

Ruth 1:1-7

Announcements:

- Thank you to Scott Wall (two weeks ago - “know your choices” (apologetics)) - **Feb 22nd**
- Crazy ice storm - (rare occurrence to cancel in-person church) Show of hands? Cold again...
- Baby dedication (9:45am service) - Jarrod and Sarah (Valerie Edwards (2 months old))

Please open to the **Book of Ruth, Chapter 1** (Need a Bible? Raise hands / backs of chairs...)

- First Sunday - **A good Sunday to come!** (Loyal Love)
- **Ruth** is an amazing book of **redemption in the midst of dark times** (Judges (and us!))
- **Megillah (Megillot)** - **5 scrolls on feasts/festivals**. Includes the only two female books:
 - **Book of Esther** - story of a Jew in Gentile lands (Purim)
 - **Book of Ruth** - story of a Gentile in Jewish lands
 - Shavuot = **Feast of Weeks / Torah / Covenant / First Fruits** (wheat)
 - Pentecost = **50 days = 3,000 Gentiles / New Covenant** (Prophetic!?)
- Also, Canonization typology? - creation, redemption, worship, walk, obedience, victory, failure, **redemption (8th book)**, and then ultimately God's kingdom... (intriguing!)

This beautiful love story of redemption actually opens with disaster...

We've all taken wrong turns - somehow when we first moved here - got on opposing traffic

- Missing an exit. GPS detour gravel road tractor doing 7 MPH...
- Famous last words “I know a faster way.” Taking a “not-so-short-cut.”
- Some wrong turns in life cost more than just gas and time...

Message Title: “Destructive Detours”

- A Wrong Turn (verses 1-2)
- A Dead End (verses 3-5)
- The Road Home (verses 6-7)

Detours aren't always sinful. Sometimes God leads or moves us unexpectedly (leave room for that)

- And, going and coming are normal (school, work, etc)
- Today's opening verses **highlight something abnormal:** sinful; disobedience, weak in faith.
- But also, how **God's grace can meet us** even in the midst of our destructive detours and pull us out of that miry clay...

Shall we dig in...?

A Wrong Turn (verses 1-2)

PRAY

V. 1 - It came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled (judged)

- This is where we get some context and timing... Judges was a 400 year time period of repeated cycles: sin, oppression, crying out, deliverance (Gideon, Samson, Deborah)

- Judges 21:25 - "In those days there was no king in Israel; **everyone did what was right in his own eyes...**" (not just political/economic instability, but **covenant/moral instability**) - **not easy!**
- Doing reverse engineering math from David's reign: **between Gideon & Jair (Judges 8-10)**

Okay, so now that we have the **backdrop** and **timing**...

V. 1 - [there was] a certain man of **Bethlehem, Judah**

- **A man ('ish)** - text emphasizes his role as **head of household**; his decision affects everyone.
- This so far nameless man was a man of a particular area of the **Promised Land**:
- **Bethlehem** (beit lechem) = "house of bread/food" (provision)
- **Judah** (yehuda) = "celebrated, praised; **praise YHWH**" (land allotted to the **tribe of Judah**)
- Makes it clear this is the **Bethlehem in Judah** rather than the **Bethlehem of Galilee** (**map!**)
 - An interesting discussion on which location is Jesus' birth?
 - The northern **Bethlehem of Galilee** is closer to Nazareth (Joshua 19:15 - Land of Zebulun). Interesting, from a proximity standpoint, but **never mentioned in NT** verses...
 - However, both Matthew 2:1 & Luke 2:4 make it clear it is **Bethlehem of Judea**, the birthplace/city of David, and we get further clarity in this in our immediate text...
- V. 2 - [he and his family were] **Ephrathites** of Bethlehem, Judah.
- **Ephrathites** (eprati) = "descendants of Ephraim or **inhabitants of Bethlehem**" - ("**Fruitfulness**")
 - **Ephrathah** is essentially another name for Bethlehem. (Istanbul/Constantinople)
- **More importantly** - **Bethlehem Ephrathah** is the birthplace of two important people:
 - 1 Sam 17:12 - "Now **David** was the **son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah**, whose name was Jesse..."
 - Micah 5:2 - "But you, **Bethlehem Ephrathah**, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me **the One to be Ruler in Israel**, whose **goings forth are from old, from everlasting.**"
- So we know clearly who the family is and clearly where they are from: **Bethlehem of Judah**

And, now we get **their names**...

