

B90 3

The Faithfulness that God Wants

Ruth 1:6-18

INTRO:

We have covered a lot ground already in the Bible in 90 days. We saw Creation was good. We saw that it was Contaminated by sin. We looked at how God responded by establishing the Covenant with Abraham. This week we read Joshua and it was so nice to get back into narratives. *We have read all the sacrifices and all the laws and all the commandments in the Torah! But, then we get to the distribution of the land, and oh . . . my!* It helps to rememberer that this is about God's faithfulness to his promises.

We have all heard that God works in mysterious ways, **right?** Well, we saw it in Joshua 2:10 and following with the spies being hidden by Rahab the prostitute. And Rahab and her family are spared because she helped God's messengers.

In Joshua 24, we read about the Covenant renewal. Judges is about the people's unfaithfulness and God's continued faithfulness. Like the refrain of a song, we read over and over:

“In that day, there was no king in Israel...”

Israel wanted to be like everybody else and have a king rule over them. They already had a king! They had the king of all kings . . . they had God.

Then we read the book of Ruth. *Now we are getting somewhere!* The Book of Ruth tells the story of Ruth and Orpah, two women of Moab who had married two sons of Elimelech and Naomi, Judeans who had settled in Moab to escape a famine in Judah. The husbands of all three women died. Naomi plans to return to her native Bethlehem and encourages her daughters-in-law to return to their families. Orpah ultimately does leave, but not Ruth.

Her Moto is “**I go where you go, I'm going to be faithful.**” The faithfulness that God is looking for . . . *and in a Moabite! God works in mysterious ways . . .*

ME:

When I did the Bible in 90 days 15 years ago at another appointment, I said I'd never do it again! I was glad I did it but it is so much work! But I am glad I am doing it again! And I am glad I am taking you along with me through the Wednesday night study, or through these sermons. We will all have great opportunities for God to reveal himself to us in new and deeper ways through this experience.

YOU:

What has God revealed to you about himself so far? What do YouTube hope he will give you new understanding about today?

Well, let's pray and then we can let God have his say...

GOD:

Ruth 1:6 Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had considered his people and given them food. 7 So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. 8 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 The LORD grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. 10 They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? 12 Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, 13 would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the LORD has turned against me." 14 Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. 15 So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods;

return after your sister-in-law.” 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!” 18 When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

WE:

The whole book of Ruth is read aloud in synagogues during the Jewish feast of Shav-u-ot (or Pentecost), which celebrates the wheat harvest. The book tells just one story, and it’s helpful to take in the whole story at once. Reading aloud also lets us engage the text with more than one sense. [So this is your homework!](#) I encourage you to go home and read this short book aloud. As you do, you can underline or highlight the words spoken by each character. As you study the biblical story, you can learn about the main characters by paying attention to how they are portrayed. **How does the author portray Naomi, Ruth and Boaz? How do other characters describe these individuals?**

Why do you think Naomi encouraged her daughters-in-law to return home? Is she acting out of kindness, or is she hoping to free herself from them as some kind of burden?

Why do you think Ruth and Orpah wanted to remain with her? Ruth is commended for remaining with Naomi in chapter 2, but Orpah is never condemned for returning home. **Do you think her decision wrong? What do Orpah and Ruth's decisions show us about their character?**

Some think that Naomi has given up on God's love for her, but she hopes that he will show kindness to Orpah and Ruth. The word she uses for "**kindness**" refers to God's unfailing, covenantal love. God ends up showing his love to Naomi by providing an heir for her through Ruth.

Where else in the Bible does God display his faithful love despite human doubt? What does this say about God's unfailing love?

In times of difficulty, how can you remember that God's love is unfailing?

It's kind of like this. Two decades after forgetting where he parked, a resident of Frankfurt, Germany, finally found his car right where he left it. The man, now 76-years-old, reported the car missing in 1997 to police when he couldn't find the car after leaving it in a parking lot outside an industrial building. After hearing nothing, the man assumed the car was lost permanently. But a construction crew preparing to demolish the building and lot twenty years later reported the derelict vehicle to police. After checking through old records, police located

the two-decade-old report. When the man and his daughter went to recover the car, it wouldn't start.

Do you ever feel like a car that has been parked and forgotten by the world? Do you ever feel forgotten by God? He has not forgotten you.
And he did not loose you in the parking lot!

It's all about loyalty. Ruth's words are a clear display of loyalty. It would have been easier for Ruth to return home and start fresh. **What do you think motivated her to stay with Naomi?**

Listen to verse 17 again:

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.

What does this passage demonstrate about Ruth's commitment to Naomi?

Who or what are you committed to in your life? Are you as committed to God as Ruth was to Naomi?

By staying with Naomi, Ruth distances herself from **Chemosh**, the god of Moab and connects herself with God. Naomi had just claimed that **"the hand of Yahweh has gone out against me"** in verse 13, making Ruth's faithfulness to the Lord even more impressive.

How does Ruth's loyalty to Naomi exemplify God's loyalty to his people?

God is so patient with us. He was patient with Israel too. Every time they turned their backs on him, he waited for them to see the light or have the curtains drawn back by one of his messengers. God wants to be our King, he wants to be your King. When we have had enough of living our lives with our backs turned towards God, He welcomes us back! The faithfulness that God wants is our relying on him, trusting in him through whatever life brings.

THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE: **The Faithfulness that God wants is our modeling Ruths dedication to Naomi ... Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.**

YOU:

The book of Ruth closes with a genealogy pointing to David and eventually to Jesus. God uses the seemingly minor events of this story—events that affect only a few people—as part of his larger plan to bring salvation to the world. **What seemingly insignificant events in your life has God used to achieve a greater purpose?**

How do you think God's promises of loyalty affect our lives ?

CLOSE:

In his novel *Jayber Crow*, the Kentucky farmer and writer Wendell Berry has his character Jayber talk about the quiet work of God's guidance in our lives:

Often I have not known where I was going until I was already there. I have had my share of desires and goals, but my life has come to me or I have gone to it mainly by way of mistakes and surprises. Often I have received better than I deserved. Often my faintest hopes have rested on bad mistakes. I am an ignorant pilgrim, crossing a dark valley. And yet for a long time, looking back, I have been unable to shake off the feeling that I have been led—make of that what you will.

Let's pray for God to lead us now...