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Good morning. Children may be dismissed to Children's Church. Before I get started, I wanted to remind everyone that this is our. Can you turn me up a little please? Sorry. Little bit louder. Thank you. Okay. Before I get started, I wanted to remind everyone that this is our retired ministers Sunday. So we're taking up a collection to help. You know, support all these ministers who have served us so well over the years and who are now retired. And so we have an offering play right as you walk out the door. If you will just drop something in there to you know what we give them is not very much, but every little bit helps. And so just on your way out, please, please bless those guys for all of their faithful years of service. Let's have a word of prayer. Heavenly Father. Thank you so much that you love us and that you care for us and that you made a way for us to be reunited with you. Thank you that you are faithful to us, that if we will weigh and trust in you and submit to your will and your goodness and your plan for our lives, that you will bring us through any trials that we are facing, that you will bring us into goodness and righteousness. And the joy of being your children in your family. We thank you for this and praise you in Jesus name. Amen. Right. Today we are going to study the book of Ruth. It's something, you know, a lot of my messages are topical. You know, I pick a subject and I preach on it, but today we're just going to go start reading through the book of Ruth and learning, digging into the history and also learning what we can learn from the people involved. But before we begin, I just want to point out something that is has been very helpful to me as I study anything in the Old Testament. Ruth is in the Old Testament, for those of you who don't know. The entire the point of the Old Testament is to point towards Jesus. And everything will make so much more sense if when you read the Old Testament, you keep that in mind that somehow what I'm reading right now is pointing towards Jesus. That's always very important. Or as as Chuck Mr likes to say, the New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed. All right. So let's begin. Ruth chapter one, verse one. Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled. All right. We're going to stop right there and talk about it. The days when the judges ruled. What is going on there? Well, as some of you, it seems like every generation has their their Moses movie as they're growing up. For some of you, Moses is Charlton Heston. For some of us, it's an animated Val Kilmer. But somehow along the way, all of us have heard the story of Moses and leading the people out of Egypt and through the wilderness. And it's a very popular story. We all know it. But as as as the story progresses through the Bible, our knowledge of what happened kind of goes down and down. And so I'm going to give you a real brief recap. So Moses leads the people out of Egypt. He gets them right to the border of the promised land and they send him some spies and the spies. All the two of them say we're not going in there. It's full of giants. They're going to kill us. And God says, all right. And then I'm going to lead you around the desert for 40 years till this generation is dead. And then the next generation, he leads up to the promised land. And God says, how about you guys? You want to go into the promised land? And they say, hey, God. And so God takes Joshua and they enter the promised land and they drive out all of the all of the people there. And that's what the book of Joshua is about. OK. And so they clear out the promised land and they take it and they set up their home. And God says, if you will obey my commandments and love me and serve me, then I will protect you and I will bless you. And the people say, yes, God. And that's where the book of Joshua ends. And then the next book is the book of Judges. And that book starts right where the second generation after that first generation in your promised land, that second generation is now taking their place and everything kind of goes. Downhill, bad. And they start forgetting about God and they start worshiping idols and it gets bad. And so God, in order to try and bring the people back to him, bring their hearts back to him, he starts allowing bad things to happen. You know, he allows, you know, famine and attacks and stuff like that because he wants the people to say, hey, it used to be good and now it's bad. And I think it's because we've forgotten about God and he's hoping that the people will come back in their hearts. And so that's what the book of Judges is about. It's this time when it's just real bad for the children of Israel because they have turned their backs on God. During this time is what's talking about here in the days when the judges ruled. OK. And the very next line is there was a famine in the land. Well, that was why there was a famine in the land, because during this time, God is allowing stuff to happen to try and wake the people up out of their sin. All right. And so this book of Ruth takes place during the book of Judges. A certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab. He and his wife and his two sons. OK, I don't know what version you're reading from, but mine says a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah. And the first time I read that, I thought it was saying