



Back to Bethlehem – Ruth 1

December 3rd, 2023

Beginning a new series, we were taken to the story of Ruth. Fleeing a famine in Israel, a man called Elimelech took his family and fled to Moab – the territory of the enemies of Israel in that time. His two sons marry Moabite women – one of which is Ruth. After many years of hunger and death, Naomi (Elimelech’s widow-wife and Ruth’s mother-in-law) hears that God has been merciful with Israel and given them food. Being worn out, broken, bitter and about to make her way back to Israel, she tells her daughter’s in law to abandon her and find someone to marry. Ruth clings to Naomi and clings to her God. All Ruth knows about Yahweh is that he feeds the undeserving and that is enough for her to leave her home and go to Bethlehem with Naomi. The first chapter leaves us with several questions: Is there hope for a bitter heart like that of Naomi? Is there a kinsmen-redeemer to marry Ruth and continue the name of Elimelech? It leaves us with a promise as well: In Bethlehem, prodigals are welcomed home. Is it time for you to come home?

[If you’re working through these in a group, jump straight to Apply]

For personal reflection/community discussion



Read – Read the passage in its context several times. Read it slow enough to understand what God is saying through it.

- What ideas or words are emphasized, repeated or related in this passage?
- In your own words, what is the main idea of this passage? (Try to summarize these verses in 10 words or less)

Examine – Next, try to understand the specifics of what the passage is communicating.

- What do you notice about God? What has he done/is he doing in these verses?
- What do you learn about Jesus and his gospel from this passage?
- What does this reveal about people?
- How do you think the writer wanted his readers to respond to these words?

Apply – After seeking to understand God’s Word in this passage, consider how he intends to use it in your heart and life today.

- What role does Elimelech play in this chapter? Is he simply caring for his family or is there more to it?
- Is there hope for Naomi? What drives her to go back to Israel? Consider her statement and change of name at the end of chapter one. Can a bitter and ruined heart become whole again? Look at Jesus. Who is he to people like Naomi?



- What are Ruth's reasons to cling to Naomi and to hope in Yahweh?
- Where is God in this story? Consider the mercy of God in this chapter - can you find similarities to the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15?