



**MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
AND  
**IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org) and [immanuelshirley.com](http://immanuelshirley.com)

July 13, 2025

Pastor David Ruddat

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Galatians 5:1, 13-25](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 25A

Second Lesson/ Sermon Text: [Ruth 1:1-19](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 10:25-37](#)

**UNDIVIDED ATTENTION**

**On a Neighbor in Need**

**WHAT DOES ADVERSITY REVEAL ABOUT YOU AND YOUR LORD?**

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

God's Grace, mercy and peace are yours from God our Father through our Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ.

*Direct us now, O gracious Lord, to hear aright your Holy Word.  
Assist your minister to preach, and let the Holy Spirit teach.  
Let eternal life be found by all who hear the Gospel sound. Amen.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Adversity brings out the best and the worst in all of us. That's true if you are playing sports. Adversity brings out the best and the worst in all of you. When I was in grade school, fresh in my 7<sup>th</sup> Grade at St. Peters in Collins, we had a chance to make it all the way to the championship, but there was this team standing in our way from this town up north, called Morrison Zion. We didn't make the championship that year. Morrison did. But when we played them, we played at our best. Sometimes when we were playing them, we play at our worst.

That's true in marriage, too, isn't it? Adversity brings out the best and the worst in us. They used to say that after seven years, you get that seven-year itch that seems to really start to come to head, that adversity really comes to head. But I read an article in [Psychology Today](#) that said it's no longer seven years. Now it's four years. Four years and there are troubles and strife and adversity and whatever difficulties that are going on in the marriage brings out the best and the worst.

I know it's true in my own marriage. Somewhere between year four and year seven, my wife and I had a miscarriage. We were both grieving but we made the mistake that we were grieving separately and we weren't doing this together. There was one particular day that I remember, Kelly doesn't remember it but I remember, where we were on that crazy cycle when you do one little thing to aggravate the other person and the other person would respond and it would escalate. Finally, I said "This has to stop." So whatever it was, we apologized to each other and we forgave each other. It was not our best day.

Then I think a year ago, when I was diagnosed with cancer and then I had to walk through having my prostate removed, my wife was my nurse, by my side, and that was the best in both of us—different story.

Adversity has a way of bringing out the best and the worst in us. As we look at Naomi and Ruth, we are going to see that. We are going to see that revealed to us as we are looking at the adversity that both Naomi and Ruth were struggling with. As we look at that, it's an encouragement for you to look at your own life and how you handle adversity. Does it bring out your best or your worst? And, when you are dealing with adversity, where is your Lord? Let's ask that question as well. What does that reveal about your Lord when you are dealing with adversity? So we'll look at Naomi and we'll look at Ruth, first of all, Naomi.

Naomi and her husband, Elimelek, which means "God is king" and is kind of fascinating because they were living during the time of the Judges. As you know, the time of the Judges was this circular pattern. God's people were supposed to live in that land. They were supposed to follow God's covenant law, but they would fall away and do their own selfish things. Then the Lord would send some sort of adversity into their lives, whether it was a nation around them, whether it was a famine or earthquake or something to wake everybody up, and then they would call out to the Lord for deliverance and the Lord would send a judge. The judge would come and rescue the people. Then there would be a time of peace. Then people would fall away, and there would be this cycle back and forth. It very well may be that this was the cycle of God's people turning away and God allowed a famine to happen in the land of Bethlehem for the clan of Ephrath.

Remember [Micah 5:2](#) that we read every Christmas? ***But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah...*** Ephrathah is the name of a clan of people that lived around Bethlehem. That's where Elimelek and Naomi were from. That's where King David would be from.

Anyway, there was a famine. Today, as you look in Bethlehem, Bethlehem gets 27" of precipitation a year—27 inches. Where Moab is, that gets between 6"-14" of precipitation a year. So the famine had to have been pretty bad if Moab is the place you want to go to. Moab is the home of the decedents of Lot. Do you remember that story? Lot and his two daughters in a cave; the two daughters are saying "There is no way we are going to have sons," so they sleep with their dad and they have sons. One

of those sons was Moab. So Ruth is a descendant of an incestuous relationship with Lot and his daughter. Moab made things difficult for the people of Israel as they were coming up out of Egypt, out of those 40 years of wilderness, trying to get into the Promised Land. They made things difficult. So it's not an ideal place for Elimelek and Naomi to live.

But then her husband dies. Her two sons, they married Moabite women. They married Orpah and Ruth, and then those sons also died. There is no social security, no Medicare/Medicaid. There is no government program that is going to help Naomi in her time of need. She doesn't have family and she is in a foreign land, but she hears word that the Lord had visited His people, so she is going to head back because she thinks there might be food there again. And her two daughters-in-law are coming with her.

But notice, as Naomi is talking with her daughters, there is a grief/bitterness and she is not at her best. We want to fast forward with Naomi. We want to fast forward to the end where you have Naomi holding her grandson on her lap and the ladies around her singing a song that Ruth is worth more to Naomi than seven sons. It's as if Naomi has her own child and we want to fast forward to that, but we need to stay here in the valley because this will reveal something about ourselves and it will also reveal something about our Lord.