a certain man of Bethlehem, comma, and then his name Judah. But the man's name is not Judah. What is that saying? There is he's from Bethlehem, Judah, which is like Carmel, Indiana. OK, he went to dwell in the country of Moab. Now Moab is a name that we first see way back in, I think it's Genesis. You have all probably heard the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. And there's these these little group of towns and their sin was so wicked that God said, I'm going to destroy them. But before he destroys them, he finds one guy there who still loves him. And that man's name is Lot. And Lot and his wife and his two daughters are there. And so God comes in and sends his angels. They come in, they rescue Lot and his wife and their daughters and they pull him out of the city just as fire and brimstone are raining down and Lot's wife turns around and looks back at the town because her heart still belongs to that town. And she turns into a pillar of salt. Remember that? So anyways, so now it's just Lot and his two daughters and they run off. Into the wilderness and now they're all alone and all of their friends and family are been wiped out by God. And and the two lots, two daughters are a little bit worried because now there's no more available men around and they say, what about our how are we ever going to have children? How are we going to have a future? And so their clever plan is to get dad drunk and lie with him and have children. And one of those children was named Moab, which means of his father. And so that's where this now this country called Moab, where this man is going, is the descendants of Moab. These are the Moabites. And these are all descended from this one child of Lot, child slash grandchild. And so back to our story, verse two, the name of the man was a limalek. His wife, the name of his wife was Naomi and the name of his two sons were Malon and Kailian, Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah, and they went into the country of Moab and remain there. Now, here's where we can find our first real important lesson from the book of Ruth. All right. Why was God why was there a famine in Bethlehem? Bethlehem means house of bread. Why was there a famine in God's house of bread? Because the children were being rebellious and God brought this to wake them up out, to call them back to holiness. He didn't want the people to starve. He just wanted them to wake up and repent. And so what would the proper response have been? If you were living in this land at that time, it would have been to repent and God would have brought back bread. But instead, this man, a limalek, whose name means my God is king, he says, instead, I think I'm going to go over here to this pagan country and I'm going to bring my family away from God's house of bread. And I'm going to go over this pagan country and see if we can do any better over there. And that's always that's always bad. And so the little lesson we can learn from the first mistake a limalek makes here is if things are going wrong in your life, don't doubt God's goodness. Don't doubt his faithfulness. He may be leading you through something for a time, for a reason. Just stay loyal to him. Remember that he's always been faithful and true and good to everyone throughout history, and he's not going to be treating you any different. Just be patient and prayerfully turn to him. Say, God, is there something I need to repent of? But just wait upon him and the bread will return, as we'll see in this story. So we have a limalek who I said his name. My God is king and his wife, Naomi, whose name means my delight or my pleasantness. He also had two sons. Their names in Hebrew were Maklon and Killion. And in your book, it probably says Malon and Charlyon or something. But Maklon means sick and Killion means wasting away. And the next little lesson that we can pull out of here is our words have power. And God created the whole universe. Everything that exists is created because God used words. And he has given that same power to us. And it's funny how I grew up when I was a little kid thinking, "Oh, I wish I was a superhero and I wish I had superpowers." And it turns out that I do. And so do we. We have the power of words. And I can start talking about warm, gooey chocolate chip cookies. And immediately make a chemical change happen in your bodies where suddenly your stomach is one. Warm, gooey chocolate chip cookies. See, words have power. And you can use your words in this world for light and life and goodness, or you can use them for death. And a limalek, Naomi, named their kids sickness and wasting away. And as we're about to find out, both their kids died young. They died as young men. So be very careful about the words that you speak in other people's lives, about the words you speak over your children. Speak words of life, speak words of encouragement and love things that strengthen and build up and don't speak that death over them. All right. A limalek, Naomi's husband, died and she was left and her two sons. They took wives of the women of Moab. The name of one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about 10 years. Then both Malon and Shillian also died. So the woman, the woman survived her two sons and her husband. So we have kind of a sad start to our little story here. But what happens next? Verse six, then she arose, Naomi arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab. For