V. 2 - The name of the man was **Elimelech**

- **Elimelech** (eli-melek) = "my God is king"

V. 2 - The name of his wife was **Naomi**

- **Naomi** (na' omi) = "delightful, lovely, or pleasant one"

V. 2 - And... his two sons (which we will talk about in the next section - interesting prophetic names)

Taking what we've learned so far, **in the names of everything** (and names matter in the Bible):

- **God is my King...**
- **With his pleasant delightful bride...**
- **Living in the fruitful land of provision and praise....**

Why would you ever leave any of that? = **Paradise!** (Heavenly **Garden of Eden** language!!)

Well, **a test** came long... (you know we will be tested at times?)

V. 2 - There was **a famine in the land** - Doesn't always mean judgment. God may even use...

- **Irony**: A lack of bread in the "**house of bread.**" = **Something has gone terribly wrong...**
- **Disobedience** during the period of Judges - **ungodliness and idolatry** (**Duet 11 & 28 / Lev 26**)
- **Abraham fled to Egypt** during **a famine** in Genesis 12... (Sarai: deception/consequence)
- **Abraham's son Isaac** would be tested in this same way... (Gen 26) (almost disobeyed...)

- And then in **Genesis 42** there was **a famine** bad enough to lead *Joseph's brothers to Egypt*.
- The point: **God is sovereign and sends famine for His purposes** to *judge or test* His people.

The lesson for us: *When things get really hard (testing), do you give up? Walk away? Press on/in?*

- I love looking to **Christ our Lord** as our example...
- **Satan, temptation, wilderness test:** *Satisfy earthly hunger or please heavenly father?*
- *Matthew 4:4 - "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"*
- No matter how hard it gets... **safest place is in the will of God** (for: you, family, church)

It becomes clear that **Elimelech** operated more in **fear than faith** in what happens next...

V. 2 - He and his wife and his two sons, **went to dwell in the country (fields/territory) of Moab**

- **TWO MAPS! (northern route first and most likely)** **Either way:** steps in the wrong direction.
- **Dwell = sojourn (gur)** - A **temporary word**; *not permanent relocation (not intended at least)*
- *Jump ship and ride it out* for a couple months. *Whether the storm (can't blame him as a father)*
- **Warning:** this is often how **Destructive Detours** begin. *"Just for now... until things improve..."*
 - Financial loans, substance use, relationship choices, viewing movies...
 - Detach from church, quit praying, isolate for counsel... (*Demas (2 Timothy 4:10)*)

*****Be careful that seemingly practical decisions don't lead to spiritual drift*****

V. 2 - They went to the country (fields/territory) of Moab **and remained there. Ruh Roh!**

- This was *enemy territory* and God's people **knew they were not to dwell** there (*at this time*)
- The **Moabite** nation has an interesting background...
- Lineage began in *a shameful act (Genesis 19)* Incest with *daughters/Lot (Moab & Ammon)*
- Warnings of *danger/seduction (Numbers 22-25 & Rev 2)* (**Balak/Balaam = idolatry/harlotry**)
- People of **"Chemosh"** (**Numbers 21, Judges 11, Jeremiah 48**) - *Supreme national deity:* labeled in the Bible as **"the abomination of Moab."** included gross rituals, **child sacrifice**.
 - **Big compromises** in *1 Kings 11:7* - **Solomon** would encourage **Chemosh & Molech**
 - Later **abolished by King Josiah** of Judah. *1 Kings 23:13-14. NIV - "[King Josiah] desecrated the high places [pagan places of worship]... the ones Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the vile goddess of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the vile god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the people of Ammon. Josiah smashed their sacred stones and cut down the poles..."*
- It's clear *God is not very pleased* with the *ancient Moabite people's ways*. In fact, *the opposite...*
- *Isaiah 16:6, CSB - "We have heard of Moab's pride—how very proud he is—his haughtiness, his pride, his arrogance, and his empty boasting."* - God hates (*Prov 6*); opposes **Proud** (*Prov 3*)
- *Psalms 60:8 - "Moab is My washpot"* - A vessel *used for washing dirty feet*. *Not loving like when Jesus washed feet*, but **a term of contempt**. Some go as far as **a toilet (a stretch)**. **Humbled.**

God's picture of Moab is now clear to us... *not a place to hangout (what's your Moab? Ask Him...)*

- **The problem in our text:** *Not just visiting*, but **remaining, dwelling, existing (haya)** there...

