

Ruth part 2

Ruth 1:6-22

Good evening everyone.

INTRODUCTION

Having departed from the promised land due to a famine with her husband and two sons and having gone to head the ungodly, forbidden land of Moab for greener pastures, Naomi was now utterly bereft by the deaths of both her husband and her sons.

She was left a hopeless widow in a foreign land without either the protection or provision of a husband or son in a male dominated society

(PAUSE)

Word reaches Naomi that there was food at last in Bethlehem...a little ray of sunshine in the darkness.

God is once again providing for his people back in Israel - things are picking up at home.

What would Naomi do?

Surely now the prodigal daughter would go home?

LET'S READ from Ruth ch 1 verse 6 continuing from where we left off this morning.

READ

[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 anything but 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, ” she told them. “Call me Mara, because the Almighty 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 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

MAIN SECTION

Naomi, and her daughters-in-law plan to return home, they make the necessary preparations.

Naomi leads the exodus

Things are looking ever so slightly brighter,

...there's a glimmer of hope – if in nothing else, in the fact that God is once again providing for the people of Israel.

And in V7 we read

“With her two daughters-in-law she [Naomi] left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

But what about her daughters-in-law?

Bethlehem may be home for Naomi but it wasn't for them, they were Moabite women.

Would they go too?

Well, it was customary in a context like this, even if the daughters-in-law were not planning on going the whole way with Naomi, for them to make the journey at least out of town with her; and that's what they do.

Naomi is going down the road and they are going down the road with her.

Naomi says to them...

“you go back now”.

“I want you to go back”

*“Go back to your mothers' house, each of you....and may the Lord show **hesed** to you ...that is 'loving kindness'.*

You've shown loving kindness to your dead husbands and to me. You have looked after me, you have been so kind...now may the LORD grant that each of you find rest in the home of another husband.

I pray for you, for the rest and fulfillment and the stability that remarriage will provide – may it be yours.

And then she said to them – *come here.*

She kissed them, and they wept aloud and said to her...

V10

“No, we won’t leave you...we’ll go back with you to your people”.

And in v11 Naomi says to them

“why would you do that?

Why would you come with me?

Am I going to have any more sons who could be your husband?

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 – 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!

(PAUSE)

There was a custom in Israel which will actually turn everything around for Naomi.

It’s found in Deuteronomy 25:5–10

If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

But Naomi says in verse 11 *"Both of my sons have died - I have no other sons to marry you Ruth and Orpah!"*

It's hopeless for you to remain committed to my family name.

However, she evidently does not remember that there is another relative whose name is Boaz (we'll meet him tomorrow), who may, under the exceptional circumstances be able to perform the duty of a brother-in-law to one of these ladies.

(PAUSE)

...after weeping for a second time in V14, we're told Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye and began her return to Moab...but Ruth clung to Naomi.

In v 15 Naomi tries one last time.

Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her – she's not too far away yet, make a run for it!

V16

“Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you.

LISTEN TO THESE INCREDIBLE WORDS.

*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
anything but death separates you and me”.*

The more you think about these words the more amazing they become.

Ruth's commitment to her destitute mother-in-law is simply astonishing.

Firstly, her commitment means leaving her own family and land.

Secondly, for Ruth it means a life of widowhood and childlessness, because Naomi has no man to give, and if Ruth married a non-relative, her commitment to Naomi's family would be ended.

Thirdly, it means going to an unknown land with a new people and new customs and new language.

Fourthly, it’s a commitment from Ruth on a par with marriage: *“Where you die I will die and there I will be buried”* (v. 17). In other words, she will never return home, not even after Naomi dies.

But the most amazing commitment of all is this:

Fifthly, "Your God will be my God" (v. 16).

Naomi has just said in verse 13, "*The Lord's hand has turned against me.*"

Naomi's experience of God was bitterness...but in spite of this, Ruth forsakes her religious heritage and her gods (the false gods of the Moabites) and she makes the God of Israel, the one true and living God, her God.

In Ruth we see an incredible woman.

- A woman with faith that sees beyond the present bitter setbacks.
- A woman free from the so-called securities and comforts of the world and her home.
- A woman with the courage to venture into the unknown with God.
- A woman with radical commitment to the relationships appointed by God.

Ruth was truly remarkable.

(PAUSE)

v19

And when Naomi realised that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her to return to Moab.

APP

Perhaps you're not a Christian and maybe the reason you're not a Christian is because of the sacrifices you will have to make if you become a Christian – the friends you may potentially lose, family members who may grow cold towards you, the habits and perhaps even hobbies that you would have to give up. Can I tell you now...It's worth it. To commit to Christ and to his way is the best decision you could ever make. He doesn't promise it will always be easy. But it will be worth it. If only all of would say:

Where you go Jesus, I am going.

I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back.

I'm committing my life to you, come what may.

(PAUSE)

So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem, and when they arrived in Bethlehem the whole town was stirred and they exclaimed

'Can this be Naomi?'

[20] "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty 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 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.

Naomi’s theology is actually very good, she understands the situation well.

Naomi is sure about two things:

God exists.

God is sovereign.

She’s right!

But she’s bitter.

As we move through this letter we will see an easing of Naomi’s bitter spirit.

CONCLUSION

Do you know that God exists? Do you really believe it? Do you believe that He’s sovereign? That all things are in His control?

When you see and understand and accept these truth’s ...then you will be free, like Ruth, to give up everything for Christ and for his cause.

If you’re a Christian, where is God asking you to go?

What is he asking you to do? To give up?

Are you willing to put the words of Ruth into action in your life? Are you willing to follow Ruth in the

abandonment of her own life for the will of God in her life?

(PAUSE)

If you're not a Christian, surely the created world around you is enough for you to know that there is a God (the Bible tells us it is), and so the question is what will you do with Him? Will you trust in Him and allow Him to have sovereign rule over your life?

LET'S PRAY.