

Sermon, February 20, 2011,

“Redemption”, Ruth 1:1-22

Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy

Overview of Ruth:

- Takes place at some point in time during the Book of Judges, probably around 1,200 to 1,100 BC
- Author unknown, traditionally Samuel is accepted.
- The third book of history after Joshua and Judges.
- **Outline of Ruth:**
 - 1:1-5 Journey from Bethlehem to Moab and the tragic outcome
 - 1:6-18 The love of Ruth and Naomi
 - 1:19-2:23 Bethlehem and the man Boaz
 - 3:1-18 The Plan for Ruth
 - 4:1-12 Redemption in the Public Square
 - 4:13-22 The lineage of Boaz, Ruth, and Obed

Major Themes of Ruth:

- Ruth; the story of Naomi and her afflictions, of decisions and their consequences
- of the Moabitess Ruth and her loyalty to Naomi and the God of Israel,
- of Boaz the kinsman-redeemer, (portraying a savior like Christ)
- of Ruth’s place in the lineage of David therefore of Christ,
- of the pleasant outcome for Naomi, God’s hand in the lives of this family
- and let us not forget the place where this all takes place, Bethlehem, the birth place of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.
- The Book of Ruth displays the sovereign hand of God, ruler of all creation, and this short story’s role in the redemptive plan for mankind.
- *The story of Ruth is the story of redemption and teaches us that in the worst of life’s circumstances God is still with you.*

Intro to Ruth

- Affliction and suffering are part of man’s existence here on earth. No one escapes trials and tribulations. If you do not have faith in God these trials can have devastating effects upon you, your family, your neighbors, your community...
- However, the Apostle Paul tells us (we who believe) to rejoice in your trials, and further in **Romans 8:28** ...we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

Decisions leading to tragic circumstances (Ruth 1:1-6)

Elimilech’s first decision:

- Through God’s sovereignty, there was a famine in the land, Elimilech makes the decision to jump to the next stepping stone and take his wife and two sons to Moab, the perennial enemy of Israel, east of the Dead Sea, Moab.
- So Elimilech is willing to leave the Promised Land (now undergoing famine) to enter into a despised land (now undergoing feast). In the decision of feast or famine Elimilech chooses feast because he is a father dedicated to his family. They did not travel there to visit, but “remained there” (v.2).

Consequence:

- Elimilech soon dies and Naomi is left with her two sons. Tragic outcome for the leader of the family who was trying to do what was best for them, ended in death.

Chilion and Mahlon’s decision:

- Furthermore, the family jumps to the next stepping stone, in this land of Moab, both sons marry Moabite women; Chilion married Orpah (stubborn) and Mahlon married Ruth (friendship). The two sons made the decision to marry outside of their faith, but it soon seems that one of the Moabite women was to become a believer in YHWH

Consequence:

- Another tragic outcome follows, within 10 years Mahlon and Chilion also die.
- It is difficult to see God’s plan in the present. Time must pass to see how His plan unfolds, as we are to “*trust in the Lord and lean not on our own understanding*” (**Proverbs 3:5**), **Isaiah 55:8-9**, **Romans 11:33**

Pack up and get out of town (Ruth 1:7-14)

The heartbreak of Naomi

- Naomi is crushed, heartbroken and grieving mother, yearning for the comfort of her homeland. Naomi says, “As I look back on these last two stepping stones, I can see no good, I am grieved, the hand of the Lord has gone out against me (v.13), the Almighty has afflicted me.” (v21),
- God’s sovereign hand once again brings feast to Israel.

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Naomi's decisions:

- Hearing that the Lord has once again "visited His people and provided them bread", **Naomi jumps to the next stone**, and **decides** to return to the Promised Land.
- Perhaps initially wanting the comfort and companionship of Ruth and Orpah on the journey home, she graciously **decides** to encourage Ruth and Orpah to return to their own mother's house.

Consequences:

- Orpah concedes, Ruth does not. Another stone is in place.

Loyalty of Ruth (Ruth 1:15-18)

Ruth's decision:

- **Ruth made the jump to the next stepping stone**, she will not leave Naomi.
- Ruth will not have it. ¹⁶ *But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and **your God my God.**"* ¹⁷ *Where you die, I will die-- there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!"*

Consequences:

- Ruth now makes a great and glorious leap to the next stone! Ruth has turned from the gods of the Moabites to the God of Israel
- ¹⁸ When Naomi saw that she was **determined** to go with her, she said no more to her.

Home again (Ruth 1:19-22)

- After more than 10 years Naomi arrives back in Bethlehem.
- The town seems excited on her return, v.19.

Naomi Unaware of God's Plan

- ²⁰ *She said to them, "Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. ²¹ I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty; why call me Naomi when the LORD has dealt harshly with me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?"*

God's Plan - Redemption:

- Ruth and Naomi's life will soon change, while they may not understand what God has done and has in store, they have God-given dedication and have made God-guided decisions. Their trust in the Lord will soon be realized.

Decisions - In the midst of trials we are called to trust in the Lord:

- **Job 13:15** *"Though He **slay me,** I will hope in Him."*
- You are not promised a bed of roses. You are not promised a life free of hard decisions, free of trials, free of afflictions, free of persecution, ... **Matthew 5:11-12**
- While you traverse this earth and participate in the great adventure of life, you are **already** part of the kingdom of God, but you are **not yet** in heaven. **Romans 5:3-5**

You can "learn" to trust God

- While you may not have the answers to every question regarding the events of your life, turn around, look back at all those stepping stones, the decisions of your life, in trials you never thought you would understand but now do, in stones you leaped upon that worked to bring you where you are today. Serving the Almighty God of all creation. All of this God-given dedication led to God-led decisions according to the sovereign will of God Trust in the LORD with all your heart And lean not on your own understanding.

Naomi and Ruth's Outcome

- **Ruth 4:13-17** *So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. ¹⁵ "May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. ¹⁷ The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.*
- And remember, that God works all things together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose. Rejoice and be glad, even in your afflictions.
- ***The story of Ruth is the story of redemption and teaches us that in the worst of life's circumstances God is still with you.***