

O Hungry Town of Bethlehem

Scripture Reading — Ruth 1:1-5

A man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. — Ruth 1:1

In Bethlehem, which means “house of bread,” cupboards were bare. So, like Abraham, who left the promised land to escape a famine (Gen. 12:10-20), Elimelek moved his family to another land. They migrated to Moab. But before long, Elimelek died, and then his two sons, who had married, died also—leaving Naomi and her Moabite daughters-in-law with no support.

What would the God of Elimelek—whose name means “My God is King”—do about this grief and hunger? In the future, Bethlehem of Judah would provide Israel with a good and faithful king, David. But in the time of the judges, when everyone did what was right in their own eyes, there was no king in Judah.

Still, God’s people had the Lord as their King, who had been providing them with everything, and he was faithful in blessing (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). But if Israel turned its back on him, God would also be faithful in punishment (Deuteronomy 28:15-24). That’s why Bethlehem was empty and Naomi was living far from home, now alone without a husband or sons to provide for her.

What would happen to Naomi? Who would help her? Remember the name of her husband: “My God is King”! In all things, God, who is faithful despite his people’s waywardness, “works for the good of those who love him” (see Romans 8:28).

Prayer

By your Spirit, Lord, fill the hearts we have emptied by doing what is right in our own eyes. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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