

Ruth 1:8-22

Announcements:

- **Facility Updates:** Inspections complete; final contract details are being sorted out...
 - **Layout:** Another in-person viewing soon (**layout image!**) Model out front on table....
 - **Construction phases:** Phase 1 (above), phase 2 (portables), phase 3 (new building)
 - **Timing:** March access to edges, April access to sanctuary, services by May
 - **Finances:** Approved and moving forward - Still raising funds = **New Facility Project**
 - **More details soon**... We are thankful for your prayers, patience, and faithfulness!

Please open to **Ruth Chapter 1** (Need a Bible?)

- **Last time:** **Destructive Detours:** God is my king with his pleasant bride left the fruitful house of bread in the land of praise and it resulted in **death, compromise and bitterness**...
- **This time:** The text narrows/focuses on **Naomi and her two daughters in law**...

Message Title: "Bitter Blessings"

- **Struggle Bus** (verses 8-13)
- **Crossroads** (verses 14-15)
- **Commitment** (verses 16-18)
- **Wrestling** (verses 19-21)
- **Bread Ahead** (verse 22)

We'll start by seeing that **Naomi is wrestling**. Hard to tell where she's at?

- **Varying thoughts** on this battle bruised train wreck...

Struggle Bus (verses 8-13)

Raw emotion is coming out of Naomi. She's struggling (you and I would be too...)

V. 8 - Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law: "**Go, return**... each to her... house."

- You and I have the **benefit of looking back** and thinking, **lame!**
- But Naomi had no idea what was ahead; This was **common sense** (**stronger ties & future**)
- A **Moabite widow in Israel** would be like a **ham sammy / shrimp taco at a bar mitzvah! :**

Anticipating a goodbye moment, Naomi prays a beautiful blessing over them...

V. 8 - "[May] **the Lord deal kindly (show kindness)** with you..."

- "**May He reward your kindness** - that you've showed your husbands and me" **Keyword Alert:**
- **Kindness (chesed)** = "kindness/goodness/mercy (i.e. Unfailing Covenant Love)" (**Loyal Love**)
 - **All of Psalm 136!** "Oh give thanks to the Lord... **His Mercy (chesed) endures forever**"
 - **She's praying God's covenant mercy upon them! And also...**

V. 9 - "[May] **the Lord grant that you may find rest**, in the house of your husband (another marriage)"

- **Rest (menuchah)** = "Quietness, Security, Settled Peace" - **Context of Marriage!** (expound)
- **But also:** Promised Land, Sabbath, Eschatology, God Himself, Messiah (**Isaiah 11 / Eph 5**)

NOTE: In the midst of her suffering, she doesn't ask for a blessing from a false God, but from **YHWH!**

- This is a good gauge given some of the other things we see in this passage...
- She loved them, and prayed to the true God in spite of her tragedies...

V. 9 - She kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

- This was a good bye kiss. And they all wailed loudly... - Real genuine love.

V. 10 - They said to her, "Surely we will [we insist on] return with you to your people."

- Interesting, at this point, they both wanted to go to Israel with her. To "her people..."

V. 11 - But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters" - **Why?**

- Embarrassed to have Moabites along? Living proof of disobedience... (cover up?)
- Practical out of love for them? (latter likely)

V. 11 - "**Why** would you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, to be your husbands?"

- She may be referring back to a "Leverite Marriage" from Deut. 25. (nothing to do with "Levi")
- Latin (Levir) = "A husband's brother" - He would marry the widow and provide an heir.
- There are no "Levir's", because Naomi has no other sons to offer... (that ship has sailed!)

V. 12 - "I am too old...[to get married again]"

- Estimated in her 50'/60's - not impossible, but unlikely (unless you're Sarai!)

V. 12 - "[Even if it were possible that] I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons..."

- Hypothetical for a moment. Finding a husband = slim! Having kids = slim! But let's just say...

