

Ruth

Week 2 Ruth, Chapter 2

Title: Simple People, Simple Love

Introduction:

I have another bad dad joke this week.

"Want to hear a joke about a piece of paper? Never mind it's tearable."

Mike

Review the Story: (Picture of Samson)

- The book of Ruth takes place in the time of the Judges.
- The Judges are militant leaders that arose after Joshua passed away.
- Remember: Not everything the Bible reports does the Bible endorse.
- This is a dark time in Hebrew history - they have abandoned their mission to be the love and light of God into the world and the world has infiltrated them.
- Remember: When people forget who they are they forget their purpose. When they forget their purpose, they become driven by jealousy, anger and appetites. Everything streams from who you believe you are.
- Oppression, violence and famine have driven Naomi and her family out of the Promised Land.
- Naomi's story goes from bad to worse. In the land of Moab she loses her husband and sons.
- Based on nothing more than a rumor she returns home with one of her mourning daughters, Ruth.
- Let's pick up the story from here...

Scripture:

Ruth 2:1-7

Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. 2 And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." 3 So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech. 4 And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you!" And they answered, "The LORD bless you." 5 Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" 6 And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. 7 She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.' So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest."

Observation: (Picture of Naomi and Ruth)

The text is full of hints into the character of the major players. Let's pause and do a little character study:

Mike

- Boaz:
 - A hard-working man who has a great heart.
 - Notice the culture he has created in the spheres of his influence. He is kind, he is safe, he is reliable and honors ancient customs.
 - He is most likely Rahab's son. The Canaanite from Jericho. If this is true, he is a half Jew.

Leslie

- Naomi:
 - An older widow who has lost everything. Her wealth, children and her husband.
 - She is a Hebrew that left the "Promised Land" because of social chaos and famine.
 - She still believes in God but is bitter about her circumstances.
 - Her suffering drives her closer to God.
- Ruth:
 - Naomi's daughter-in-law.
 - A widow.
 - A Moabite, a poor immigrant whose husband died.
 - She is a hard worker.
 - She is optimistic, hopeful, and loyal.
 - She takes care of her mother-in-law.

Application: (Picture of Naomi and Ruth)

From the Story:

Mike

- We all want big flashy miracles to answer big messy pain. Sometimes the work of God is like a little seed planted.
- Love and honor are the robes that envelop this whole story. The incredible suffering just makes love and honor even more beautiful.

Leslie

- Amazing things can come from regular God honoring people living faithful lives.
 - Ruth cooperated with God's leading – even though the work was grueling and held little return for her at first. Her faithful obedience was rewarded abundantly.
 - The blessing came about in Ruth's life in the midst of everyday obedience. She did not have to work out her own good – God did it for her. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.
 - The blessing was shared – it was for Ruth, Naomi, Boaz, and as we now know, generations to come. In God's economy our faithfulness will be multiplied exponentially, beyond what we can even see.

- What can we learn about suffering from this story?
 - It is not our ultimate end.
 - To persevere through it with patience/long-suffering, not allowing doubt, discouragement, or despair to choke out our hope. This does not mean we won't wrestle with doubt, discouragement, or despair.
 - We aren't meant to suffer alone. Ruth and Naomi are an example of hope and pain walking together. Together they made it through, together they kept from sinking and giving into despair. We must remember to carry the hope of Ruth along with us when we are going through the pain of Naomi. Sometimes we need others to speak hope into us when all we feel is bitterness.
 - Suffering brings fellowship with Christ. "Still, it's what GOD had in mind all along, to crush him with pain. The plan was that he give himself as an offering for sin so that he'd see life come from it—life, life, and more life. And GOD 's plan will deeply prosper through him. Out of that terrible travail of soul, he'll see that it's worth it and be glad he did it." Isaiah 53:10-12 MSG It will be worth it. He is a God who wants to give his children good things, and the things he has in store are way beyond what we could make happen for ourselves.

Mike

- God shatters the human definitions of value and worth. Color of skin, wealth, gender, education. The only exclusivity is loyalty to God.
 - There is no "better" blood line. Romans 12:2 talks about circumcision of the heart. Boaz isn't fully Hebrew; Ruth is fully a Moabite. King David and even Jesus will come from this "tainted" blood line.
 - Immigrants are incredibly important to Jesus.
 - Ruth and Naomi were not bound by marriage, blood, or ethnicity, so we can know these are not requirements for two people to be that committed and loyal to one another.
 - This story teaches us to seek our sense of identity and worth in God alone. Naomi is returning to her original identity as one of God's chosen people, and Ruth is leaving an old identity behind by making Naomi's God her God.

