

Talk: Loyalty

The theme of loyalty has really got under the skin of our society. For example, we love to hear tales of loyalty about our pets, or our friends. It's inspired films and TV programmes. And loyalty has inspired generations of story and song writers. For example, can you remember who sang these words...

"The road is long, with many a winding turn

That lead us to where, who knows where?

But I'm strong, strong enough to carry him - yeah

He ain't heavy - he's my brother" by the Hollies

"When the night has come

And the land is dark

And the moon is the only light we'll see (pause)

No I won't

Be afraid,

No-ooo, I won't be afraid

Just as long as you stand,

Stand by me" by Ben E King

And then tonight, the theme of loyalty has revealed itself in the story of Ruth. But why is the story of Ruth's loyalty important to us?

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Firstly, because it reminds us that this is how we would like our friends to be towards us! We kind of hope, that our own personal qualities are attractive enough to inspire that sort of loyalty amongst our friends. Maybe that even inspires us to try and be a better person, someone who is worth someone else's loyalty.

Secondly, Ruth's loyalty is an example to us, of how **we should be** towards our own friends, even when it sometimes feels like they don't deserve it!

After all, Naomi wasn't all sweetness and light and happy!

She was hurt, disappointed, bitter, and probably angry.

But Ruth never gave up on her. And so, Ruth is moved to say to Naomi, "**Where you go, I will go.**" Ruth's love and loyalty for Naomi was able to overcome Naomi's bitterness and misery.

Finally, Ruth's loyalty is an incredibly beautiful image of the way that Jesus gave himself for everyone in the whole world. He's the God who comes to us in friendship, for no other reason than because he loves us, right to the end.

In Jesus, we see the perfect example of loyalty. He inspired loyalty amongst his friends when he was alive, and those qualities have literally inspired millions of people to follow him, these last two thousand years.

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And he showed his deep loyalty and love **to us**, by never giving up on us, and by taking on himself, the punishment and death that we deserved, when he was crucified on a cross, for us!

Jesus' invitation is open to you this evening – His invitation is to come and personally experience the kind of loyalty that took him to a cross on our behalf. When we accept His invitation, His promise is that He will NEVER leave us, or forsake us. Forsake is a bit of an old word – it simply means to leave, to abandon or desert, to give up on... When we choose to become a follower of Jesus, He himself makes a promise to us to NEVER leave, abandon or give up on us. That is loyal beyond loyal, and love beyond measure.