Even in the midst of her grief and her bitterness, Naomi is thinking about what is best for her daughters. She is thinking about what is best for someone else. And she thinks of her daughters and says, "You have more things in your favor if you stay here, among your own people. You'll have a house to live in. You'll have people that will marry you." Naomi could not guarantee that those Israelites or Judah men or men of Ephrathah were going to find any of these ladies attractive and want to get married to them. She can't even guarantee that and in her worst case scenario is, "What if I find somebody, I have a child, and then that child grows up and you marry that child?" She can't even guarantee that. It's not going to work. "Stay. This is the best thing for you." She is thinking about them more than herself. Oftentimes when we are facing adversity we have this tendency to push everybody away and be isolated and to think only of ourselves. Even in the midst of this, Naomi is thinking of someone else.

What does that reveal about you? When you are facing difficult times, whether it's in your marriage or personal life, where have others been in that equation? As Paul wrote about in Galatians, we have this sinful nature that is very selfish and inward focused.

**What does adversity reveal about you?** That's the question for you. And if you are honest with yourself, you are going to say "Adversity reveals that I can oftentimes be very selfish, and I need a Savior."

Think of how Jesus viewed adversity. When He is in the garden, He is praying and He is stressed about what He is about to undergo, suffering and pain and death, and He prays

“Not my will, but yours be done.” [\(Luke 22:42\)](#) He does that for you and for me. That’s the kind of righteousness that God wants from us—an unselfishness that we have had displayed for us in Christ Jesus.

Now think of Him on the cross. The first words out of His mouth, **“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”** [\(Luke 23:34\)](#) And then, “Dear woman, here is your son. Son, here is your mother.” [\(John 19:25-27\)](#) Jesus did all those things. He was thinking about other people in the midst of His difficulty and pain, for you and for me.

That’s Naomi. Let’s look at Ruth.

It doesn’t explicitly say that Ruth was surrounded by God’s Word, but you can kind of see it in the details throughout the story. The way that Naomi uses the name of the Lord and she is not using it as an explanation point or an interrogative, she’s not saying “Oh my God,” no, she is using God’s name in the way that it is supposed to be used in blessing her daughters. “May the Lord bless you as you go back,” she says. But Naomi is a real human being and the words that are written are what she actually said, and a lot of times what she feels isn’t what the truth is, and what she is feeling is that they had a better situation at home, with their own family, and with their own gods. And how does Ruth respond?

Ruth is pitting a home that she knows she could go back to and people that are more like her with a foreign land that she has never been to, the people that not even her own mother-in-law can guarantee that they are going to be nice to her, but she is willing to take Option B. Why? It’s because of Naomi’s God. Ruth is very respectful to her mother-in-law. “Don’t ask me to go back. Don’t force me to break that commandment that you told me about—to honor your father and mother. Don’t ask me to go back because where you go, that’s where I’m going to go. Where you stay, I’m going to stay there. Your people are going to be my people.” Why? It’s because “Your God is going to be my God.” That’s a beautiful expression of faith.

Where does that come from? Sure, it could come from those words of Naomi, but knowing human nature, you don’t come up with words like Ruth said unless this is the lifestyle that they lived while they were there in Moab. Ruth saw the witness of her husband and her brother-in-law and her mother-in-law, when times were good and they talked about the Lord. And even when times were bad, they were talking about the Lord.

What does that teach you about adversity? What does that teach you about how you handle and conduct yourselves in the world around you, amongst your family and your friends? Don’t just wait for adversity to tell them about Jesus. But as opportunities arise, talk about Him, not just when you are facing adversity. We don’t often do that, but thankfully Jesus did that for us and for you.

Giving us His Word when we are ready for it or not, building us up in faith, whether we acknowledge what is going on or not, here is the Lord Jesus speaking through His Word, building us up in Christian faith so that when we do face adversity, we turn to Him and use His name as it is supposed to be used—to pray, praise and give thanks.

Can I circle back to Naomi for our closing thoughts? The Scriptures are revealing honestly what is going through Naomi's mind, and of course, we know the end of the story. Ruth finds a husband. Things go well. They have a child. Naomi is holding this child on her arms and she is pouring so much love into the child that people are saying that child was actually Naomi's. They are doing it in an affectionate way. Earlier she said, ***"It is much more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has reached out against me."*** That's how she felt. But was that true? No, because even in adversity, the Lord was watching over them.

We know the end of the story. We know how it ends. We know they get back and Ruth finds herself in the field of Boaz, who was a man of God, who was watching over his workers and even watching over those who are less fortunate. He takes on Ruth as his wife and they have a child, who is Obed, who is David's grandfather, so we know the end of the story. And knowing the end of the story helps us to see that the Lord was there even in the valleys. (See [Ruth 4](#) for the story.)

But when we are in the valleys, what does that reveal about our Lord? Sometimes what we feel about our Lord isn't the reality. When things are tough, when it is hard, it might seem like we would say the same things of Naomi. "The Lord's hand is against me." Don't look to your feelings to tell you how the Lord feels about you. Look to His revealed Word. And what do God and His revealed Word tell you? That He loved you so much that He sent His Son to suffer and die for you. ***Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?*** ([Romans 8:32](#)) How is He not also going to be there in the valleys, too?

So dear Christian, when times are tough, don't look to your feelings to tell you how God feels about you. Look to His Word, where He tells you He loves you, where He tells you He suffered and died for you, where He tells you your sins are forgiven, where He tells you He is watching you every step of the way. Jesus said, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." ([Matthew 28:20](#))

So as we've looked at adversity for Naomi and Ruth and looking at ourselves, we also see our Lord revealed for us and working for our best interests. Amen.

***And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*** ([Philippians 4:7](#)) Amen.