

REDEEMING LOVE

RUTH 1:1-22 (NIV)

Hey Newsong!

I want to take an opportunity to welcome all of our first time guests! We are so glad that you can join us today as we begin our summer sermon series called “Redeeming Love” based on the book of Ruth.

Ruth is a beautiful picture of how God is extraordinarily involved in our ordinary lives.

Ruth reminds us that the invisible hand of God is always guiding, directing, providing, sustaining, and redeeming us.

Moreover, the love of the invisible God is often seen in our visible relationships with one another.

Ruth will teach us about love - the redeeming love of God and redeeming love in our relationships.

Ruth 1:1-22

1 In the days when the judges ruled,[a] 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. 7 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.

15 "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.

19 So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. 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,[b]" she told them. "Call me Mara,[c] because the Almighty[d] 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[e] me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."

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

PRAY

I am super excited this morning because we get to turn to the book of Ruth together and for the next few weeks we're going through this book verse by verse.

We're going to be looking at God's providence in the midst of our pain...I don't just mean pain in general.

I want you to make it personal this morning, that you would feel Naomi's pain this morning and that you would see His hand of providence in it and through it.

This could be, if you let it, maybe one of the most comforting and encouraging books that

you will ever study, but it's going to take some work on your part.

This week, I'm not going to be able to get all the good stuff in, just giving you a heads-up.

You're going to have to do some of the work outside of our Sunday service on your own to draw every ounce of goodness from this book.

If you'll do that work, and you'll listen faithfully, take notes, God will show you His hand of providence, not only through the life of Naomi and Ruth and Boaz, but in your own life.

That is where the comfort will come from. Seeing God's providence, which just means His will being done in your life despite the circumstances that you are surrounded by.

Sometimes God's providence can seem tough because you can't see it. Other times, it may be fulfilling because you do see it.

John Piper says it can be both bitter and sweet, depending on how it strikes you and what particular circumstance you are in at the time.

But I want you to see through the book of Ruth whether it feels good or not, whether it tastes sweet or bitter, God's providence is good for you because He is God and He is always good.

Today we will be spending time in Ruth chapter one, we will be going through the passage verse by verse but let me give some background before we get started.

The first verse really opens up for the hearer of

the Israelite of that time and even for believers today.

Let's look at the history of God's people, in the days when the judges ruled in Israel...your mind should go to a time of what life looked like for the Israelites at that point and there's a ton of weight on that phrase "in the days" so it'd be like this if we're about to say you know in the days of Covid our mind goes to that time with isolation, fear, lockdowns, death.

The very book before Ruth is the Book of Judges which comes after Joshua, Joshua after Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy paints a picture of God's law...of what it looks like to live a life close to God.

When you obey He will bless you in your land
when you don't obey He won't...if you obey me
it shows Me you love.

If you don't obey then you don't love Me that's
what that kind of relationship was like at that
time.

Deuteronomy and Judges was a season where
there were no Kings...a time where God's
people were walking away.

They were influenced by other cultures and
would turn away from God to worship other
gods.

And God would raise up prophets as judges
and they would bring God's people back to
Him.

It was a time where we saw many judges and the last judge among all of them was Samuel.

1st and 2nd Samuel are right after Ruth and so it highlights what it looked like to walk in the shoes of the last judge before they installed the first king, King Saul.

So Ruth is right in the middle of that, which is why Ruth is placed in that place in our scriptures and to sum it all up we have to look at Judges 21:25.

***In those days there was no king in Israel;
everyone did what was right in his own eyes.
(NKJV)***

So people lived saying, if this seems right to me I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna participate in this, I'm going to experience this and because of that God's hardship came down on them.

It was back and forth culturally, so we have this line ending in Judges 21:25 and starting 1:1 in Ruth that we can pretty much put together.

In the days when people did whatever they wanted, when the judges ruled over Israel severe famine came upon the land and so there was this circumstance, this famine that put pressure on this specific family and every family experienced this famine at the time but not every family left Bethlehem.