V. 13 - "Would you wait for them till they were grown?"

- You'd be collecting Social Security before they were old enough to marry you! (if around :)

V. 13 - "Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands?"

- Would you really wait till they grew up? You might be too old to bear children yourself...

She speaks now with the reality of her situation...

V. 13 - "It grieves me very much for your sakes = Chances for husbands/kids are better in Moab..."

- CSB = "My life is much too bitter for you to share..." Almost speaks as if she is cursed...

V. 13 - "The hand of the Lord has gone out [afflicting] against me!" - Right/wrong - she's attributing her situation to God's sovereign hand of judgment (Lamentations 3 = Jeremiah struggles too)

- Is this veiled guilt (the one pressuring Elimilech?)
 - "I'm to blame; maybe more to come" (sees not only darkness behind, but also ahead)
- Is this just emotion (broken hearted, believer)? Many have been there...
 - Job 19:21 - "Have pity on me... O you my friends, for the hand of God has struck me!"
 - God, can handle messy honesty (Psalms)
- Perhaps recognizing corporate judgment
 - (Judges 2 = idolatry and immorality) - She wouldn't be wrong in that case...
- Can, I just say, though possibly irrational/inaccurate, I'm thankful she's acknowledging God!
- Many go through trials and doubt his existence or run away altogether. She's going home...

- Luke 15:19-20 - "I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants. And he arose and came to his father..."
- Shame caused him to feel that way, but he **still returned**. **Father met him on the road!**

In trials, friends... **DON'T RUN AWAY, RUN TO!** (He will meet you there!)

- Psalms 34:18, CSB - "The **Lord is near to the brokenhearted**; he saves those crushed in spirit."

The **struggle bus is on the road home**. Radio's busted... wheel's falling off... but on the road!

- Who's getting off at this stop... and who's along for the ride...?

Crossroads (verses 14-15)

A crisis pressures these two girls between **comfort and commitment** (**crossroads moment...**)

V. 14 - They lifted up their voices and **wept [loudly] again**

- Must have been quite a scene! (geese fighting!) **Feelings** and **actions** are different things...

V. 14 - **Orpah kissed** her mother-in-law [good bye]

- Essentially, an **affectionate good-bye kiss** (i.e. aloha) - "Love ya, but I'm out..."

V. 14 - **But Ruth clung** to her [embraced her and held on]

- **Key word & Key Theology:**
- **Clung (davaq)** = "to cling, cleave, hold fast, stick to, join with, follow closely" - **Glue!**
- Genesis 2:24, NASB - "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and **be joined to his wife**; and they shall become one flesh." - **Marriage Covenant!**
- Deut. 10:20, NASB - "You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him, and **cling to Him**, and you shall swear by His name." - **Mosaic Covenant!**
- Joshua 23:8 - "You shall **hold fast to the Lord your God**, as you have done to this day." - **Covenant Renewal!**
- **Septuagint** inserts the greek word (**akoloutheo**) = same word for "**Follow**" (**Matthew 4**)
- This is: **big deal stuff!** Ruth is **fully committing** here... (like **a barnacle** on a ship's belly!)

V. 15 - [Naomi] said, "Look, your sister-in-law has **gone back to her people and to her gods**"

- Refers to **Moab's people and gods** as if to **persuade her**. See, your sister-in-law is going...
- **Side Note:** **Orpah** = Interesting speculations. **Midrash** (part of **Talmud** to "fill in gaps" on the **Tanakh**) ...**Orpah** gave birth to **four giant sons – Goliath** and his three Philistine brothers.
 - If true... **poetic justice** that Ruth's lineage would include **David**. And Oprah's: **Goliath**.
- **Oprah is not the villain** of the story. She does **what many do** (even what Naomi asked!)
- And, Naomi is not helping. Trying to **push her away** to what is **convenient, familiar, or easy...**

So, now the **crossroads moment** for Ruth...

