

CALL to PRAYER - pray for people to be converted - today and this weekend at evangelism event

Ruth 1:14-22 - Close, but not Converted

INTRO - today we are going to form an LLC. I am bi-vocational (though not a great businessman), so it is different kind of LLC - Loyalty, Law and Conversion - Family LOYALTY (in-laws), a LAW to live one's life by, &...CONVERSION. I want to end by using this remarkable family situation in Ruth as an analogy of the reality of conversion. We are *getting down to business* this morning and conversion is serious business. Mark 8:36 "what does it profit a man..." One thing I don't want us to miss in this narrative is that you can be close to heaven but not go heaven. You can be affiliated with Christianity but not be a Christian. You can have affections for Jesus but not be saved by Jesus. You can be close....but not converted. *Close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades...* not for heaven or conversion. *Pilgrim's Progress* "there is a way to hell from the very gates of heaven" serious business in our LLC today

Loyalty to Family

- You have to admire the love and affection that existed between the three widows in this story
Review of situation - famine, leave Bethlehem for Moab, 1 funeral, 2 weddings, 2 more funerals
 - This was a decade of disappointments for Naomi, Orpah and Ruth (Ruth 1:4)
- 1:14 Naomi wanted the best for her daughter-in-laws – better prospects elsewhere
 - She couldn't provide husbands for them (1:8-13) food and shelter was also iffy
 - Naomi repeatedly presses them to a path that seems to have better options
 - 1 Tim. 5:8 our faith informs us and motivates us to provide for our families
 - Naomi had a affectionate family (1:14) great love between in-laws
 - tremendous example of family love - in-laws were in-loves (mother in-love)
- Orpah took Naomi's advice but Ruth clung to her and exhibited a remarkable loyalty
 - Ruth 1:15-17 Ruth confirms her allegiance and changes her allegiance
 - She forsakes what security she might have in Moab and embraces her mother in-law
 - No prospects, no expectations...just loyalty no matter what
- Not all countries, cultures and religions are the same or are equally beneficial or good
 - Ruth chooses a different country, a different culture, a different religion,.....family
 - In clinging to Naomi she was leaving and forsaking all else.
 - Loyalty to one means leaving another

Law to Live by

- I am impressed with Naomi's faith, fortitude and attitude. (perhaps this attracted Ruth)
 - She has great perseverance in, and perspective of, her many problems
- 1:19 - their arrival in Bethlehem caused a stir. 10 years of hard life must have altered Naomi's appearance. We all wear the road we have walked
- 1:20 Naomi didn't disguise her disappointments in life. Naomi = pleasant Mara = bitter

- Ex. 15:22-26 the water that was expected to be sweet wound up being bitter
- Naomi's Law Naomi believed God was present in all her circumstances.
 - She did not erase God's hand from her hardships 1:13b
 - 1:20 - the Almighty - El Shaddah has dealt very bitterly with me (Gen. 17:1-2)
 - 1:21 - the LORD brought me back empty (Job 1:21)
 - 1:21b - The LORD witnessed against me (God speaks to us by our circumstances)
 - 1:21c - Shaddai has afflicted me (the Almighty abundant Provider)
 - People of faith do not erase God's hand from their hardships
 - humble ourselves under HIS mighty hand (1 Peter 5:6-7)
 - Naomi's worldview included God in her perspective of her problems...& she persevered
- 1:22 her times were in HIS hand (Ps. 31:15) and she shows up at harvest time
 - No coincidences in life – only providences in life. God was directing her path
 - The LORD brought her back empty.... but at harvest time. El Shaddai provides!

Conversion

- In this account God has provided an analogy about the reality of a true conversion
 - This is serious business in our LLC. No coincidence that you are here and hearing
 - This story provides description of an *almost Christian* (J. Wesley) or *altogether Christian*
- You can be close but not converted
 - Orpah and Ruth both initially left with Naomi and headed toward Bethlehem
 - Both had great affections and tears. One was close but only one was converted
 - One had a close association but only one was assimilated and converted
- “Not all countries, cultures and religions are the same or equally beneficial”
 - That statement might have offended some but I said it for a reason (needed distinction)
 - Conversion is a clinging to one while forsaking another. Conversion causes separation
 - Bethlehem or Moab God or other gods 1 Thess. 1:9 Acts 26:18
 - You can't be torn between two lovers - Joshua 24:15 Matt. 6:24 1 Kings 18:21
 - Orpah wept but eventually went back to her old gods, family, culture
- An almost Christian can have:
 - Great affections for Christ (hugs and kisses and tears)
 - Some want to flirt with Jesus but not totally follow Jesus (only journey part way)
 - Some just want to date, but they never want to marry
 - Embrace & kiss but no lifetime commitment. Orpah was close but no...
 - Close associations with Christ
 - I have a friend who thinks Jesus is a good option
 - Close doesn't count when I comes to conversion
- Conversion counts the costs and clings. Embraces full assimilation and total allegiance
 - Jesus is my only option for better or for worse.....forsaking all others
 - Where He goes I will go, His people are my people, His God is my God death/burial is
 - Ruth changed her allegiance and embraced the uncertainty of a new community/conver