Warning lights going off! *This is an issue in the Bible...*

- **Psalms 1** = blessed is the man who *does not walk/ungodly; stand/sinners... sit/scornful... BUT*

- Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah - sojourned, pitched his tent near, then sitting at the gate...

Do you give up on God when times get tough? That's the test. One prophet passed:

- Habakkuk 3:17-18 - "Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Habakkuk shows us how to rightly respond to **famine** (trials); **Elimilech** does not...

- **Language Summary:**
- God is my King... With his pleasant bride... living in the fruitful land of provision & praise...
- Acts like God is **NOT** his king, causing his wife to be BITTER (v. 20); by leaving the fruitful land of bread & praise to go down to the dirty wash bowl (toilet).
- **Ever done that? God brought you back!? Are you there now? Listen up...**
- The **problem is not the lack of bread**; it's **a lack of trust//faith/obedience...**

And now we see the consequences of Moab... (stay out of Moab, friends!)

A Dead End (verses 3-5)

The irony of fleeing to seek life, but finding death...

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

V. 3 - Naomi's husband, **Elimelech, died**

- This must have been devastating for everyone... (such is the nature of sin)
- James 1:14-15 - "Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." (Elimilech's life is a picture of this verse)

V. 3 - And she (and her two sons) **[were] left**

- **Keyword Alert:** Sha'ar = "to be left over" or "left behind." - The wake of destruction...
 - Life was not easier... The grass was not greener on the other side...
 - The world's washpot is deceiving. Come.. partake... experience... **Whack!**
 - You also see the snowball effects of compromising your faith...

V. 4 - Then [the two sons] **took wives of the women of Moab** (Ruh Roh! Double Ruh Roh!)

- The verb suggests forceful initiative by these sons. (**Na'sa**) "lifted up" for themselves...
 - I.E. - **Samson** "saw a woman" in Timnah and said "Get her for me..." (Judges 14)
- It's not just taking wives that's the issue, but the kind or classification of wives is called out:
- These were **women of Moab** - **Moabites** (this is a big deal to God as mentioned earlier...)
- Deuteronomy 23:3, CSB - "**No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the Lord's assembly; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, may ever enter the Lord's assembly.**"
 - **Then, how come Ruth?**
 - (1) Only males (Talmud/Rabbis)...
 - (2) 10th generation... (Ruth close (7-12 depending on breakdown), but deep study study shows intensified restriction, not specific time to fulfill)

- (3) **Genuine conversion**... (**makes the most sense** given verses 16-17 next week). And satisfies the following warning...
- Deut. 7:3-4, NIV - "**Do not intermarry with them**. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for **they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods**, and the Lord's anger will burn against you..."
- **Ezra 9** - *plucked out his own beard...* | **Nehemiah 13** - *pulled out their hair...* (new ministry?)
- The issues were clearly **syncretism & apostasy**, **never ethnicity itself**. (conversion/proselyte)

A quick look at these **Two Moabite women** (more detailed next week):

V. 4 - The name of the one was **Orpah**

- You've heard of her.... **She has a TV show...** :) favorite southern food = **fried okra**?
- **Orpah** (arpa) = "gazelle/fawn" or "back of the neck/turn one's back"
- **Her name is prophetic** as we will see next week... Bails (turns back) on Naomi/Ruth (God?)
 - Even deeper thoughts next week...

V. 4 - The name of the other **Ruth**.

- **Ruth** (rut) = "friendship / companion"
- **Her name is also prophetic** as we will see next week! (a model of covenant loyalty)

Simple note in the text...

V. 4 - They dwelt there for **about ten years**.

- The syntax is looking back and saying **the family spent about 10 years there...**
- Longer than initially expected... **much more than a layover...** (blink, and ten yrs go by...)

Don't get comfortable in Moab, friends...