This family left Bethlehem and we're going to learn a little bit about why they left Bethlehem in a moment but this is like paralleling our lives today.

Our lives we are not absent from the same kind of pressure.

We may not experience famine but we experience different kinds of pressures within our relationships, family, our finances, work, church, especially in today's culture.

In the days of Ruth this specific family upped and left, the head of the household was Elimelech, he was the father, the decision maker, the leader, the head of the home and he decided here I'm going to lead my wife and

kids, my family out of Bethlehem to another place to experience abundance.

Seems innocent right, there's no food here so we might as well go somewhere where there is food.

To a normal person reading this I would say what's wrong with that **but there's a lot wrong with that.**

Elimelech leaves his culture in Bethlehem specifically and goes to Moab.

Elimelech and Naomi leave Bethlehem for abundance for food and for a different life.

Do you know what Bethlehem means, Bethlehem means House of Bread so in the

House of Bread the place where bread is in abundance there's no longer any bread.

So this specific family decided to leave Bethlehem and go to Moab.

Now Moab wasn't just like I'm gonna go to Pennsylvania where there's a lot of Farmland down there. The milk is more fresh so I'm just gonna move there...No it's not like doing that.

We have to look at the history of the moabites and the Israelites at that time through the scripture.

If you guys are familiar with Lot, Lot had some daughters, his oldest daughter and him had relations and kids were born and out of that

came the line of Moabites. We can see this in Genesis 19.

The Moabite culturally were anti-Yahweh anti-God, they were against God and they worshiped other gods. They were hostile toward the Israelites.

For all you bible scholars you can find this in Deuteronomy 2, Numbers 21, and Judges 10.

In Jeremiah 48 God reveals the proud disposition of these people along with His disgust with them and His plan to judge them.

So this culture pretty much despised the Israelites and vice versa and so for Elimelech to

take his wife and his kids and say let's go to Moab is basically giving the bird to God.

Sorry church I know no one wants to hear that but think about it, he knew this was a place that was very displeasing to God but he went there anyway...and you heard HE DIES.

Just think about every time you know you're doing something totally against God and do it anyway it's like flipping off GOD.

He was saying in my words I'm done with you, I want nothing to do with you and I'm going to live here to demonstrate it.

So, he's fleeing from God if you will and he wants nothing to do with God.

In this space he says I'm going to raise my family apart from You, we're no longer going to be a part of the celebrations.

They were not gonna travel back during Passover; they were flat out choosing to live apart from God.

In this decision there's an aftermath and so part of that aftermath we learn within the first five verses of Ruth 1.

You know what's crazy, Elimelech's name literally means my God is King, that's what his name means.

My God is King and you're in Moab and you're meeting people who worship other gods and every time you say hello you are saying hi my

God is King not yours my God is King nice to meet you, so it's like okay how does this work you have this name that says your God is King but you want nothing to do with that God...It's very ironic.

So his life is taken but we're not given any background about what that looks like.

Naomi's response could have been, well I was living in an oppressive house, I had to do everything my husband said now that he's deceased I'm gonna go live back to Bethlehem because that's where we should live.

Nope, remember she was disciplined under his headship and she continues to live in Moab and she allows her sons to marry moabite women.

Pause, church, think about it, our decisions can and will affect generations.

Side note the head of the home comes with tons of pressure, there's tons of weight on the heads of the home, we disciple our spouses, we disciple our kids in the way we want them to live.

A lot of discipleship takes place in ways we don't even realize, we may not be sitting down around a table in a Bible discipling but guess what our spouses are watching, kids are watching how we are responding to the circumstances of life, do you stress out when money's tight, what does it look like when you're speaking to your wife or to your husband.

What does it look like when there's rhythms within the church or God's people, how are you responding, what are we doing in our home, how are we living in relationship with God and what does your life look like?

Elimelech painted that experience where God wasn't present and he wanted nothing to do with God so he led his family away and now Naomi is following in his footsteps...she stays in Moab allows her sons to marry Moabite women and then they die.