V. 15 - "**Return after your sister-in-law.**"

- "Cmon Ruth, I've given you **all the common sense**. I'm **0-3 on keeping people alive**... be **reasonable like Orpah**... **This is a test!** - **Matthew 7 - Broad vs Narrow Road...**

- Joshua 24:15, ESV - “**Choose this day whom you will serve**, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. **But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.**”

A fork in the road... **which Path will Ruth take?**

Commitment (verses 16-18)

I love the **resolve and determination** we're seeing here from Ruth!

- Some of the **most beautiful words ever** spoken! (she owed nothing to Naomi)

V. 16 - Ruth [essentially] said “**stop urging me to abandon you!**” (NET)

V. 16 - “For **wherever you go**, I will go” - **a commitment to a land!** (new nationality)

V. 16 - “**Wherever you lodge/live**, I will lodge” - **Not a temporary commitment!** (new home)

V. 16 - “**Your people** shall be my people” - **a commitment to a people/society!** (new identity)

V. 16 - “And **your God**, my God.” - **a commitment to worship!** (new HEART!)

- **Repentance! Covenant! Conversion!**
- 1 Thess 1:9, NIV - “For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how **you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God**”

V. 17 - “**Where you die**, I will die” - **a lifelong commitment!** (lifetime gym membership :)

V. 17 - “And **there will I be buried.**” - **a steadfast commitment!** (burial locations = important)

She even invokes the name of the covenant keeping God of Israel (YHWH)

V. 17 - “**The Lord do so to me, and more also**, If anything but death parts you and me.”

- She looks to heaven and asks God to strike her if her commitment falls short of death. **Wow!**
- This is what it means to **declare Christ as Lord** (Romans 10)

Remember that **commitment comes with a cost**...

Luke 14:33 - “So likewise, whoever of you **does not forsake all** that he has cannot be My disciple.”

- Family members... picking up cross... building a tower... going to war... **counting the cost**...
- Phil. 3:8, NIV - “I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. **I consider them garbage [rubbish], that I may gain Christ.**”
- **Some of you have... Some of you need to...** (today = fresh?)

V. 18 - When [Naomi] saw that [Ruth] was determined to go with her, **she stopped speaking** to her.

- **Hahahaha!** (she said nothing more.) **Ruth's resolve was unshakeable.** No more trying...

All of this is even more remarkable when considering it **could be worse ahead than it was before**...

- Ruth has **no idea what's ahead**. She doesn't have the rest of the book...

- Hebrews 11:1 - "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

It almost seems like Ruth has more faith than Naomi as we read the next section...

Wrestling (verses 19-21)

V. 19 - Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem.

- Two lonely ladies. A 50+ mile uphill hike during the time of Judges. Danger everywhere...
- God was watching over them, but they must have looked weary & worn when arriving...

V. 19 - All the city was excited [stirred] because of them (arose such a clatter!)

- O little town of Bethlehem was churned up in commotion...
- Ruth and Naomi were the talk of the town... (small town vibes)

Apparent confusion...

V. 19 - The women said, "Is this (can this be) Naomi?"

- The original language almost reads with "shock" to it... (as if they couldn't recognize her)
- It had been 10+ yrs. Husband/sons gone. Battle bruised from the journey... (War/Drugs)
- "She's not like the Naomi we remember..."

V. 20 - But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara"

- "You're right that I don't look the same... I don't feel the same..."
- I am no longer "pleasant/delightful" | I am now "Bitter" (Mara) - This is raw, unfiltered grief.
- Severe trauma or if beaten down hard enough, long enough = Can lose identity.
- Friends, do not let the tribulation of this world break your spirit or take your identity...