V. 5 - Then, both **Mahlon and Chilion also died**

- V. 2 - The names of his two sons were **Mahlon and Chilion**
- The language reads: **suddenly**. (not sure how). Their **names** are interesting...
- **Mahlon** (makh-lone) = "sickly (weak)" + **Chilion** (kil-yone) = "pining; puny (wasting to the end)" = **Sickly & Puny** (baby names?)
 - Complications at birth? Born in a famine? Picture of the Fallen World? Prophetic Foreshadowing? **One picture here for us is surely spiritual...**
- **Romans 3:23** - "**All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**" - we're all **sickly & puny**
 - We've **all wandered off into Moab** at times...
- **Romans 6:23(a)** - "For the wages of sin **is death...**" - **that's God's price**. **Us, or another?**
- **Romans 6:23(b)** - **But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord** - **Theme of Ruth!**
 - **There is HOPE, there is a REDEEMER! Died and conquered death! Paid it all.**

Back to the text...

V. 5 - The woman [Naomi] **survived [was left without]** her two sons and her husband.

- In some ways **mirrors the pain of Job** (different circumstances) - **my heart goes out**.
- God's Word highlights the **hurt/pain/emptiness (Sha'ar)** again... (the world's devastation)
 - A **childless widow** among the lowest, disadvantaged of that ancient societal system.

The text is **purposefully painting/emphasizing** the **darkness of this moment** before the next...

- The picture of **utter hopeless despair** is the exact type of situation **our Lord specializes in!**
- **Skip if time:** Unique word for sons (yeled instead of Ben or Banim) - used again of **"Obed"** at the end (**Ruth 4:16**) but attributed as unto Naomi. **Lineage restored!? Beyond imagination!**

The Road Home (verses 6-7)

God is never late. The famine lasted as long as He intended...

V. 6 - [Naomi] had **heard in the country of Moab** [good news!]

- **"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of great joy!"** (Isaiah 52, Romans 10)
- **Someone shared the good news!** To the guttermost parts of the world! (even Moab!)
- You know someone in Moab? **God can reach them!**

V. 6 - That the **Lord had visited His people by giving them bread**

- **The Lord** (yehova/YHWH) - **"the self existing one"** - Who the whole **book is ultimately about!**
- **Visited** (paqad) - **"to remember, take note of, pay attention to, to intervene"** - **Covenant mercy!**
- There is **emphasis in the language**. It's not just that God visited any people, but **HIS people**.
- (**lehem lehem**) There's **bread in Bethlehem**. Elimilech should have just stayed there...

Naomi, in her despair, hears the good news... (and did nothing about it... NO! hahaha)

V. 6 - Then (so) **she arose** (she's been gluten free for a while and is ready to carb load man!)

- **The point:** She didn't just hear only, she **took a step in the right direction**... (set her apart)
- Like the **Prodigal Son** sitting in a far country remembering his Father's house...
- **Luke 15:17** - **"When he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father...'"**
- And the **Father met him** on the road! (He will **FOR YOU** as well...)

But the language **isn't just any old action step**, it's **an intentional one**...

V. 6 - She arose [to] **return from the country of Moab**

- Keyword alert: **To return** (shuv) - **"turn back or come home"** | **"restore, refresh, or repair"** -
- **Spiritual Restoration** (used 1,000+ times) | (**Metanoia**) - **GPS recalculating...**
- Naomi is now **"thinking right"** and is heading back home, **where she belongs...**

Sometimes, people might think - **you don't know where or what or how far...** doesn't matter...

V. 7 - She **went out from the place where she was**

- She was in a bad place, that's **where she was**. Where many of us were. Where you might be.
- **Enough time in the toilet!** (**pigpen**) - **Repent and turn** to the living God!!!

V. 7 - And they [Naomi and her two daughters-in-law] **went on the way to return to the land of Judah**

- Just like Elimilech - **Naomi's decision impacted others** - **it's bigger than you...**
- **Good news** - they were **"on the WAY to return"** back to the **land of "Praise"** - **Any of you?**
- **"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!"**

Closing:

Friends, there is **bread in the land of praise!** *And His name is Jesus... (way, truth, life)*

- He is the heavenly bread of life born from the house of bread. And now we break bread...
- **Whoever comes to Him will never hunger or thirst again...** **(skip reference if time)**
- Isaiah 55:1-7, NIV - “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! ...Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.’ Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. **Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.**”

This table isn't for people who've never taken a wrong turn. It's for **people who've been to Moab.**

- **Plead with the souls of men...** Altar Call

Communion:

Bread: In a famine of the soul, Christ is the true bread.

Cup: The road home is paved by His blood—the new covenant of grace!

PRAY - Numbers 6 - The Blessing!