

### Two Lives, One Love

***“But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.””***

A young man walks into a photography shop with a framed picture of his girlfriend. He wants to make a copy of her picture, but he wanted a better quality picture than scanning it into his computer. To make a copy, the owner of the photo shop removes it from its frame and notices some writing on the back. It read, “I love you more and more each day. I love you forever. P.S. If we should break up, I want my picture back.”

Something doesn’t match. Loving forever and should we break up seem to contradict each other. Now the question is, who seems less committed to the relationship, the girlfriend who admits her love may not be forever, or the boyfriend who wants a copy of her picture just in case?

The truth is, there are passages in the Bible that talk about marriage, but they generally talk about what marriage is. Usually we turn to other passages in the Bible to find guidance on how to live in a marriage. For example, 1 Corinthians 13 is known as the love chapter, how love is patient, kind, keeps no record of wrongs and so on. That chapter actually is talking about how Christians, married not, should treat one another. Yet, it is not wrong to use a chapter like that at a wedding because love, Christian love, is the same whether expressed to a spouse or to the fellow member sitting in the pew on Sunday.

And the same is true with this reading from Ruth that you want for your wedding sermon. It isn’t about marriage; it is about the commitment a widowed daughter-in-law has for her widowed mother-in-law. Yet, shouldn’t such love and commitment be expressed in a marriage too? You bet. And that is why you chose this text. You don’t want a P.S. in your marriage as if there is a chance you will break up. No. You want a loving commitment to one another as Ruth has for her mother-in-law.

Let’s be honest. We have a hard time understanding Ruth. Her husband had died, but she is still in the prime of her life. She could have gone back home, hit the reset button, find a new husband, and started a new life. That makes sense. Even her mother-in-law told her to do that.

Ruth refused. And then we get these famous words of commitment: Where you go, I will go; where you live, that is where I will live. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. Where you die is where I will die and I will be buried where you are buried. And then she seals it with an oath: May God deal with me if anything but death separates us.

I ask you, whom did Ruth love most? It wasn’t Ruth. It was her mother-in-law. She was willing to give up everything, including her heritage, for her. Naomi had nothing to give Ruth in return, nothing but a rough life. Ruth made this commitment expecting absolutely nothing in return. That is love. It always puts the other person above itself.

That is the kind of love you want for each other. You don’t want to merely say you love each other forever. You want to love each other forever and you know what it takes: commitment. You want to go where the other goes even if it is to Green Bay. We will forgive you for that one. You will eagerly embrace the other’s family as your own. You want to be with each other through thick and thin and one day you want one tombstone with two names etched into it.

That is pretty easy to promise when you are getting married. But the broken marriages out there tell us that it may not be that easy to do later. That is why I entitled your wedding sermon, “Two Lives, One Love.” Does Ruth’s commitment sound familiar? I hope it does. This sounds like the commitment Jesus made to you. Jesus never stopped loving us even though we give him every reason to. This is the Jesus who asked God to forgive those who crucified him, the same Jesus who was crucified to die for your sins so you have the certainty of eternal life. This is the same Jesus who said he will be with you always to the

very end of the age, who is shepherding you even through the valley of the shadow of death. This is the same Jesus who said he has gone back into heaven to prepare a place for you there and he is coming back to take you there forever.

This is the love your Savior has for you. This is the love you want with no P.S. in case things don't work out. Christ and his love will elevate your love to new height. He will move you to forgive, endure, and bear with each, to share, to enjoy, and to live together all your days and not just some days. So let Jesus be the one love that binds your two lives together. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 6:25-34

***“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”***

***“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”***