Multiple times in vv 20-21, she assigns her bitterness/affliction to the Lord Almighty (YHWH Shaddai)

V. 21 - "I went out full" - True: a husband and two sons, but an empty belly on the road to Moab...

- You have to wonder if this is a little bit of confession from Naomi? It seems so...
- I went out... So the Lord allowed bitterness... (that is the "Book of Judges" BTW)

V. 21 - "The Lord has brought me home... empty."

- This is how she feels (small minded) - but aren't we all in the middle of the storm? (magnified)
- On the Struggle Bus, we forget Romans 8:28 and Genesis 50:20
- And, we can even be wrong in our wrestling... (looking for sunglasses/phone) Right next to her! She was not alone... (Ruth was with her and hope was around the corner)

Can we just pause there for a moment? She didn't know all the story yet... (neither do we...)

- Exodus 15:22-25 - "Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea... and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?' So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet." - C'mon!

- Some of you may feel like **"Mara"** today, but **God is still writing your story**
- This is **WHY JESUS CAME!**
- **Is. 61:1-3** - "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted... to comfort all who mourn... **to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness!**"

Naomi has **no idea yet**, but there is....

Bread Ahead (verse 22)

V. 22 - So **Naomi returned**

- **Well, that's good news! Put on a fatted calf!**

V. 22 - And **Ruth the Moabitess** her daughter-in-law with her

- **Put on some brisket and some ribs!**

V. 22 - **Returned from the country of Moab.**

- This is **an important point**. Not to be overlooked... (last week's study (**the washpot**))
- But **that's what God does**. **He calls us out of the miry clay** and **gives us what we don't deserve**.
- **Ephesians 2:13** - "But now in Christ Jesus **you who once were far off** [Gentiles] have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

V. 22 - Now they **came to Bethlehem**

- Back to the **house of provision**. **Should have never left...**

And one last note that could be easily overlooked if not careful...

V. 22 - **At the beginning of barley harvest.**

- This puts us in the **spring time**. When **flowers bloom** and **crops produce**. **A buffet on the way!**
 - Specifically at the time of **Passover** and the **Feast of First Fruits** (gleaning opportunity)
 - **Do you think that is any accident?**
- That's **not random**. It's **God's providence**.
 - "So Naomi returned, and with her was Ruth, the Moavite, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the field of Moab. And they came to Beth Lehem **on the eve of the Passover, and on that very day the Israelites began to harvest the Omer of the heave-offering** which was of barley." (Targum(im): An Aramaic translation / interpretation / paraphrase of the Tanakh)
 - **Passover** means there is a **redemption has been provided**
 - **Barley Harvest** means **provision is on the way**.
 - It's all the **language of HOPE** and **new beginnings!!**

Closing:

Naomi doesn't see it yet, but **God has been working**: He's about to introduce them to **Boaz...**

- Like a **chess grandmaster who sees 20 moves ahead** while we're **just trying to survive the next move...**

Think of a hand woven tapestry: Underside messy (bitterness), topside beautiful (blessings).

- That was Naomi's life. And that is ours too (though more clear than Naomi's), for now...

And, the good news in today's passage is that **she came back!**

- Yeah, she came back bruised and bitter, but **SHE CAME BACK!**
- That's the **STORY OF THE BIBLE**, friends... God is calling His people home...
- **Pilgrim's Progress:** (city of destruction to the celestial city, and the journey to get there...)

The initial harvest has come in...

There's more on the way!

(He's still gathering wheat into His barn)

GOOD NEWS = GOSPEL

- We're all like Naomi and Ruth at some point in our lives... (prone to wonder... outsiders...)
- And, those who come to God will never be rejected (John 6:37; Matthew 11:28-30)

Struggle bus? Bitter? Broken? Lost in Moab?

Cling to the Lord Christ just like Ruth did to Naomi, and never let go. Even unto death.

PRAY

- *Father... we thank You that You are the God who works in the bitter seasons.*
 - *You are writing stories we cannot yet see...*
- *Brothers and sisters... go forth knowing that your bitter seasons are not the end of your story.*
 - **God is working, the harvest is coming, and the Redeemer is near.**
- *"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace" (Numbers 6)*