From the Characters:

Mike

- Boaz is a simple businessman. He uses his little influence to honor God. He honors the ancient customs and lives generously.

Leslie

- Ruth is a simple hardworking young lady with a good heart. She even takes care of her mother-in-law.
 - Ruth never gave up! She remained hopeful and optimistic, making the best of what she had and diligently working to do what she could to provide for her and Naomi. Because of this, she ate and was satisfied, with leftovers! (v.14)
 - I think it's important to ask the question, why did Ruth do what she did? Why did she leave her homeland to go with Naomi into a life of such uncertainty, possible starvation, to be a foreigner in a strange land? What kept her going

when they arrived in this strange new land, wondering how they would keep from starving? I found myself wondering that as I was reading the story. Ruth was no longer bound to Naomi through marriage, her husband was dead. She was free to go. She was not under any obligation to Naomi. Was it guilt or fear? I don't think so....I think it was love. I think Ruth loved Naomi. Love will always drive us farther than duty, guilt, or fear. The same love that God had for us, who loved us so much that he gave us his Son. Love is the motivator and driving force.

- Naomi is an elderly lady who is, quite honestly, a little bitter at God. She has lost much and is in a season of grief and loss. All she can do is love well and encourage the younger people around her.
 - She represents someone under a lot of stress and grief, she's lost so much she wants to change her name to "bitter." She is heart broken and crushed, understandably so.
 - Grief is not wrong. It is certainly not wrong to feel the sadness and pain of loss. "Naomi was not wrong in tracing all her changes in condition to God, but she erred in ascribing any bitterness to God in His treatment of her. The father loves the child as really when he administers the disagreeable medicine which is to recover him from disease as when he is dandling him upon his knees. The only difference is in the manner in which the love is shown, and that is accounted for by the differences in the circumstances of the child. In like manner adversity, how bitter soever it may be, is a manifestation of God's love to us, designed for our ultimate and highest welfare. Now this may well reconcile us to trial. It will not make the trial less, but it will help us to bear it, just as the wounded man is braced for the amputation of a limb when he is told that it is indispensable if his life is to be preserved." (*W. M. Taylor, D. D.*)
 - "Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back." Isaiah 38:17 Much like "blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted"...it's not the mourning that's the blessing, but the comfort we experience as a result. We also have to get THROUGH the hardship in order to get TO the victory, otherwise we wouldn't call it victory!! And while the hardship can taste so bitter, the victory tastes all that much sweeter.

Mike and Leslie back and forth

- A portrait of love from 1 Cor. 13 (TPT)
 - Love is large and incredibly patient, gentle and consistently kind to all (vs. 4)
 - Love does not traffic in shame and disrespect, nor selfishly seek its own honor. (v.5)
 - Love is not easily irritated or quick to take offense. (vs.5)
 - Love joyfully celebrates honesty and finds no delight in what is wrong. (v.6)
 - Love is a safe place of shelter, for it never stops believing the best for others.(v.7)
Love never takes failure as defeat, for it never gives up. (v.7)
 - Love never stops loving. (v.8)

- Above all else, let love be the beautiful prize for which you run. (v.13)
- God is going to honor each of them for the love and honor they have.

Mike

Final Thoughts:

Illustration: A few years ago I was working on another big “Mike” project. This one was personal. Honestly, it fell apart. I lost a little money and this specific idea didn’t take off. I was sitting in my office thinking about a good friend of mine whose last business idea really took off. I was making my jealousy with prayers of the good things I could do if God would just give me more. I was thinking/praying “God, if you would just give me this success then I could give more to the poor and more to the church. I could even buy a bigger home and adopt.” In the middle of trying to hide my jealous heart with prayers of intention I heard the door to the garage open and my family came pouring into the house. I heard the Spirit whisper in my heart, “Be faithful with what I have given you.”

I was brought to one of the biggest shifts in mental and prayer energy. Instead of obsessing with what I could do if God gave me all I wanted, I shifted my attention to what I am doing with what he has given me. In my heart I shifted from jealousy to faithfulness.

This is the beauty in the story of Ruth. No wealthy kings, no super powered war heroes, no giant miracles, just simple honorable people that live in charitable love.

Next Steps Cards:

Who are you in this story?

- Boaz: A hardworking, honorable, regular person who has been given a little margin in life.
- Naomi: Someone who has lost much, but chooses to love the people God has placed around her anyway.
- Ruth: An industrious person with a heart of loyalty and no special traits. She lives taking care of and loving those around her.

What does this mean for you?

When you are done, I want you to process what that means for you and reflect on your Next Steps card.

Resources:

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

The Bible Project: Judges; www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOYy8iCfIJ4

