

Ruth 1:1-13 - Naomi's Law

INTRO - today we embark on voyage into a great story/narrative of scripture. This account contains culture and romance; it deals with work and welfare; it is full of family and loyalty but it also... a tragedy. It is a tragic drama that does eventually ends in triumph- but there are a lot of lessons along the way for which we can benefit. 1 Cor. 10:11 says, "these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction..." (Romans 15:4 - the purpose and power of *story*). Through the lives of these people we can see how the Faith informs them in: Family, Industry, Loyalty and Tragedy - all of which leaves a lasting Legacy or us to esteem and in which to aspire.

The book of Ruth is the back story to the family of King David. It is a link in chain to David's greater Son. Just like the end of Judges tells a sordid story in the tribe of Benjamin & Gibeah as a back story to Saul of Gibeah; so too Ruth is a prequel to the promised King. It is a great story/drama & will be a good change of pace as well as challenge us in some practical areas of our life and faith. The Setting & The Saddening

THE SETTING

- Ruth 1:1 "...in the days when the Judges governed..."
 - The *Judges* - about a 300 year period of time after Joshua and before the kings
 - A tumultuous time when "everyone did what was right in their own eyes - Judges 21:25
 - *Ruth* gives a peek into a family that is trying to do right when everything is going wrong
- Famine in the land
 - Could be a clue as to when - there was a shortage of food during Gideon's time
 - Bad economy because of the oppression of the enemy (result of sin) Judges 6:1-6
 - No bread in Bethlehem irony because Bethlehem = "house of bread"
- Bethlehem Significance of Bethlehem not known at that time.
 - Bethlehem means something to us but probably no big deal to them (Micah 5:2)
 - We are not an accident and where we live is not an accident. Acts 17:26
 - "the providence of God is like the Hebrew language – it can only be read backwards"
hindsight is 20/20 don't discount you/your circumstances/your location (purpose)
- Moab country just east of Israel - (MAP)
 - Bethlehem to Moab = 50-60 miles over mountainous terrain
 - Had to cross Jordan River and go around Dead Sea to leave the Promise Land.
 - Be like leaving Madill, Okla. (going south) around Lake Texoma, cross the Red River (leaving promise land) to get to Sherman Texas
 - Sometimes the "Promise Land" doesn't look as good as the pagan land next door
 - When there is no bread in the *House of Bread* a different house looks good
 - Believers often struggle with the prosperity of the wicked (common complaint)
 - It might have been wrong for them to leave (?) God even redeems our wrong paths
 - Without going to Moab we wouldn't have Ruth (link in the chain to Christ)

- Ruth 1:2 we meet this wandering Jewish family of four leaving the promise land
 - Elimelech = “God of the king” Naomi = “pleasant”
 - Mahlon = sick and weak Chilion = wasting away/pinning away and failing
 - Their sons names could be indicative of the circumstances they were born into - (hard)
 - Later, Naomi wants to change her name to fit her situation - Ruth 1:20

THE SADDENING

- The drama of this story is a Tragedy hard times/famine/fleeing the homeland....gets worse
- Ruth 1:3
 - their intention for leaving was a better life but Elimelech loses his life James 4:13-15
 - Naomi is now a widow in a foreign land
 - The bright spot is that the boys get wives Ruth 1:4 (marriage is honored)
 - For better or worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and health, until death do us part
- Ruth 1:5
 - 3 widows they were hoping for a better life but now they are surrounded by death - tragedy
 - God often uses tragedies to change our trajectory
 - Famine, economic downturn, health problems (Mahon/Chilion), death
 - Don't discount the difficulties in your life (Prov. 16:9) (Psalm 119:71, 75)
 - The Bible doesn't sugar coat our circumstances but there is purpose to problems and God can redeem our sordid and sad reality
- Ruth 1:6 some good news amidst all this bad news
 - When God “visits” that is the definition of good news
 - God sends bread to Bethlehem
- Ruth 1:7-12 - the three widows begin a journey to Bethlehem
 - We get a picture of the close relationship they had with each other. Very tender
 - Naomi was a model mother-in-law and the girls were good wives to her sons
 - This story will encourage us and challenge us in our homes. How is yours?
 - Naomi encourages marriage for her two widowed daughter-in-laws
 - Marriage is called a *kindness* from the Lord (1:8)
 - Marriage is also called *a rest* that God grants (1:9)
 - How do we think about and refer to marriage? Is marriage honored in our society?
- Ruth 1:13 in all her hard times Naomi sees God's hand
 - The world complains about God's supposed absence in tragedy. “Where was God when....”
 - People of faith see God's presence there. Don't erase God's presence from your problems
 - Naomi's Law is older than Murphy's Law Naomi's Law applies the law of faith
 - Naomi was not a pessimist, but she was a realist/theist. She saw God's hand in her reality and knew God shaped her tragedy and could redeem her reality
 - Your person, your place, your problems, your wrong paths, your pain.....
 - All these have a purpose in God's Providence