she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had visited his people by giving them bread. Guess what? God brought bread back to the house of bread, Bethlehem. They should have just stayed around. They should have waited on God and trusted in him. So therefore she went out from the place where she was and her two daughters-in-law with her and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, go return each to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that you may find rest each in the house of her husband. So she kissed them and they lifted up their voices and wept. And they said to her, surely we will return with you to your people. But Naomi said, turn back my daughters. Why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb that they may be your husbands? Turn back my daughters, go for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters, for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me. And they lifted up their voices and wept again and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. So what's going on? So Ruth, Naomi is she's like, she's headed home. She's like, I'm going back to my people. This is like this country is not my country. You're not my people, not my gods. And from what I'm told, there's bread back there. So she's like, I'm leaving. And then, of course, the daughters-in-law who have left their families to come be a part of her family, they're thinking, well, I guess I'll go with her. She's family now. And Naomi says, now, hang on a second. My country, my people, they don't like the Moabites. All right. If you come back there, you're not going to find a husband. All right. And so then what choice do you have for her husband? Because she's like, I'm not pregnant. I'm not getting married any time soon. And even if I do, how many years you're going to have to sit here waiting to see if it's a son and see if he grows into a man and then marry you? And she's like, it's it'd be so much easier for you if you just stay here, find one of these many available Moabite bachelors and marry them, make a life, make a family for yourself here. And she keeps talking to them and trying to convince them and eventually, Orkba, she says, OK, all right, I love you, Naomi, but that's some good wisdom. I'm going to stay here and find a good Moabite man and settle down. But it says, Ruth clung to her. Verse 15, Naomi speaking, look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods return after your sister-in-law. But Ruth said, entreat me not to leave you or to turn back from following after you. For wherever you go, I will go. And wherever you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die. And there I will be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if anything but death, parts you and me. And so when Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her. Now, I don't think that means she gave her the silent treatment. I think what that saying is she stopped trying to convince her to stay. Now. That was a really amazing thing for Ruth to do. Do you see? Naomi was saying, Ruth, I have I have nothing for you. All right. There's nothing, nothing. All the things that you might want in life, I don't have them. And if you come with me, you won't get them. You want to have a good life. Go that way. But but Naomi said, I don't want your stuff. I want you. It says, Naomi clung to her. She didn't care about the husband or the children or any of that stuff. She loved Naomi and she wanted to stay with Naomi. And I think there's an important lesson that we can learn there. And that is sometimes God holds out his hand to us and it's empty. And he says. Well. Are you just here for the stuff I give you? Or are you here for me? Do you love me because I give you blessings or do you love me? And he's giving us an opportunity to cling to him the way Ruth clung to Naomi. And as we will see. Ruth wound up having a fantastic life because she made the right choice. She she chose the relationship instead of just the gifts of the relationship. And that is so important in our. As we as we live our Christian lives. It you need to get to know God, you need to spend your quiet time, your prayer time getting to know him. Because. All of us, I remember when my dad used to go on. Work trips, you know, he he he shot video for a living and so he would often have to travel around the country to this or that seminar. Set up a bunch of cameras, shoot video and he'd be gone for a week or so at a time and then he would come home and it kind of got into the habit in our household that he'd come home. I would be really excited to see what present he brought home. Because he'd always come home with some little thing. And I remember one time he didn't come home with anything and I was so sad and disappointed. And and as I look back, I realized, you know, I I got to the point where I wasn't so much missing my dad as I was just looking forward to whatever thing he brought me. And that was and, you know, I'm embarrassed at that. We don't want that kind of relationship with our kids. We don't want our kids only to love us because of the things we give them. We love giving them stuff because that's love. You know, that's how one of the ways we express love. But we really at the end of the day hope that they love us and that they choose to love us and God wants the same thing. So Naomi makes this really beautiful pledge where. Wherever you go, I