

PASSION - the Series for Lent 2007

**“Introduction to PASSION: Relationships that are Personal, Active, Special,
Secure, Inspiring, Overwhelming, Near and Always New”**

Scout Sunday – February 25, 2007

Sermon by Boy Scout Zak Vitez and Pastor Cathy: Was Ruth the Earliest Scout?

Ruth 1: 15-22

John 14: 1-7

PC: All of our important relationships are personal – they all are between specific individuals with specific interests, habits, hobbies. Yet at the same time, if relationships are healthy relationships, they will have a number of things in common. Those qualities are characteristics that all healthy people share.

Z – Scouts group them together; the Boy Scouts refer to them as aspects of the Scout Law. Scouts are expected to be: **TRUSTWORTHY, LOYAL, HELPFUL , FRIENDLY, COURTEOUS, KIND, OBEDIENT, CHEERFUL, THRIFTY, BRAVE, CLEAN, and REVERENT.**

PC – One of the interesting things to me about this story of Ruth and Naomi is that Ruth showed a lot of these same characteristics. What do you think, Zak – was Ruth the earliest Scout?

Z – No, PC, because the Boy Scouts weren't founded until 1910 by Robert Baden-Powell. Powell's fascination with the wilderness led him to become a naturalist, an artist, and an author, and through his works he influenced both youth and adults. Juliette Gordon Low founded the Girl Scouts - USA in 1912. But Ruth really did have a lot of the same characteristics as a Scout.

PC – Yes, she did. Let's take them from the top, starting with **TRUSTWORTHY**. What were some of the things that made Ruth **TRUSTWORTHY**, Zak?

Z – Well, when we say that a Scout is **TRUSTWORTHY**, that means that a Scout tells the truth. He keeps his promises. Honesty is part of his code of conduct. People can depend on him. And Ruth did that when she decided to stay with Naomi no matter what.

PC – You're right; Ruth was **TRUSTWORTHY**. What about **LOYAL**?

Z - When a Scout is **LOYAL**, that means that they are true to their family, Scout leaders, friends, school, and nation. This means a Scout stands up for their friends and family, and doesn't leave them hanging.

PC – Yes, Ruth fits the bill for **LOYAL** here as well. How was she **HELPFUL**?

Z – When we say a Scout is **HELPFUL**, this means they are concerned about other people. They do things willingly for others without pay or reward. Naomi didn't offer to pay Ruth to go with her; Naomi actually tried to talk Ruth out of going with her. But

Ruth insisted on going with her mother-in-law because she was really concerned about her – would she be safe? Who would take care of her? Who would she live with? Ruth wanted to take care of her because she loved her.

PC – Yes, Ruth really did show a lot of **HELPFUL** behavior. But how was she **FRIENDLY**?

Z – To be **FRIENDLY** means that you are a friend to all, like a brother or sister to others. Scouts want to understand others. They respect those with ideas and customs different than what they are used to.

PC – If that is what **FRIENDLY** means to a Scout, Ruth surely was friendly. Even though she was a Moabite, and did not grow up worshipping Yahweh God, the God of Israel, the God of all creation, she wanted to go with her mother-in-law and she said that she would follow Naomi's God, Yahweh. She even used the name Yahweh when she made that vow. Want to know how I know she did that? If we were looking at a pew bible, on page 210, we could see the word LORD in the text. See the word LORD here in the pulpit bible? See how it's all typed in capital letters, with the letter size of the ORD in a little smaller type than the capital L? In English, that's how the translators show the Hebrew name for the Lord God – YHWH. Pretty neat, hunh? Ruth was showing a lot of respect for her mother-in-law and her mother-in-law's faith. How was Ruth **COURTEOUS**?

Z – if you want to say that a Scout is **COURTEOUS**, you're saying that a Scout is polite to everyone regardless of age, race, or position. Scouts know good manners make it easier for people to get along together. Ruth was polite to her mother-in-law; she was polite and listened to her.

PC – Ruth WAS **COURTEOUS** – you're right. And it seems that she was **KIND** to Naomi as well.

Z – Yes, she was **KIND**. A Scout understands there is strength in being gentle. A Scout treats others the way they want to be treated. A Scout does not hurt or kill harmless things without reason. Ruth treated Naomi the way Ruth wanted to be treated – and that was the way that Naomi had treated her when they were all living in Moab. Naomi and her husband had taken care of Ruth when she married their son, and now Ruth is going to take care of Naomi. She cared about her mother-in-law, and so she was **KIND** to her.

PC – Yes, Ruth was **KIND** to Naomi. But what about **OBEDIENT**? I'm not so sure that Ruth was **OBEDIENT**. Naomi told her to go home, and yet Ruth refused to leave her.

Z – It's true that when we think of the word **OBEDIENT**, we think that it means that we always do what we're told to do. But when a Scout is **OBEDIENT**, they follow the rules of their family, school, troop or pack. They obey the laws of their community and their country. If a Scout thinks these rules and laws are unfair, they try to have them changed in an orderly manner rather than disobey them. But Ruth wasn't breaking the law when

she insisted on going with her mother-in-law. It's true that her mother-in-law urged her to return to her parents' house, but it wasn't because she was kicking Ruth out of the family. Naomi was trying to not make Ruth feel like she HAD to return to Israel with her. Israel was a foreign country to Ruth, with a different religion and different customs. Naomi was trying to tell Ruth that it was ok to stay in a place where she was comfortable and knew what was happening there. It's not like Ruth was trying to do something wrong; she was trying to help her mother-in-law.

