

Ruth 1:1. 3-6, 14-16, 22.

Matthew 22: 34-40

“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first Commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself.” These are among the most remembered and quoted words of Jesus because, “On these two Commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also.”

A prophet is someone who understands, lives, and reflects the way forward for others to follow. Today we are given an example of how we too are called to be prophets, in the story of Ruth.

There is famine in Judah, so a man, Elimelech, takes his wife, Naomi, and two sons to live in the foreign country of Moab. Over the next 10 years Elimelech dies, whilst the two sons marry local girls, Orpah and Ruth. Then, later, the sons also die. Now there is famine in Moab, so Naomi decides to return to Judah where the people had relented of their past sins and God had provided them with a rich harvest. We now reach the crux of the story.

Orpah returns to her old way of life with her own people, and to worship their God. Ruth, on the other hand, will not leave her Mother-in-law. She knows where her loyalty and future lie and says these beautiful words, “Wherever you go, I will go, wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God, my God.

To me, this is the essence of living out the two commandments of Jesus. They contain a desire both to love God and, by establishing a covenant with Naomi, to love her neighbour. This is the pattern of love that Jesus lived and wants us to live also.