

## **SENSING HOPE**

February 17, 2021 - March 17, 2021

Lutheran World Relief Series

March 17, 2021  
Tasting Hope  
Session 5

■ Touching Hope:	February 17, 2021	Preached February 21, 2021	■
■ Hearing Hope:	February 24, 2021	Preached February 28, 2021	■
■ Seeing Hope:	March 3, 2021	Preached March 7, 2021	■
■ Smelling Hope:	March 10, 2021	Preached March 14, 2021	■
■ Tasting Hope:	March 17, 2021	Preached March 21, 2021	■

TASTING HOPE: Bringing safety and refuge to refugees in Syria  
Ruth | Ruth and Naomi

How your love provides safety for refugees

Fatime, a widow and mother, packed her belongings and took her family to join thousands of neighbors fleeing Syria's civil war, setting out on a brutal 430-mile journey to a refugee camp in Lebanon.

When they arrived, they instantly realized how harsh life was going to be. Disease, sickness, hunger, death and a tent-like dwelling were what they faced in this foreign land. Winter is hardest for refugees like Fatime and her daughters, and it's especially brutal for families with young children and newborns. Nearly half of all refugees are children and infants. During the long cold winters, food is harder to come by, and freezing winds whip through the old vinyl billboards and tattered canvas Fatime had used to construct two tiny rooms on a concrete slab. Water pours through the roof like a sieve as the family huddles together in a shivering sleep.

Another refugee, Amar Hamwi, remembers the bombs, too. "I saw people dying in front of me," he said. "We finally left." A reaction to medicine as a child paralyzed his right leg, but it did not hinder the family's journey nearly 200 miles from Idlib, Syria, to Riyaq. He worked as a driver in Syria and was fortunate enough to find a job upholstering furniture once he, his wife and their five children found a place to rent. As Lebanon's economy

faltered, so did the demand for new furniture. Hamwi lost his job, and the family has fallen six months behind on rent for their flat above a filling station on Riyaq's busy main road. "Even people with two working legs aren't working," he said. The family's sons had jobs in a curtain shop, but coronavirus lockdowns put them out of work, leaving the family without income. "I don't know what I'll do," Hamwi said. "I'm very worried. I just want to go home."

## TASTE

Take a few moments to think about your favorite meal.

Where did you eat it? Who was with you?

What made it special – was it the food itself, or was it also about the experience of fellowship, the feeling of blessing or the hands that prepared it

## DISCUSS

1. What's the longest walk you've taken?
2. What challenges did you face?
3. Think about refugees who take only what's on their back and walk for days or weeks searching for safety and peace.
4. How has food been a way for you to experience God's hope?
5. How has your congregation used food to meet the needs of your community and share hope?

## BIBLE STUDY Ruth 1

What does hope taste like?

Does it taste like bread and wine, a meal shared with family at the dining room table, the first sip of morning coffee, a piece of chocolate?

In today's lesson from Ruth we learn that hope looks like walking towards a country in search of food and being in community with others. The book of Ruth begins with a famine. In the first chapter alone we read about both hunger and death, but also the commitment between Ruth and Naomi, mother and daughter-in-law. Ruth travels loyally with Naomi, and during this journey she is referred to as Ruth the Moabite, emphasizing her foreignness.

As we move closer to Holy Week and Easter, our congregations are still affected by the ongoing pandemic. Many have lost friends and family to the pandemic, as well as the loss of relationships in light of our current political

realities. Many in our country are famished — emotionally, spiritually and physically. Reading the first chapter of Ruth we begin with famine but end with a harvest; we move from emptiness to fullness. How can we recognize that same movement in our congregations and acknowledge the depth of emotions experienced.

Chapter 1 begins with a famine and ends during the barley harvest.

1. Where in your life have you experienced emptiness?
2. Where have you experienced fullness?
3. What was the journey like between the two?
4. Ruth displays remarkable loyalty to Naomi.
  1. Reflect on your relationships. Who has been loyal to you and where have you shown loyalty? Give thanks to God for faithful friends.
5. Who in your community is experiencing hunger?
6. How can your congregation support them?

### PRAY

God of goodness and grace, we come to you hungry for your presence. We desire to know you more, and to feel your love. We give thanks for friendships that sustain us and accompany us through life. Teach us to be friends who offer time, food and compassion. Show us how to be people who walk with others towards safety, healing and hope. Teach us to extend our tables to welcome all to feast on your Word. We pray all this in the name of Jesus, the One we long for in this season of hope.

LWR - Lutheran World Relief

At Lutheran World Relief, we envision a future where all people, in every corner of the world can live full, dignified lives.

Founded by Lutherans in the United States at the end of World War II, grounded in Lutheran theology and building on decades of experience, Lutheran World Relief tackles global poverty by helping people adapt to the challenges that threaten their livelihoods and well-being. We work with people based on need, regardless of race, religion or nationality and we do not evangelize. We provide aid in emergencies and help families restore their lives. We partner with communities to build and grow rural economies. We break the cycle of poverty, so families and communities can thrive. Our goal is to help people build self-sufficiency and create new community-owned approaches to problem-solving that will last long after our projects end.