfill the OT, but also to do something more. Jesus wants the cleansed lepers to go to *the place of sacrifice* (Lk 5:14) and offer themselves as testimony that a corresponding spiritual healing accompanies the physical cleansing he bestows. The sacrifices in the temple (commanded in 5:14 and implied here) would include the shedding of blood, looking forward to the cleansing atonement of the Messiah, who was traveling to Jerusalem to offer his blood as the final, once-for-all cleansing. Jesus wants the priests in the temple to confirm that the miracle has taken place. The miracle will also confirm that Jesus is who he says he is: the one who cleanses the entire sin of all humanity. (CC p. 653)

In this instance, unlike 5:12–16, the cleansing happens *while the ten lepers are traveling to the temple*.

Lev 14:2–32 directs the cleansed person to offer sacrifices after being certified as clean by a priest. Those sacrifices would be offered at the central place of

worship—in Jesus’ day, the temple in Jerusalem. There is no support for the suggestions of J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1154, and I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 651, that the lepers might find priests somewhere in the area or that the Samaritan would find a Samaritan priest (cf. also R. Stein, *Luke*, 433). (CC p. 653)

They go by faith, having confidence from Jesus’ previous healing activity that they too will be healed as they follow his command to go to the temple. Their sacrifices will foreshadow Jesus’ own bloody sacrifice in fulfillment of Moses and the entire OT (Lk 5:14; 24:27, 44). (CC p. 653)

The corresponding section in the chiasm is Jesus’ description of the miracle to the one leper who returned (B’—17:17–18). The parallelism between these two sections consists of the word for “they were cleansed” (ἐκαθαρίσθησαν; 17:14, 17). The irony here is this: the ten lepers were happy to journey to the temple with the expectation that they would be cleansed, but only one leper, *after the cleansing*, was willing to return to give glory to God—God in the person of Jesus, whose presence in the world and whose sacrifice on the cross would bring an end to temple worship. *And the chief irony is this: the one who returns is a “foreigner,” a Samaritan, an outcast!* (CC p. 653)

D. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 166, summarizes the significance of the Samaritan:

A Samaritan ... serves as a foil not only to the apostles but to the whole stubborn nation of Israel as well ...: (a) He submits to Jesus’ authority (vv. 15–16a) by giving Jesus thanks (v. 16a; cf. 17:10); and (b) his *faith* (cf. 17:5–6) is the instrument not just of miraculous healing but also the presence of eschatological salvation among Samaritans over against the mass of a recalcitrant Israel. (CC p. 653)

He responds in faith, as did the Good Samaritan, who responded in compassion and love (10:33). (CC p. 653)

One of the chief functions of the holiness code in Leviticus 12–26 was to separate Israel, the clean people of God, from the unclean Gentiles. Circumcision, the kosher dietary laws, and the many liturgies for different kinds of cleansing all set Israel apart from the other nations. However, just as Jesus crossed the boundary separating clean from unclean when he touched the leper in 5:12–16, so too Jesus’ cleansing of the Samaritan and his reception of the Samaritan’s worship show that another OT boundary has been crossed. Jesus brings a new kind of holiness. It is not a holiness based on circumcision, dietary laws, or the Jerusalem temple with its priests and sacrifices. Rather, it is a holiness based on his own person as the sinless Son of God and on his sacrifice as the perfect, unblemished Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. The holiness of Jesus, given to all who will be baptized in his name, will transcend all ethnic and cultural boundaries as it purifies the people of God’s new covenant in Christ (Gal 3:27–29). The cleansed Samaritan points toward the multitudes of foreigners who will be incorporated into the church in Acts and beyond. (CC pp. 653–654)

17:15 CAME BACK, PRAISING GOD – Began his praise from a distance. (TLSB)

δοξάζων—The present participle suggests continuous action. (CC p. 649)

In contrast to the worshipful Samaritan are the nine who do not return, and the implication of Jesus' words are that the nine are Jews. (CC p. 654)

The whole context prompts this conclusion. R. Stein, *Luke*, 434, notes: "The nine were the Jewish lepers who were healed, in contrast to the 'foreigner.' For Luke's Jewish readers the pathos of these questions would have been great (cf. Rom 9:2–5). Once again the last had become first and the first last (Luke 13:30)." See also J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1155. (CC p. 654)

