

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Dearly loved by God, especially you, Rhonda, Deanna, Cecil, and Tracy,

The text for our meditation is from St. John's 1st letter, chapter 3:1-2.

It was the text Ruth said was used at her husband Sigmund's funeral over 31 years ago.

But it is also the text that Ruth had chosen for you, as were the hymns that we are singing today.

So consider these words of our Lord's comfort through His Apostle, St. John.

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*As follows in Jesus' name:*

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. <sup>(NKJV)</sup>

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen.* (John 17:17)

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While Ruth chose this for her memorial service, it wasn't just a Scripture verse she chose for you.

It was a text that Ruth herself had found comfort in.

Among the various slips and scraps of papers with other sayings and Bible verses and hymns that Ruth had written on and kept around, she had not just written the reference,

but she had written it out and even altered it ever so slightly, writing,

**"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on [Ruth],  
that [she] should be called a child of God!"**

Here, 1 nonagenarian (that would be Ruth) was reflecting on what (according to tradition)

another nonagenarian (that'd be St. John) wrote over 1,900 years ago for the Church's comfort.

In pious humility, tempered by over 90 years of experience in this world and God's grace, they meditate on their heavenly Father's love,

and find their greatest joy in simply being a child of God by baptism and by faith.

But lest we are tempted to think of some romanticized idea about an ideal childhood

where Father and daughter dote on each other and life is simple and easy and utopian,

let's take a glimpse into Ruth's early childhood growing up on a North Dakota farm. ...

Think *Little House on the Prairie*: no electricity; hauling buckets of water; out houses for toilets in winter;

Baths in the kitchen; 1¢ candies (which were few and far between); paper dolls;

and teachers (like Ruth was for 3 years) starting the wood stove before the students got to class.

She noted that she grew up at the later end of the Great Depression, but for her, it was just life.

This kind of life wasn't easy, and many who grew up in it were, what we could call, "hardened" people.

They can be very serious all the time, with little time for light-heartedness and laughter,

but that wasn't Ruth.

In God's kindness, He gave to this child of His a kind and tender-hearted disposition,

with an innocent sense of humor.

And while she could never boast of great wealth, she was generous with what the Lord had given to her.

No doubt, her early experiences shaped the down-to-earth realism that took things in stride.

She was a patient soul. While getting frustrated to a certain degree, she wasn't prone to anger.

Today we would call her “resilient,” able to cope, in a healthy way, with stress and adversity.  
And what a blessing that would be for her throughout her life.

...

A year after her marriage to Sigmund, Ruth was made a child of God through her baptism into Christ.  
As the hymn said, She fled to the Rock of Ages to be covered by the water and the blood  
that flowed from His riven side.

She was confirmed a few days later giving clear confession to her Christian faith.

**“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on [Ruth],  
that [she] should be called a child of God!”**

A few years later, and in a 12-year span, the Lord blessed Ruth and Sigmund with 7 children.

Their house was not large, but it was a home, whether in N. Dakota, or in Colorado.

And the home, with so many mouths to feed, needed a garden.

Ruth appreciated her heavenly Father’s provisions through her ever-expanding gardens.

She would can and prepare the foods and keep them in the root cellar for the months ahead,  
but she also loved the beauty of a flower garden.

While a well-tended garden is a lot of work, for Ruth it was a place to stay grounded.

With 9 mouths and bodies to feed, clean, and clothe... and discipline to maintain...

and just general upkeep of the home and garden, there was a lot of work to be done.

But Ruth wasn’t alone in her work.

Not only were the children around, but so was her heavenly Father.

You’d be certain to see her sitting at her Lord’s feet on Sunday morning to receive His grace.

And she was happy to remain His child throughout the week as she took the hymns sung in church  
into the home, constantly humming or singing them while she worked.

And it’s evident that she reflected on them as you look at the various scraps of paper she had.

She had written hymn verses and Bible passages on them, to help her remember them and use them,  
even noting when the new hymnary didn’t have the same wording as her previous hymnal.

No doubt those hymns comforted her as two of her children took sick with Hodgkins disease.

How often did she go to her Father in prayer on their behalf?

How often did He give her peace through those hymns, seeped in Biblical language, imagery, & comfort?

Ultimately, Ruth would bury 3 of her 7 children and her husband.

Her parents and siblings would also precede her in death.

I suppose you should expect that when you live to 100 years, but that doesn’t make it easy.

Each is loss, an absence, a hurt of the soul.

And for the wise one, each death that precedes your own is a reminder of your own mortality  
as you plant that body into the ground to await the resurrection of all the dead.

It can help to keep you grounded as you realize that some day your own death will come.

For many in this world, death is a scary thing.

**“The world”**, as St. John calls those who are not God’s children,  
wants to ignore death, to avoid even thinking about it.

But that’s because **the world doesn’t know Him;**

the world doesn’t know Jesus Christ as the risen Lord and victor over death... as its Savior.

This isn’t to say that the world hasn’t heard of Jesus, or doesn’t know He was crucified 2,000 years ago.

**To know** Jesus is to believe that He died for you,  
that His crucifixion and death was the redemption price for your sins.

**To know Him** is to trust in Jesus' perfect life as the only righteousness that God the Father accepts  
on your behalf.

**To know** Jesus is to be looking forward to the day when He is revealed in all His glory  
and He will raise up all His children to life everlasting with Him in paradise.

As 1 nonagenarian wrote 1,900 years ago: **Beloved, now we are children of God;  
and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed,  
we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.**

Ruth appreciated these words.

While she was looking forward to her 100th birthday celebration today with you,  
she looked forward even more to her own heavenly rest.

Her N. Dakota down-to-earth realism motivated her to prepare this service for you. ...  
And to give you an idea of her preparations, she had more hymns selected than we had time for.  
*Chief of Sinners Though I Be... What a Friend We Have in Jesus... Abide with Me... Just as I Am...  
Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me... God Loves Me Dearly... Jesus Loves Me, especially stanza 3,  
"Jesus loves me! God's own Son Over sin the vict'ry won.  
When I die saved by His grace, I shall see Him face to face..."*  
And as she came across hymns that touched her heart (a few that we are singing today),  
she would write them on a scrap for herself to reflect on later.

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It's remarkable that Ruth lived in such good health through to her 99th year.

There were a number of hospital visits earlier this year, but in His grace, the Lord preserved her longer;  
while her body was frail, she was tough.

And it is remarkable that, in His grace, the Lord gave her such a sharp mind to the end.

She did not lose her sense of humor, nor her wit, nor her desire to hear Jesus' words to her,  
nor did she lose her ability to confess His love for her.

Whenever she was able, where did she want to be?

In the Lord's house... among His children... at His feet...  
hearing His grace and forgiveness... AND singing His praises.

And guess where she is right now?

In her Father's house... among His glorified children, at His feet,  
no longer receiving forgiveness (because she her body of sin and corruption is not put off),  
but humming and singing His eternal praises forever more.

While Ruth did not make it to her 100th birthday,

she noted to someone this past spring that her heart had been beating for 100 years.

And yet, for all her years, for all her experiences, for all God's gifts and graces,  
her greatest joy is summed up in these simple words:

**"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us,  
that we should be called children of God!"**

Thanks be to God!

In Jesus' name. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria*