

Courage
Rev. Ed Blonski
St. Matthew, Hawthorn Woods

But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.” Ruth 1:16

I didn’t want to go. I was afraid. What made me scared was the “newness” of it all. I knew only one person. What was expected of me was, for the most part, unknown. But I would go anyway.

One person defined courage as “being afraid but saddling up anyway.”

Even though I was scared, I had one thing that was helping me. I knew one person. I had a dear friend who was going with me. So, I wasn’t going to be totally alone. And, of course, God was going with me.

Because I recently had been studying the story of Ruth, the great-grandmother of King David, I was reminded of that particular aspect of her fear-filled journey.

She was a young widow that was about to embark on a journey to a place where she didn’t know anyone. She didn’t know what awaited her at Bethlehem. Her future was as uncertain as can be.

But she also had one person who was going with her. Her mother-in-law Naomi.

She was encouraged by her mother-in-law – herself widowed and recently buried her two sons – to stay. Naomi was going back home. But she encouraged her daughters-in-law to stay in their homeland. She told them to go home, find new husbands, and start a new life.

Ruth had grown to love Naomi so much that she was determined to go with her back to Bethlehem.

Ruth didn’t know what was expected of her there. Certainly, it would not be a comfortable life – two widows fending for themselves.

But at least Ruth would know one person. And, of course, God would also be with her.

Scared? Yes! But she was going to go anyway. And what awaiting her was an exciting future!

Our future as Christians and as a church is also somewhat unknown and somewhat scary. There was a time when just putting up a church building and starting a school was enough to fill a church with people.

But times – and people – change. This 20th century model of church ministry isn’t working as well as it did in the past.

It is time to go back to a 1st Century Church ministry model.

What this 1st Century model in the 21st Century will be is scary. It isn’t really known. But it can be so very exciting!

We must understand that we are not going to this new place alone. We have friends with us. Friends that we know and love.

We also have God with us. Never forget Jesus' promise, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

And we are going to a new place – to where the people are! They aren't going to come to us. We are going to them, to bring the Gospel of Jesus to them.

Here's a new and exciting way to go into the unknown. The goal here is to start a conversation with other people about Jesus and keep the conversation going.

You do can to this by:

Listening to them.

Asking them questions.

Seeking points of commonality.

Share the Gospel.

Invite them to worship and Bible study.

Encourage them in their own faith walk.

This is going to be scary. Talking to other people, face to face, is not easy to do! But you are not alone. God is always with you!