They do not realize the eschatological significance of what happened to them, i.e., God's kingdom has arrived in Jesus. The very next passage (17:20–21) reinforces that message. The presence of Jesus is the presence of God's kingdom. Jesus is the very presence of God in human flesh, in the world, among humans. Here again are the two groups that Jesus has confronted throughout his ministry: the outcasts who receive him by faith and the religious establishment, which rejects him. This passage continues Jesus' ongoing ministry to the marginal people of society as part of the gospel theme of the Great Reversal. In the kingdom of God, things are the opposite of what one might expect. (CC p. 654)

The center of the passage begins with a simple frame of references to the Samaritan. This alerts the hearer that the Samaritan's insight and worship are central to the passage. Luke is subtle in introducing him simply as "one of them" (εἷς δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν), leaving the hearer to wonder which one of the ten lepers returned (C—17:15a). The corresponding line in the chiasmic structure gives the ironic, surprising answer: "And he was a Samaritan" (C'—17:16b). Luke links this center section to the previous one by means of the word "seeing" (ἰδών) and the word "healed" (ἰάθη; 17:15). Just as Jesus, "seeing" the lepers, sent them to the priests to be declared clean (17:14), so the Samaritan, "seeing" that he "was healed," is moved by Jesus' mercy to return to him to give him worship. (CC p. 654)

17:16 Samaritan. See note on 10:31–33. Normally Jews did not associate with Samaritans (Jn 4:9), but leprosy broke down social barriers while erecting others (see notes on Lev 13:2, 4, 45–46). (CSB)

The Jews despised the Samaritans because of historic betrayals and heretical beliefs. (TLSB)

They were all outcasts. Jesus didn't care what social standing they had; his love extends to all. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

At the very center of this Samaritan frame stands the Samaritan's worship, which is a confession of his faith. (CC p. 654)

C. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 165–66, notes:

The faith of foreigners is a Lukan concern (e.g., 7:9; 10:25–37; Acts 10–11), as is the contrast between their faith (cf. Acts 26:16–18 where the Gentiles' eyes are opened) and the unbelief of Jews who are unable to see God's work in Jesus (cf. Acts 28:26–27 where the Jews do not see). This story, then, foreshadows the rejection of the gospel by the Jews and its enthusiastic reception by foreigners which we see in the narrative of Acts and which was already established at the time Luke-Acts was written. (CC pp. 654-655)

Luke uses the same grammatical construction to accent the two aspects of the Samaritan's worship: an aorist followed by a present participle. He returned, giving glory to God (ὑπέστρεψεν ... δοξάζων τὸν θεόν); he fell, giving thanks to Jesus (ἔπεσεν ... εὐχαριστῶν αὐτῷ). This is the innermost ring of the chiasm (D/D'), the mystery of the correspondence of God and Jesus. By using such a structure, Luke leads the Gentile catechumen to see himself in this foreigner, this Samaritan, who has seen the connection between the presence of God in the temple and the sacrifices there and the presence of God in Jesus, who is God's final sacrifice. The Samaritan returns to Jesus, glorifying God the Father for the miracles that he is bringing to the world through Jesus. (CC pp. 654-655)

Others throughout Luke's gospel have done this, e.g., 2:20; 5:25, 26; 7:16; 13:13. Note that the glory given God in 5:25 results from the forgiveness of sins given to the paralytic in 5:20, 24. (CC p. 655)

But now he recognizes that the glory he gives God is to be expressed in *worship of and thanksgiving to Jesus*, who is God in flesh, and whose cleansing atonement supersedes the cleansing rites of the priests in the temple. Every other instance of εὐχαριστέω, "give thanks," is a giving of thanks to God.

On εὐχαριστέω in Luke-Acts, see Lk 18:11; 22:17, 19; Acts 27:35; 28:15. (CC p. 655)

This is the only place in the entire NT where εὐχαριστέω refers to the giving of thanks to *Jesus!* (CC p. 655)

FELL ON HIS FACE – Note that he praises God at Jesus' feet. (TLSB)

ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον—The first leper healed in Luke also fell on his face when he saw Jesus (5:12). (CC p. 649)

The Samaritan's posture is one of worship—falling on his face at Jesus' feet. It is possible that the Samaritan never made it to the temple, for when he saw that he was healed, he realized that the locale of God's presence had shifted from the temple in Jerusalem to the body of Jesus. His worship confesses his faith, this conviction about

God in Jesus. The place to give thanks for cleansing is wherever Jesus is, anticipating worship in the NT era down until this day. In Jn 4:20–26, this Christological basis of true worship is revealed to another Samaritan, this time a woman. Notice that here in Luke, Jesus is not chastising the man but simply wondering why the others did not come to the same theological conclusion this Samaritan did. He alone had faith that God’s presence is now in Jesus and with that presence comes God’s mercy and cleansing. (CC p. 655)

