

A Reflection For Today

1st Monday of Lent • HopeForNiagara.org



By: Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow

Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow is a retired pastor and serves on the American Baptist Churches of New York State Board of Missions.

When Everything Seems Lost

(Texts: Ruth 1:15-17)

As I sit in my living room today, warm and cozy as the snow lightly falls outside my window, I contemplate this scripture text and it gives me hope...and courage. My son is addicted and homeless and I am trying to “let go and let God.” I think this text from Ruth is a good illustration of that.

Humankind has always had to figure out how to handle adversity. How do we rally when everything on earth we know and love is tragically stripped away? How do we go on, how do we move forward?



By the time my husband left our home both of my sons were addicted to drugs. A year and a half into the divorce proceedings I had to make a decision whether or not to sell the house. The house my kids grew up in, my *home*, the only house I'd ever owned. I had lived there a year and a half without my husband and knew I couldn't keep the place up by myself. My kids, by that time young men, could not be relied upon to help me in their addicted state. So I said “yes” in the spur of the moment because a decision needed to be made. Yes, sell the house, reduce everything down so I can move forward.

So, at 1 a.m. the following morning I woke up in a panic and thought, “What have I done?! I've never lived alone, never looked for an apartment, and never moved by myself. I had a house full of stuff - furniture and memories to sort through and let go. I remember getting on my knees at that moment and praying, “God, I have lost everything...” I had lost everything I had worked so hard for, all my hopes and dreams

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were shattered: the husband I thought would love me forever, and my children who would be happy, healthy and whole in body, mind, and soul. My whole family was gone. I prayed that God would take care of me, that God would see me through.

Naomi and her daughters-in-law have lost everything! Naomi lost her husband, then her sons. All she has left is two daughters-in-law and she bids them to go back to their homes and find good husbands. But God is full of surprises. Naomi's daughter-in-law Ruth refuses to return to her home; she "clings to" (Ruth 1:14). Naomi pledging her faithfulness and loyalty to Naomi and her God.

In those days if a woman didn't have a husband or sons to rely on she would have been destitute. Her only options were begging and prostitution. Ruth is God's gift to Naomi. The two women traveling together will face many physical and emotional challenges, but they won't have to face them alone. As they rely on God and one another, they persevere.

I had lost my husband and children, but I still had God. And through my faith in God I had an amazing Pastor who traveled with me through my devastation and heartache. My Pastor was able to help me see that God was with me every step of the way.

Today my life is good. I am remarried to a wonderful man, one of my son's got clean and is married. I have three beautiful grandsons and a daughter-in-law who is the daughter I never had. Although my youngest still struggles mightily with his addiction, I pray daily that one day he will lay it down and let God have his way, as I had to do so many years ago.

We have the advantage of seeing the rest of the story as we read through the book of Ruth and realize that Naomi and Ruth's journey together resulted in Ruth giving birth to the royal line of King David, and ultimately to the birth of Jesus. We get to see how God brought a blessing out of the suffering of these women. And so, we can never know how our own suffering may bear fruit in some future time. May God make it so.

¹Al-Anon Family Groups Literature, Purpose and Suggestions Pamphlet, p. 3

Image: Swanson, John August. Story of Ruth, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.
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