

## ***A Eulogy for Ruby Humphries Talley***

Deuteronomy 6.4-9, John 14 & 11

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

I cannot tell you that I really knew Ruby Talley. I had visited with her, but by the time of those visits, she was not the Ruby that you knew. But in getting to know her through the insights and memories of others, I thought of this passage of scripture which has been central to the people of God for more than two thousand years.

Harriet Morris, one of our charter members and a long-time friend of Ruby's, who shared Sunday School with Ruby when they were young mothers, told me of Ruby's caring way – of her kind heart. Ruby and another church friend were to get together one morning, but the friend was not feeling well. They ended up in the hospital, Ruby standing by her side through an emergency appendectomy and recovery. "This is who Ruby was," Harriet said. And I thought of those words: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart...*

Ruby was faithful to her church, raising her children in the nurture and education of the Christian faith. And I thought of those words: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your soul...*

Ruby lived a long, faithful productive life. Giving herself to her studies, to her family, to her faith. And I thought of those words: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your strength...*

And when Jesus quoted these familiar words to his disciples he added: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your mind...* And I thought of Ruby, the Valedictorian of Gardner Webb College, and of education, which was obviously so important to her life.

I did not really know Ruby. But you did. You knew her heart, because you were touched by it. You knew her soul, because you were inspired by it.

You knew her strength, because you were supported by it. And you knew her mind, because you were shaped by it.

Do not forget her. For as she lives in your memories and as her influence lives in your own lives, she will continue to live among us. Loving God... through your hearts, souls, minds, and in your strength.

And because of her faith, we celebrate today our belief that Ruby Talley lives, not only through us, but also in the very heart of God. For we share Ruby's hope in the words of the Christ:

*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?*

Jesus has shown the way to that place. And for those who believe in him, he becomes the very way, itself.

*I am the way, the truth, and the life...*

For Jesus said to Martha, the sister of the raised Lazarus:

*I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.*

Jesus asked Martha, as I believe he asks all who would follow: *Do you believe this?*

We celebrate today, even in our grief, that Ruby knew the comfort and grace that comes to all who can answer with Martha, *Yes Lord I believe...*

For the life of Ruby Talley, who lived and believed – and even for her death – today we say, "Thanks be to God!" Amen.