

Weekly Bible Study for Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

God in the Grief – Ruth 1: 13b -22 by Norman Bonnett w/c Sunday 11th October 2020

The story told in these verses is one of a tragic set of circumstances through which three women are left alone after the deaths of their husbands and in Naomi's case her sons. They seem to be without hope.

Our own lives can sometimes appear to be pointless when disaster strikes as it does here in this passage. I am sure you will know situations where meaning and purpose seem to disappear from life, brought about through a series of unforeseen circumstances. Think back on them, did they provide a happy outcome? Did those involved in the tragedy live happily ever after? Or was your hurt, anger and bitterness buried deep down so that it took root in your heart to always choke hope and joy.

Notes:

Naomi in her desolation and perhaps self-pity or guilt is trying to encourage her daughters-in-law to find a husband and to build a family in their homeland – Moab. She blames God (verses 20,21) and asks to be called Mara (Bitterness) to capture her sense of desolation. She feels separated from God because of the circumstances she is experiencing.

Separation from anyone we are devoted to is a deeply painful experience, one which we will all have faced and will face again. Often it comes to the warmest of relationships at times certainly not of our choice and with no apparent reason.

Isaiah 59:2 tells us that our iniquities separate us from God, that a barrier is formed between us and God because of our sins. We read the same theme expressed as a foretelling of the coming of Jesus in Isaiah 53, such wonderful words expressed so beautifully in Handel's Messiah (why not take a listen to remind yourself of Handel's firm faith in Jesus and why many still call this piece "an epitome of Christian faith"). This theme is taken up in 1 Peter 2:24 where we read that the Perfect One suffered and died for each one of us.

Your thoughts about these passages:

Isaiah 59:2

Isaiah 53

1 Peter 2:24

We are living now through times of fear, of discomfort and for many disaster; all in addition to the ongoing problems and messiness of the lives of our families, friends and of the world's situation of separation from God, perhaps much like "the times of the Judges". In needy situations our faithful prayers along with the study of scripture and full trust in God, through His Son will actively help. As tragedy abounds may your love and prayer abound in equal measure. May you find blessing as you focus on this passage. Norman