**Grandma Ruth (Ruth 4:13-17)**

 Because of Grandma Ruth’s faith, today we are accepted by God the Father through Jesus Christ. Greetings to you all on this first Sunday of Lent, in which historically the Armenian Church has spoken about the Fall of Adam and Eve into sin and their ensuing exile. However, instead of beginning our Lenten journey with that, today we are going to talk not about exile from the Garden of Eden, but about being accepted into the family of God. Yes, it is true that man is no longer in the Garden of Eden. However, one needs to remember that man himself now has hope to be accepted by God through the Savior. For this reason, today we are going to remember our spiritual grandmother, Ruth the Moabitess, and her example of faith as it pertains to our life. Because of Grandma Ruth’s faith, today we are accepted by God the Father through Jesus Christ. Let us speak, therefore, about her astonishing faith…

 The repentance of one pagan to God caused the whole history of salvation to move forwards; similarly, your decision to be devoted to the Lord and your resulting spiritual life also form a part of God’s great plan. Very often we do not realize how important this short spiritual witness called the book of Ruth is in history. Ruth was a Moabitess. Her people lived in what is today the country of Jordan, the southern part. The first remembrance of this kingdom was around 1270BC, and it disappeared as a kingdom just a few decades after King Nebuchadnezzar invaded the region around 586BC. Moabite women caused Israelite men to sin in Numbers ch. 25. The Moabite local ruler Balak hired Balaam the false prophet to curse Israel in Numbers 22. Even King Solomon sinned because of Moabite women in 1 Kings 11. They were so anti-God that the prophets Elisha, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel all prophesied the annihilation of Moab for its collective anti-theistic stance and its gross immorality.

 Knowing all the above, however, Ruth was not like her compatriots: First and foremost, we see that her character was different than the other young widow Orpah. Not only did she love her mother-in-law (an Israelitess) more than her own self, but she loved Naomi’s God as well. Ruth’s decision to follow Naomi had a great effect both on her life as well as on the whole of salvation history. Even though she could only enjoy the change that happened in her life after her decision to follow Naomi, and though she could only do good to her mother-in-law by being the conduit of a child as a blessing, yet she could not fathom just how important of a child Obed, her son would be. She could not see how great and even eternal the effects of her decision were in following the God of Israel. We know very well that as a result of her decision, she became the great-grandmother of King David, and also a fore-mother of Jesus Christ Himself!

 Though it doesn’t carry the same level of importance, but this is a little bit like the situation with Johann Ambrosius Bach, who, if he had not tried to have his 8th child, all of humanity would have been the poorer. Today we would not be enjoying the music of his 8th child, Johann Sebastian Bach.

 But what does this mean? Why is the witness of Ruth important for us? First, let’s think for a moment about her big decision to follow Naomi: Ruth left everything that was familiar to her. She left her language, her culture, her religion. She left her family, even though it was her right to return to them. Most importantly, by follow her God-fearing mother-in-law, she had decided to follow True God.

 In the same way, today, God is inviting us to follow Him wholeheartedly. Far be it from us to allow our past, our comfort or the things we are used to, to become walls that stop our maturation and advancement in Christ. Rather, God is inviting us to leave our dead past behind, to leave our previous life, to leave our limited images of God’s identity and His power. God is inviting us to widen our paradigms of worship. How? To widen them by giving way to new forms of worship without changing the message of the Gospel. To widen them by stretching our comfort zones and by giving the next generations of believers a chance to worship the Lord in their language. To widen our paradigms or horizons by creating warmer relationships with those around us with the intent of inviting them to church.

 God is not only inviting us to worship, but He is also showing us that today, we too have an effect through our faith-related decisions on the faith-lives of coming generations. This effect will be negative if we stay silent or uncertain about our own devotion to God. But if we are clear, expressive, and certain regarding our identity as followers of the True God, then those around us as well as our family members and relatives will be affected and benefitted by our stance. In one sentence: if we desire to see the blessings of God continue let us clearly express our devotion and loyalty to the Only True God and His Savior.

The repentance of one pagan to God caused the whole history of salvation to move forwards; similarly, your decision to be devoted to the Lord and your resulting spiritual life also form a part of God’s great plan. Because of Grandma Ruth’s faith, today we are accepted by God the Father through Jesus Christ.

Therefore: You do not know how much God is using you for His glory (now). Come and let us, me and you, bring forth our life of devotion to Christ even more. May our decision to follow to Lord be full of obedience like Ruth’s. May we do whatever God desires of us through His Word and Spirit. May we leave behind whatever we need to let go of - come and let us decide together to leave those things behind in the past.

Look at what one decision did (in history). Your decision, too, can cause so many blessings, if it is done for the Lord.

God Bless You All – Amen.