Now we have Naomi and her daughters-in-law left alone and there's this experience in verse 6 through 13 where they are interacting.

Naomi tells them she needs to go home, she needs to go back because there's nothing left for her in Moab.

She needs to return to where she came from and she tells them that they should stay in Moab because it'll be better for them.

In this experience it's not like her relationship with God is vibrant but it is an experience where God is emptying her.

She is at her wits ends, she is fully broken and she's returning back to God but she's bitter, she's sad she's broken-hearted.

Romans 1 says that God is going to give us over to our sinful desires, He's not going to control us or make us love Him or obey Him.

He's going to release us to live the way our hearts are desiring to live and if that's backslidden, if that's in sin 's, He's going to allow it, until we're fully broken.

But look at the kicker because He is so good, He will be right there to redeem us as we return. So that is what's happening, in the bigger picture, Naomi is slowly being stripped away from everything she's clung to.

She now is left with her two daughter-in-laws, they have a great relationship. There's lots of love between them because why else would they leave their homes.

And Ruth has this experience in verse 16 and 17 that I want to read again in order to highlight these very famous verses.

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.

This is so beautiful verses 16 & 17, Ruth is having a conversion experience she's proclaiming faith in these two verses what

would look like today she's living out of I believe in Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

I've witnessed, I've experienced, I'm turning from me being the lord of my life to God being the Lord of my life.

There's this conversion from spiritually dead to spiritually alive that's what's happening in verse 16 and 17 with Ruth.

So though natively she is a moabite woman, she now is a spiritually redeemed woman of God.

God's redemptive power is being shown here, and let me just say that sometimes we don't see God's plan but let me tell you her experience is found in Jesus's lineage.

God has a plan for every situation even in our pain. We may not see this side of Heaven but if we just trust in His plan know that there is one.

Now we have the next verse, where Naomi is being welcomed back in verse 19.

19 So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?"

Doesn't that seem odd a little bit, Elimelech and Naomi were gone for a long time. It was well over 10 years that they were gone, probably close to 20 years and here Naomi comes back

and people knew her and they were welcoming her and they were excited to see her.

This right here communicates of what it looks like after we repent, after we come back from our Moab experience, our Exile experience or this season of our life where we've been living in our own ways and we turn back to God.

When we come home and God is waiting there just like the prodigal son.

Where he comes home and the father is waiting for him at a distance wanting him to come home so he can embrace him.

To hear the people of God being excited to see Naomi is a physical representation of a spiritual experience with God happening in Naomi.

She's being welcomed by God himself and that's often how it works for us, when we are living apart from God and we return.

We experience God's love, His grace, His forgiveness through our brothers and sisters in the faith.

As a brother or sister repents or is apologizing or asking for forgiveness we experience God's grace often times through one another.

That's what's happening here as Naomi comes home and she shares in the next couple verses this season of emptiness where she's at the end of herself, and says in Vs. **20** ***“Don’t call me Naomi,[b]” she told them. “Call me Mara,[c]***

because the Almighty[d] has made my life very bitter.

Basically she is saying this is how I feel right now, I'm bitter because of all that God has allowed to happen to me but she still believes in God's existence.

Now she's returning to her Homeland, she's returning to God saying for the almighty has made life very bitter for me.

I went away full, was it full of God, no, it was full of the world, it was full of other things outside of God.

I went away full but the Lord has brought me home empty so why call me Naomi when the

Lord has caused me to suffer and the almighty has sent such tragedy upon me.

See Church when facing circumstances that are hard and challenging we still have a choice on how we approach the famines in our life, we can either stay and press in and refuge in God to see His plan or we can run.

And for some of us it's easy to run because we're not dealing with the situation, we don't want to trust that God has a plan and that it will work our.

Some of us think the grass is greener on the other side. WELL ITS NOT. You are taking yourself with you everywhere you go.

