

SCRIPTURE

In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. ²The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. ³But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, ⁵and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. ⁶Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food. ⁷So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. ⁸But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. Ruth 1:1-9

¹⁴Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." ¹⁶But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Ruth 1:14-16

BACKGROUND

- **Time of the Judges** – "... each one doing what is right in his own eyes." (Judges 17:6)
- **Ruth was of Moabite origin.**
 - Moabites were despised because of their origin.
 - Sodom, Gomorrah, Lot and his daughters
 - Moabites were avowed enemies of Israel.
 - The exodus from Egypt
 - Balak, Balaam
 - Moabites were forbidden in the Jewish community because of their religious practices. (Deuteronomy 23:3-4)
 - Chemosh – divine protector and war leader, Baal worship, child sacrifice
- **The backstory**
 - Ruth married into a family of Jewish sojourners from near Bethlehem.
 - Elimelech, Naomi, and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion
 - She endured a 10-year journey of loss, tragedy, deprivation, barrenness, emotional and physical suffering.
 - The townspeople undoubtedly viewed her with suspicion, blame, prejudice and scorn after her pilgrimage to Bethlehem.

By human standards, the odds were stacked against Ruth.

Heaven stacks itself against the odds!

- Her options were few.
- Heaven is never limited by inherited circumstances, human limitations, and situations beyond our control.
- God still delights in raising up the lowly. (Psalm 133:7-9)
- He glories to make His strength known in our weaknesses. (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- We must avoid the trap of fatalistic thinking.
- We are raised with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly places – New Covenant reality. (Ephesians 2:5-6)
- We have already been Redeemed by the Kinsman Redeemer!
- We are an awaiting bride.
- Remember Gehazi and the chariots of fire. (2 Kings 6:15-17)

Ruth had no control over the violent currents shaping her life.

- This was not the life she envisioned and signed up for.
- She displayed incredible loyalty and courage despite her circumstances.
- Ruth was temporarily stripped of dignity, self-worth, and value.

Like Ruth, many of you have faced unforeseen events that have completely altered life's landscape.

- Life took an unexpected turn, and you were caught in a torrent beyond your control.
- The current left you drifting in a sea of loss, confusion, and uncertainty.
 - God, who are you? Where were you? How could you let that happen?
 - Confusion, resentment, anger towards God
 - We settled for sluice gate Christianity.

The sovereign God, who sees you, is still working amid the unfamiliar landscape.

- Ruth, stop bearing the shame of your uncontrolled circumstances!
- Life must always be examined in the light of the Word, but it does not necessarily mean we are enduring punishment because of disobedience and rebellion.
- God-given destiny is not discarded when you endure a flood!

- You are not written off as a castaway.
- Like Ruth, God will never forget your labor of love, (Hebrews 6:10)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 6:8-10

- This beautiful promise was not spoken to one, single perfect person.
- It was not given to anyone who had their act completely together.

We wrongly mistake brokenness and emotional devastation as disqualification.

The *LORD is near* to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18)

The Lord is *near*, but are we letting Him *close*?

How about your heart?

- Japanese Kintsugi art - "joined with gold"
- We underestimate the eternal beauty of scars and the value of steadfastness in brokenness.
- Song lyrics from my childhood, "*How About Your Heart?*"
- We were not intended to walk with God at arm's length with a guarded heart.
- We cannot tape over a flashing check engine light forever.

Ruth possessed a "burn the ships" mentality in her unwavering commitment and loyalty.

- Conquistador, Hernan Cortés – 1519 – "Burn the Ships"

But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you." (Ruth 1:16-17)

The Lord honors unfailing devotion and loyalty, but He would have our whole heart

- Will we allow the Lord to heal what "eats us from inside?"
- Tulip Tree
- Ruth continued to act faithfully and worked diligently.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”
Revelation 21:4

Jesus is at the center of this prophetic promise.

- Jesus paid the ultimate price for wiping the tears from our eyes.
 - This is not God righting all the wrongs.

This act is Jesus receiving even more of the reward of His suffering.

- Jesus anticipates this moment.

Jesus will release some of this grace now, into our present reality.

- The now and not yet realities of the Kingdom.

The Great Redeemer, all the while, was writing His story in the life of Ruth.

- He foreshadowed the story of the redemption of all humanity in her life’s story.
- Her life demonstrated the future inclusion of all people in covenant relationship with God.
- She became recognized and memorialized as a woman of great virtue and honor.
- She was the great-grandmother of King David, the greatest King of Israel. (Ruth 4:17)
 - Rabbinic Tradition – Ruth lived to see David.
- Matthew’s Gospel – in the lineage of Jesus

He, too, is faithfully writing His story and advancing His kingdom in you.

Scars by Bob Farrell

*I hurt when I think of the things that He suffered, The way in which He died—
Wounds taken in my place, inflicted upon Him, Sweet Son of the Most High.
Death, were you so sure when you silenced the Master? Yet, where is your sting?
The garden tomb is so empty; He stole your trophy away when He opened His eyes.*

*See those scars, precious scars, How they prove what the Savior went through.
Do you love those old scars for the strength they bring to you?
Reminders that suffering was part of His plan for you.*

*Got some of my own scars, some hurt to remember those emblems of old pain
And though everyone has them, I sometimes want to hide them when they go to aching
But pain is a tool in the hands of the Surgeon and to share in His love, I must share in His suffering
And if scars were all that I had I'd do it all just the same*