

March 15, 2021

Read Ruth 1

Key verse: Ruth 1:16

*But Ruth said,  
'Do not press me to leave you  
or to turn back from following you!  
Where you go, I will go;  
where you lodge, I will lodge;  
your people shall be my people,  
and your God my God.*

### **Loving the Stranger**

When Hyesun and I decided to get married we set up a formal meeting with her father who had a few prejudices. One was toward the people from a particular region of South Korea, and he had told Hyesun, “You can marry any man you want, but not one from *that* province.” Well, Hyesun complied with his demand, though I think he was a bit shocked to learn exactly where her husband *was* from.

But despite my father-in-laws initial misgivings he embraced me like his own son, and the rest of the family did the same. Despite the fact that I hardly speak any Korean and I grew up in a foreign land, I am embraced as family.

In a violent time, marked by tribal warfare and ethnocentricity, Ruth boldly emigrated from Moab to new country and joined a new family, a people who had knowledge of the true God, the God who commanded his people to not just accept, not just tolerate, but to *love* the foreigner in their midst (Leviticus 19:34).

Racism is an awful scourge that runs so counter to God’s will for us. To me, the most wonderful thing about being a United States citizen (and a New Yorker) is the multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial environment that it affords us. And while, I must admit, being a stranger in a strange land made me uncomfortable at times, I was so blessed to meet so many people who embraced God’s commandment to love the stranger. I pray we can all take God’s commandment to heart.

**Prayer:** God of diversity, we tend to surround ourselves with people who look and talk and act like us, and too often we look with suspicion or disdain upon those who don’t. Remind us what a blessing it is to live in such a colorful world, and teach us to abide by your commandment to love the stranger. Amen.