THANKED HIM – εὐχαριστῶν—The present participle suggests continuous action. (CC p. 649)

The apostles, who in the previous passage were instructed not to expect thanks for doing what they were called to do (Lk 17:7–10), are shown here that true faith gives thanks to the one who brings salvation. This Samaritan’s faith uproots trees and plants them in the sea, for it brought a foreigner to the temple—to Jesus, the true temple wherein God’s presence resides (cf. Jn 2:18–22). (CC p. 655)

17:17 WHERE ARE THE OTHER NINE – The lack of gratitude to Jesus is a lack of gratitude to God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

Ingratitude is the response of the majority. (TLSB)

οἱ δὲ ἕννεά ποῶ—The Greek word order emphasizes “the nine” and accents Jesus’ question. (CC p. 649)

In essence, we have two different groups of catechumens here: the Samaritan and the nine Jewish lepers. The Samaritan responds in faith because his “catechesis” led him to the presence of God in Christ and to worship the one who gives him new life. He is among those represented by the seed that fell on fertile soil, who “heard the Word with a noble and good heart, hold it fast and bear fruit in steadfast endurance” (Lk 8:15). But the nine are like those who “receive the Word with joy, and yet these have no roots, who for a time believe but in time of temptation apostatize” (8:13). (CC pp. 655-656)

17:18 GIVE PRAISE TO GOD – δοῶναι δόξαν τῷ θεῷ—This infinitive of purpose shows the reason the nine should have returned. (CC p. 649)

THIS FOREIGNER – ὁ ἀλλογενῆς οὔτος—This means “of another race or genealogy,” i.e., not an Israelite, and thus is translated “foreigner.” This is its only occurrence in the NT. (J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 847, notes that “it [ἀλλογενῆς] is the term used in the temple inscription that forbade the entry of foreigners into the Jerusalem temple.”) (CC p. 649)

United in their affliction, the Samaritan and Jewish lepers tolerated one another. Now the one least expected to associate with Jesus, a Jew, returns thanks. (TLSB)

17:19 RISE AND GO – ἀναστὰς πορεύου—The Samaritan must “arise” because he is prostrate before Jesus. Here again, Luke uses a participle like an imperative. These two words are used together by the prodigal when he decides to return to his merciful father (15:18). This Samaritan is set upon the journey of faith with Jesus. πορεύομαι often is part of Luke’s vocabulary for Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. R. Dillon, *From Eye-Witnesses*, 36, asks, “Is Jesus’ command to the thankful Samaritan, πορεύου, a bid to join the ‘journey’ to Jerusalem, in view of the man’s saving πίστις and the use of the thematic πορεύεσθαι in the pericope’s introduction?” (CC p. 649)

your faith has made you well. See Mt 9:22. The phrase may also be rendered “your faith has saved you” (7:50). The fact that the Samaritan returned to thank Jesus may indicate that he had received salvation in addition to the physical healing all ten had received (cf. 7:50; 8:48, 50). (CSB)

The healed Samaritan received an additional blessing from Jesus, his faith has saved him for eternity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

Finally, Jesus tells the Samaritan to arise and “journey.” Faith has sealed his salvation. As one raised to life, he is set in motion with Jesus and the pilgrim band. Jesus draws a connection between the Samaritan’s worship of him as the locale of divine cleansing and Jesus’ final passion, death, and resurrection in Jerusalem, where divine cleansing will take place as the fulfillment of salvation history. The hearer of the gospel may catch the connection between the call to “journey” to Jerusalem and Jesus’ suffering there, because the evangelist has provided the clue by beginning this cleansing miracle with his third travel notice. Jesus is close to the Holy City, and even a Samaritan leper may learn that it is the place of the atonement. The Lukan hearer may also hear in the giving of thanks to Jesus (εὐχαριστῶν αὐτῷ) an allusion to the church’s ongoing Eucharist. (“Eucharist” comes from the Greek verb for “giving thanks” used here and also in the Words of Institution [22:17, 19].) In the Eucharist, the church prostrates before the presence of the crucified and risen Christ, who gives his body and blood in a meal where his divine cleansing is for all who, like the Samaritan, are saved through faith. As we will soon hear, “the kingdom of God is among you” (17:21), for the kingdom is wherever the King is, and the King is in his church. (CC p. 656)

17:11–19 Jesus commends the faith of a Samaritan leper who alone gives thanks for his healing. Daily God’s mercy extends to the unworthy—including you. Give praise to Him, who bore no grudge toward you but came to save you. • Thanks be to You, O God, as we go our way, made whole by Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)