Sometimes God is allowing these circumstances in our lives to help us grow to shed those things in us that are not pleasing to Him.

Sometimes we want to blame others or even God for what's happening to us but Church, take a step back and look within.

God may be trying to get your attention in a specific area and you're not listening and guess what you will be going around the same mountain until you allow God to deal with it.

We have to take refuge in God and trust that wherever we find ourselves God will be right there to help us get through, He will teach us what we need to learn, He will remove things that need to be removed.

Think about the storms of your life, I'm sure we can all say that we have changed because of them, some us for the better, and some not. I want to always be on the better side.

Elimelech LED his family away and chose to run, he chose to escape instead of embracing and trusting God.

Nope he instead said hey this is getting challenging, so I'm taking matters into my own hands and in doing so he went as far as embracing the very culture that was totally against God.

So now Naomi is left alone stripped away from her children, her husband, everything they had, she has nothing left.

And let me tell you that's exactly where God wanted her and that's exactly where He wants us to be at times.

To be in this empty place just clinging to Him. It is the place where He can do major surgery in our Hearts.

Now we get to verse 22 we end with this and I want to shift into something else for us today.

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

How beautiful, the how chapter ends with the Harvest season.

What does harvest mean: abundance.

How did the chapter start, it started with famine.

In the days when the judges ruled in Israel severe famine came upon the land.

It ended with a Harvest, it was plentiful, it was beautiful, that in essence of repentance, when we actually think we are in full control doing whatever we want, living our lives apart from God.

We think we have everything and everything's good but we have nothing because God isn't in to and so she thought she had everything but God emptied her of the things that don't matter

the Harvest the abundance is only found in Him and Him alone.

This chapter is leading to this idea of repentance, if we were to read this chapter in Hebrew we would be able to see 13 times the word return return return it's used in different ways but it's constantly proclaiming return that's what repentance is, turn from your way of belief or thinking about God and believe the truth about God, turn from the idols in your life that you have turned away from God and turn back to God and God Alone.

In essence that is the point of the scriptures in chapter one of Ruth.

I want to remind you that every day a Believer should be

exercising faith in Repentance, every day a Believer, you and I should be able to evaluate our hearts and ask God where have I gone astray today, where have been self-centered, where have I been prideful, where have I turned away from You, search my heart oh God.

And I believe by the power of the Holy Spirit, He will bring up moments and experiences that we need to repent of.

He will allow you to experience emptiness and turn it into a harvestful, where you can experience a closeness with God once again.

Worship Team Come UP

So in closing here are some takeaways I want to remind you of:

1. There is Hope Even in the Most Devastating Times of Our Life

When life brings devastation, it's not easy to hope. It's hard to have faith. But when things are the most difficult, that's when we need faith and hope the most. In the moments where life feels like it's crushing you, start with a little faith. Hebrews 11:1 reminds us that *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* And looking at the book of Ruth, we can see that even when we can't see beyond our pain to His plan, we can have hope that our story isn't over – better days are coming.

2. The Past is Not Our Final Destination When We Trust God

At the very beginning of the book of Ruth, she's living in Moab, her home nation. Moab was a place that most Israelites didn't like. It was an enemy nation, and Israelites tended to look down on the Moabites. On top of that, she was a widow, she was childless, and she lived with her mother-in-law.

No matter your past, you still have a purpose. Your past is not your final destination when you make a choice in faith. While your confidence may be wavering, God's promises are not.

3. God will meet us wherever we are when we come to Him with a Heart of Repentance.

So what is God telling you today, do you struggle with trying to do things your way,

Do you feel like running away from your circumstances just not to face and with them,

Do you feel like God, I messed up so bad that how can you forgive me, how can You want me?

Or maybe you're here and you're bitter toward God because He has allowed devastation in your life and you're not sure how to get past it, you're not sure how you can move forward with God.

Wherever you find yourself, Know that God isn't mad at you, He has not left you, all He wants is that you turn your heart in specific areas back to HIM and He will fulfill His promises.