



March 20th, 2019

***Faithfulness in the Midst of Chaos****"In the days when the judges ruled.." - Ruth 1:1*

As you began this week's devotional reading, you encountered the book of Ruth. The book itself is pretty short and perhaps even seems a little out of place, but it's an incredibly important section in the story of God's redemption in the Old Testament. If you didn't take a close look at the video in the Monday reading of the app, go back and check it out. It gives a wonderful overview.

The video makes a brief allusion to the opening line of the book, which we really should spend a little more time on. What we learn in Ruth 1:1 is that this story takes place during the time period of the book of Judges. Why is this important? Think back to last week's readings as well as our Sunday School discussions. The book of Judges showcases Israel's continued decline in obedience to God. In Sunday School we zeroed in on Jephthah and showed how, through him, the people strayed so far from God that they were just as bad as the Canaanites that God had driven out to give them the promised land. There really isn't a lot of hope in the book of Judges. Sure we see God go through some cycles of redemption, but they are immediately followed with even worse disobedience. By the time the book ends the people of Israel aren't doing anything to make them recognizable as the chosen people of God. Everyone is guided by their own eyes - not by God!

That's what makes the storyline of Ruth so compelling. This awesome story of loyalty, grace, and mercy is taking place in the midst of utter chaos and disobedience in the nation of Israel. It's like having a blossoming romance taking place in the middle of an active war zone. There's a few key things we learn by understanding the book of Ruth this way:

1. God is moving and actively working in our lives even when there's absolutely no seeming evidence visible around us! God is never mentioned by the author of Ruth and I think that's on purpose. I think the author is trying to show that even when we don't seem to see or hear Him, God is still moving behind the scenes - he's the one pulling the strings of our stories together. Even in the midst of utter chaos in the Israelites God is shown moving in the lives of people. When you feel like God is distant, you can be confident that He's closely and at work!
2. God's work happens in the micro and macro scale. The cool thing about the book of Ruth is seeing how God is working on two levels. First, he's at work within the character's of the story. He actively shapes the lives of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz for the better. In the end these three find themselves blessed by the way God weaves their story together. But on the bigger scale, God is also working towards the ultimate story. In the midst of the Judges time period chaos, God is making sure that His big promise of a Savior stays intact. The characters of Ruth are integral to the eventual arrival of Jesus! We see this in the end, when Ruth gives birth to Obed, who's line continues to David and eventually Jesus. God promised Eve that her offspring would crush the serpents head. God here is making sure that lineage continue and is safe in the middle of a people Israel who won't listen and are going their own ways. It's like he's keeping a small delicate flower alive in the midst of a nuclear explosion.
3. The story shows us what happens when we are obedient in this world. The blessings that Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz get all come out of their willingness to commit to godly character. When we choose to walk in obedience, life may be difficult (as Naomi and Ruth saw first hand), but God will always bless that obedience and cause fruit to come from it!