Scripture Reading: Ruth 1:1-22
Sermon Title: You Got a Friend in Me: Ruth & Naomi

Allowing God to have more of us so that we can experience more of Him by allowing Him to shape our relationships.

Their circumstance:
In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. [2] The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. [3] Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. [4] They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, [5] both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. [6] When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there.
Ruth 1:1-6

A word of caution from their circumstance—be careful about addressing the symptoms of our issues, not the sources.

"'But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, [15] and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, [16] then I will do this to you: I will bring on you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and sap your strength. **You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it.** [26] **When I cut off your supply of bread**, ten women will be able to bake your bread in one oven, and they will dole out the bread by weight. You will eat, but you will not be satisfied.
Leviticus 26:14-16, 26

Resist superficial living.

A word of caution from their circumstance—be careful about looking for blessing apart from God's provision.

Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, **died**, and she was left with her two sons. [4] They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, [5] both Mahlon and Kilion also **died**, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.
Ruth 1:3-5

There is a way that **seems right to a man**, but its end is the way to death.
Proverbs 14:12

Resist the pull towards pride.

After they had lived there **about ten years**,
Ruth 1:4b

Resist the resignation.

It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has turned against me!"
Ruth 1:44

When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?" [20] "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. [21] **I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty.** Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."
Ruth 1:19-21

Resist letting bitterness blind or rob you.

"When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, [14] i**f my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways**, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.
2 Chronicles 7:13-14

Do we have the humility & imagination to wonder if The Lord's hand against us is because The Lord's heart is for us?

After they had lived there about ten years, [5] both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. [6] When **Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them**, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there.
Ruth 1:4-6

So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem **as the barley harvest was beginning**.
Ruth 1:22

A word of hope from their circumstance—God is working before we are aware of it, & even when we aren't.

Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, **Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,** Obed the father of Jesse, [6] and Jesse the father of King David.
Matthew 1:5-6

God's plans stretch further than our eyes can see & are better than our hearts can imagine.

*Their **friendship**:*

With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. [8] Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. [9] May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud [10] and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people." [11] But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? [12] Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— [13] would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has turned against me!" [14] At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, **but** Ruth clung to her.
Ruth 1:7-14

Friendships always come with hard decisions.

"Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."[16] But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. [17] Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." [18] When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.
Ruth 1:15-18

The foundation of healthy friendship is sincerity not utility—connection not networking—mutual benefit not one-sided blessing.

When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.
v18

"**I will do whatever you say**," Ruth answered. [6] So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.
Ruth 3:5-6

Friends let their friends care for them.

Unlikely friendships can produce unexpected outcomes.

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. [14] The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! [15] He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. **For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons**, has given him birth."
Ruth 4:13-15

*The gospel according to **Ruth**:*
So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. **14** The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the Lord, **who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer.** May he become famous throughout Israel! **15** He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth."
Ruth 4:13-15

"Return home, my daughters. **Why would you come with me?** Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? **12** Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— **13** would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them?
Ruth 1:11-13

The Word became flesh and **made his dwelling among us**. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.
John 1:14

Ruth's courage to go willingly into difficult circumstances for the sake of love, reminds us of Jesus' act of leaving heaven to do the same for humanity.

When Naomi realized that **Ruth was determined** to go with her, she stopped urging her.
Ruth 1:18

Find & fight for healthy friendships, starting with Jesus.

"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."
Hebrews 13:5

Do we have the humility & conviction to receive Jesus' promise to never leave or forsake us?