

The Lord's Message: Ruth: Keeping the Faith

Date: September 4, 2022

Where: Tilghman United Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: Ruth 1: 1-18

We are beginning a new sermon series on the book of Ruth. The book of Ruth is a very short book, only 4 chapters. The book is placed between the book of Judges and the book of 1 Samuel. In this book, we will learn about God working in the lives of ordinary people, and revealing to us that we are all part of God's wonderful plan. Everyone lives have a purpose and are important to God.

Let us pray.

The story begins with, "in the days when the judges ruled." In Israel's history after the death of Joshua, there was a vacuum of human leadership. God was still in charge of the nation, but there was not a human leader to direct the people, like Moses and Joshua. It says very pointedly in **Judges 2:10**, "After the whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what He had done for Israel." A cycle developed: 1) The Israelites live in peace while serving and loving God.

2) The Israelites forgot God and worship idols.

3) God punished the Israelites by sending neighboring nations to fight and rule over them.

4) God forgave the people and saved them by sending a judge to help conquer their enemy.

There was total of 16 judges. The best known are Deborah, Sampson and Gideon. The most famous and last judge was Samuel. So, this gives you some ideal of the governmentally what is going on in Israel for the background of this book.

In **Ruth 1:1**, we discovered that there is a famine in the Israel. This famine could have been caused by God's punishment on the Israelites for their unfaithfulness. The famine could have been the result of drought or raiding parties from the neighboring nations. In **Judges 6:3-6**, the neighboring nation raid the Israelites' crops.

We also learned that there is a family in Bethlehem that leave and settle in Moab to escape the famine. This is an important clue as the story unfolds. Bethlehem means "House of Bread." This is the place where David is anointed king by Samuel. David makes his home in Bethlehem. It is also the place where Jesus is born. The famine must have been so severed that there was not enough bread in the "House of Bread."

So, the family leave their country and go to the country of their enemy. The region where the country of Moab is located in now is the country of Jordan. Moab is described as “An emerald in the sand.” The reason is because the region is a green, verdant valley in the middle of the desert. The name means “from my father.” Moab was the son of Lot. Lot if you remember was saved by God through the insistence of Abraham from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Moabites worshipped the idol Chemosh with human sacrifices.

We are told the names of each person in the family. The father’s name is Elimelech, which in Hebrew means My God is king, which is a similar name for Christ. The mother’s name is Naomi. Her name means pleasant. Their two sons names are Mahlon and Kilion. Their names mean sick and finished.

In verse 3, sometime after living in Moab, Elimelech dies. We are not told how he died. Did he die of the effects of the famine and the travel? Did he die because one of the Moabites found out that he was an Israelite and may have accused of him of spying? Did he because he did not seek the Lord for help and went to live in a foreign nation that worship idols? He might have simply died of old age or from contracting a disease. The breadwinner of the family dies.

Now the sons become the breadwinners or the providers from the family. In verse 4, we learned that they marry two Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. Orpah means fawn. Ruth means friend. It is interesting to me that these Moabite women have Hebrew names. Everything seems to be going okay for the family. The sons are married. They are providing for their mother and their wives. Both sons have assumed the role as the breadwinners or providers.

In verse 5, tragedy strikes. Both sons die. Now Naomi and her daughters in law are left with anyone to provide for them. What are they to do?