

**Leader** Found in the Hebrew Scriptures, the book of Ruth is filled with love and fidelity, challenge and tragedy. It is a narrative of how God works in and through others in times when the world seems bleak and hope is lost. Naomi's husband and two sons have died. In the passage, Naomi is telling her widowed daughters-in-law to go home, start their lives again, and leave her to her plight.

**Reader** But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me." Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said,

"Do not press me to leave you  
or to turn back from following you!

Where you go, I will go;  
where you lodge, I will lodge;  
your people shall be my people,  
and your God my God.

Where you die, I will die—  
there will I be buried.

May the Lord do thus and so to me,  
and more as well,  
if even death parts me from you!"

When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said no more.

**Leader** In times of tragedy, it is easy to ask where God is within the darkness. Ruth and Naomi illuminate one of the most basic needs within tragedy: community.

Both women are recent widows bound together by their mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship. In their day, women relied entirely on their sons or husband for security and provision. While Ruth has every opportunity to abandon her mother-in-law, remarry and secure her own future, she does not. Ruth chooses to remain with Naomi, casting her lot in for vulnerability and poverty. Together, they persevere in the face of adversity. Their love for one another keeps them strong and gives them greater purpose against a seemingly desolate future.

Tragedy is an unfortunate reality within the world. Whether by pure chaos or human maleficence, we all either witness or experience this reality. How we approach it is what defines us as people. When faced with desolation, we ask “Where is God?” While all we want to do is escape, tragic moments are often times that call us to be most present. They are moments to ask, “Who is my brother or sister?”, “Who am I called to care for?”

Pray with me for grace in times of adversity,

**All** **God of all providence and peace, we find ourselves in a time of disaster. As we face this challenge, and ask, “Where are you Lord?”, open our eyes to those standing beside us.**

**Make us mindful of the needs of others and willing to ask for help with our own needs. Deepen the relationships of our community in vulnerability, trust and acceptance.**

**Most of all, let us be present in the moment, deeply aware of what light we can be for others in their darkness. Allow your grace to shine through us. Amen.**