

## Bible Month

Dear Friends,

An Irish blessing says:

May the road rise up to meet you.  
May the wind be always at your back.  
May the sun shine warm upon your face;  
The rains fall soft upon your fields  
And until we meet again  
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.

I end each of my letters with the words "God bless you". But with the terrible suffering that the Coronavirus has brought, many are not feeling blessed at all, or at least not in the way hoped for in that prayer. They feel as though the wind is against them; the sun is burning their face; the rains are devastating their crops; and far from being held safely in God's palm, they feel as though God's hand has been raised against them. Does the Bible recognise that there will be days like these, including days when we doubt God? Yes. Definitely yes. For example, take the book of Ruth.

June in the Methodist Church is Bible Month. During this month, we are invited to take a close look at one book in the Bible. The choice this year is Ruth. So, for the next little while, I will focus my letters on this story. If you want to go a bit deeper the Methodist Church has produced a magazine "Thirty Days with Ruth". Get in touch with me if you would like a digital copy. If you would prefer a physical copy that can be ordered from the leaders of worship and preachers website: [www.preachweb.org/biblemonth](http://www.preachweb.org/biblemonth) There are also a couple of Bible Month videos about Ruth. I found them by going to YouTube and searching for "Rachel Starr Book of Ruth". Rachel is one of the tutors responsible for the training of Methodist ministers.

Ruth is one of only two books named after a woman in the Protestant Bible, the other is Esther. There are nearly forty named after men. It is sad and problematic that the Bible doesn't give voice to more women or share more of their stories. We can at least give time to the stories that it does tell.

Ruth was selected for us to look at many months ago. Then we had no idea that by the time we came to study it, the world would be such a changed place. There could not, however, have been a better choice. It's about people who struggle to survive in a world which often seems hostile, where they swing between life and death, harvest and famine, fullness and emptiness, hope and despair, between the sweet and bitter experiences of life.

It will soon be time to go to Bethlehem for the start of the story. But before we can do that, we need to look at a bit of background. We will do that next time.

God bless you,

Tony