

From Brokenness to Redemption: Ruth 1:1-5

Text: Ruth 1:1-5 "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband..."

Introduction:

- **Ruth is not a well-crafted piece of fiction.**
- **It is a real piece of Israel's history.**
- **It is significant because so much personally, nationally, and theologically hinges on the way these events unfolded:**
 - **It opens with a decision to uproot a family: 1:1** "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab..."
 - **By the end of the story, a broken and hurting woman experienced God's grace in unpredictable ways: Ruth 4:14-22** "And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age...and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David..."
- **How does Naomi's life take such a remarkable turn?**

Scene 1: Brokenness and Bitterness: 1:1-21

- **Our story opens with a decision to uproot a family: 1:1** "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab..."
- **That decision culminated in unforeseen compromises and personal heartache: 1:2-5** "And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab...and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion

died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband..."

- **This heartache turned into bitterness and disillusionment: 1:12-15; 20-21** "Turn again, my daughters, go your way...it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me...Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law...Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty..."
 - She lived in a chaotic time
 - Her husband uprooted their family
 - Her husband and two sons died.
 - Her sons married unbelievers.
 - She was going back with nothing.

Scene 2: Glimmers of Grace: 1:22-2:23

- **Glimmer 1: She heard what God was doing back home: 1:6** "She had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.
- **Glimmer 2: Despite her bitterness, Ruth would not abandon her: 1:16** "And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God..."
- **Glimmer 3: The timing of their return was not an incidental detail: 1:22-2:1** "So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her...and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.
- **Glimmer 4: A man named Boaz was introduced into the story: 2:1** "And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz..."
 - Boaz had an interesting background not referenced in this book: **Matthew 1:5** "And Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab..."
 - His mother was Rahab the woman spared in Jericho for harboring the spies.
- **Glimmer 5: His field just happened to be the first place she went to glean: 2:3** "And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.
- **Glimmer 6: Boaz extended grace and protection to Ruth: 2:8-9** "Then said Boaz unto Ruth...Go not to glean in another field...have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou

art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn..."

- **Glimmer 7: Naomi recognized God's hands in these details:**
2:20 "And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.
 - This seems to be the first time Naomi recognizes that it is possible her circumstances could be turning.
 - It is the first time she sees that God has not completely abandoned her.
 - God was working even while Naomi was shaken and doubting.

Scene 3: Decisive Action and Providence: 3:1-4:12

- **Decision 1: Ruth had to choose to leave her homeland: 1:16**
"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God..."
- **Decision 2: She had to work diligently to survive and support herself and Naomi: 2:11-12** "It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust..."
- **Decision 3: Naomi had to guide Ruth in their customs: 3:1-2**
"Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast?"
- **Decision 4: Ruth had to be willing to follow Naomi's instructions: 3:5-6** "And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do. And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her..."
- **Decision 5: Boaz had to navigate a challenging situation with a near of kin: 3:10-13** "Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning...now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman. And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. Tarry this night, and it shall

be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth..."

- **Decision 6: His near of kin chose not to do the part of kinsman redeemer: 4:6** "And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it..."
- **Decision 7: Boaz took Ruth to be his wife: 4:13** "So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife..."

Scene 4: Redeemed and Restored: 4:13-22

- **She experienced the death of a husband, but now God has made her a mother: 4:13** "The LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son..."
- **She experienced the death of a husband and two sons, but God did not abandon her: 4:14-15** "And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel."
- **She experienced deep pain , bitterness, and disillusionment, but God restored vibrancy and joy: 4:15** "And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age:"
- **She felt abandoned, but God gave her a loving daughter-in-law who cared for her in her brokenness: 4:15** "for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him..."
- **God's merciful intervention played an inescapable part in her ultimate redemption: 4:17** "They called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David..."

Six Wonderful Lessons:

- **Lesson 1: God worked with imperfect people in painful circumstances to accomplish His good purposes:**
 - Always strive to do what is right.
 - Never presume against God's grace.
 - Take comfort in His power to work despite our limitations.
- **Lesson 2: Their perception of their circumstances fell short of the full picture:**
 - Each moment is a piece in a puzzle not the whole.
 - Each season is a scene in the story, not the whole.
- **Lesson 3: God was mercifully working in the background long before they could see the resolution to their problems.**
 - Resolutions generally come during the greatest height of tension.

- The details that work together to accomplish that resolution are in motion in the background long before the resolution is realized.
- **Lesson 4: He worked meticulously in critical moments to bring these purposes to pass.**
 - **Proverbs 20:24** "Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?"
 - **Ecclesiastes 3:11** "He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end..."
- **Lesson 5: He has not changed and the way He works in peoples' lives is still consistent**
 - **Psalms 19:7** "The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple..."
 - **Hebrews 12:1-2** "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus..."
- **He restored her life in two senses:**
 - **In this present life: Psalm 40:1-3** "I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God..."
 - **In eternity: Isaiah 61:1-3** "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound...to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness..."

Applying the Passage:

- **To the non-Christian:**
 - Your life is not a meaningless random existence.
 - Whether you have the eyes to see or not, God is working in your life to draw you to Himself.
 - Your presence today hearing this sermon is a perfect example of that truth.
 - God worked in history over thousands of years through numerous tests to bring Christ into the world, to go to the cross for your sins, and to conquer death.

- He offers the free gift of eternal life to you.
- What is keeping you from turning to Christ and placing your faith in His finished work?
- **To the believer:**
 - If we are weary and hurt, this sermon is for us.
 - God loves us, has never abandoned us, and wants us to see what He is doing just like He did in Naomi's life.
 - His ways are merciful, and He is working in our lives to accomplish good.
 - We may not be able to see it now, but one day we will.

We must choose to walk by faith:

- **Hebrews 11:6** "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him..."
- **James 1:3-6** "The trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering..."
- **1 Peter 1:7** "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ..."
- **2 Corinthians 4:17-18** "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal..."