PC – Ok – we'll see how Ruth was **OBEDIENT** to Naomi later, too. It does seem that Ruth was **CHEERFUL**.

Z – Yes, Ruth was **CHEERFUL** because she looked for the bright side of things, which is what a Scout does. A Scout cheerfully does tasks that come their way and tries to make others happy. We'll see Ruth doing that too, later in the story.

PC – **CHEERFULNESS** is a good thing. What about **THRIFTY**? What is that?

Z – A Scout is **THRIFTY** when they work to pay their way and to help others. Scouts save for unpredictable needs, and protect and conserve natural resources. Scouts carefully use time and property. That's another characteristic that Ruth has, but we don't get a chance to see it yet, in this passage, really. But we will later in the story.

PC – Ok, I'll wait on the **THRIFTY** part. Scouts are supposed to be **BRAVE**, aren't they? How was Ruth **BRAVE**?

Z – Well, when a Scout is **BRAVE**, it means that they face danger even if they are afraid. Scouts have the courage to stand up for their friends and what they think is right even if others laugh at or threaten them. Ruth really didn't know what to expect when she insisted on going back to Israel with Naomi. But she was brave enough to run the risk of going to a foreign place, where things would be different and where the only person she would know was her mother-in-law. And when Ruth made the commitment to go, she made that commitment for the rest of her life. She told her mother-in-law that she was so committed to her that she was going to stay with her no matter what. Even when her mother-in-law died someday, Ruth wasn't going to go back to her home country. She was going to stay with her mother-in-law for the rest of her, Ruth's, life. I think that was pretty brave.

PC – You're right, that was a pretty **BRAVE** thing to do. What's the next part of the Scout law?

Z – To be **CLEAN**. A Scout keeps their body and mind fit and clean. Scouts hang out with those who believe in living by these same ideals. And Scouts help keep their homes and communities clean. We can't really see that in this passage, but it does come up in the story later on, believe it or not.

PC – Ok, a promise of things to come over the next weeks! What is the last part of the law?

Z – To be **REVERENT**. A Scout is reverent toward God and is faithful in their religious duties, while respecting the beliefs of others. Ruth was reverent. When she promised to stay with Naomi no matter what, she also promised that Naomi's God would be her God. And when she made that vow, she also called the Lord God to witness to it, and to do terrible things to her if she didn't stick with her promise. Ruth probably knew that if she followed the gods from Moab, that she could get in trouble in Israel. But it's more than that – if Ruth hadn't really meant what she said, there would have been no reason for her to have sworn on the personal name of the Lord that the Hebrew people used. You can see it there in the text again, on page 210 in the pew bibles – that all capital LORD when Ruth makes her promise, that shows us that she used that very personal name of the Lord's.

PC – Wow! Ruth looks like she fits all the categories of a Scout! Maybe she was the first Scout, even though she didn't know it!

Z – Yeah, she was 2900 years or so too early to be a Scout, but she really does fit the pattern.

PC – All of those wonderful characteristics that Ruth had, those are all characteristics that matter to us when we get into relationships that we care passionately about. They are all things that make a relationship special – they help to make the relationship personal.

Z – When Jesus was talking with His followers in today's reading, He was personal with them. And He was also LOYAL, TRUSTWORTHY, KIND, BRAVE, and REVERENT in the beginning of this discussion with His disciples.

PC – You're right, Zak. Jesus and His followers are celebrating the Passover when He has this discussion with them, telling them to be brave, and to not worry so much. He promises that He is only going to prepare a place for them, a place He will bring them to, a place that they already know the way to.

Z – But I thought that Thomas said that they DIDN'T know the way to the place where Jesus was going!

PC – You're right, Zak – that IS what Thomas said. But Jesus reminded them that, if they knew HIM, they would know His Father. Because of their personal relationship with Jesus, a relationship that they could trust because of all of those wonderful qualities that we've been talking about, qualities that Ruth had, that Scouts have, that people can have, they didn't need to worry – because of their personal relationship with Jesus, they didn't need to be troubled or afraid any more.

Z – And if we have a personal relationship with Jesus, then we don't need to worry either, right?

PC – Right! Because of our personal relationship with Jesus, who came to redeem us and save us, we can be calm and peaceful even when trouble hits. What Jesus asks us to do when we have accepted His gift of grace by faith, is to pass that good news on to others. They will believe us because of the Holy Spirit, and because we live the way that Ruth and Naomi did, the way that Scouts everywhere are supposed to live, the way that Christians are supposed to live.

Z – Because actions speak louder than words!

PC – You’re right, Zak! So let’s be glad that we have that relationship with Jesus, and let’s help others to have that relationship, too! Let’s live the way Ruth did, the way Jesus called us to live, the way Scouts are called to live, until Jesus returns in glory!

Z – Yes! And even so,

Together – come soon, Lord Jesus! Amen.

Ruth 1: 15-22

So Naomi said, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” 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. Where you die, I will die— there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!” When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them; and the women said, “Is this Naomi?” She said to them, “Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty; why call me Naomi when the LORD has dealt harshly with me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?” So Naomi returned together with Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came back with her from the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

John 14: 1-7

Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you know Me, you will know My Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him.”