will go wherever you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die. And there will I be buried. And God help me if anything but death. Parts you and me. It was just a beautiful thing to say. Now, the two of them starting in verse 19, the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. And it happened when they had come to Bethlehem that all the city was excited because of them. And the woman said, is this Naomi? And I forgot to tell Aaron this, but I'm going to have you put some pictures up on the screen. They're on the desktop. But we're going to talk about the next thing. But we're going to talk about this trip they made back. All right. If you have an image in your head until we get our picture up, there's three pictures are called pick one, pick two, pick three and just put any of them up there. You got the Mediterranean and then you got Israel and then you have the salt sea over here. And further out east is the country of Moab and to travel from Moab back to Bethlehem, the best case scenario, you're looking at 50 miles through the wilderness. Worst case scenario, because at the time there's two seas right there. And at some point, some parts in history, there we go. Click next. Give me a different. Give me a different one. I know I said put anyone up, but give me the next one. OK. OK. So that that little right above the Arab Valley, you see there's like a big lake there and it says Judah on the left side says Moab on the right. Well, just north of the word Judah, there's a couple of dots. And one of those dots is Jerusalem and Bethlehem is just right below Jerusalem. And so Moab is down here on the bottom right. And OK, so as you can see, there's that big lake there. Now, sometimes those there's two lakes there and sometimes they're connected. Sometimes throughout history, they've been connected. Sometimes they've not been. And so it's possible that at the time that they made this trip, that those lakes weren't connected and they could have just cut straight between them. And then gone up. And that would have been about a 50 mile walk. But if those lakes were connected, then they would have had to probably go around the southern end of those lakes. And so some people speculate as it talks about here in verse 19, they went till they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, all the city was excited because of them. Some people speculate that all of that excitement had to do with the fact that these two women just walked 50 to 100 miles through the desert alone, through the wilderness. And. And they say, is this Naomi? So we kind of get the feeling that maybe, you know, they all knew of her. They they heard maybe they knew her before she left. But but whatever the case was, when they got back to town, there was a big commotion. There was a lot of talk going on about this woman and this mobile, her daughter-in-law, who have traveled back through the wilderness and come back home to Bethlehem. And this is going to be important later in the story. All right. But. Verse 20, Naomi says to them, do not call me Naomi. Remember, we said Naomi means pleasantness. She said, do not call me Naomi. Call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me and Mara means bitterness. I went out full and the Lord has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has afflicted me? So Naomi returned and Ruth, the Moabite is her daughter-in-law with her who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. That's the end of chapter one. And we are going to stop right there. The three things she's bitter, Naomi is bitter when she comes back, but at least she's home. You know, even in her bitterness, she's made the right decision. And I don't know about you, but there's been times in my life where I am frustrated or mad or bitter or something. But even if I have a terrible attitude, I still choose to make the right decision. And in the end, that's always the best decision. That's the best thing you need to do. Even if you don't feel like it, even if you're mad and bitter, just trust in God, come back to him in faithfulness. And as we're going to see throughout the rest of the story, that was the wise decision and God is going to bless Naomi. So in conclusion today for Ruth chapter one, the three things that I hope that we can take away is number one, trust in God's faithfulness. All right. Even if times look difficult, wait on him, trust in him. If he calls your heart to repentance, do what he says. Number two, your words have power. Be very careful about your words and how you use them. And then number three, cultivate your love for God, not just for his gifts. God wants real relationship with you, and there will be times where he gives you gifts and there will be times when he doesn't just trust in his goodness. All right. Remember the cross that Jesus went to and remember how great an act of love that was and say, a God who loves me that much is going to see me through whatever I'm going through right now. Let's have our moment of open worship. Seventeenth and I'm getting a little stronger each day. I do have a few days to go here, but I want to thank everyone for their cards, letters, their visits, the food. You've all been fantastic and I just appreciate you being all the larger part of Janet and my family. There were three or four cardiologists in my room Easter weekend. My visit was a couple of days. My surgery was a couple of days prior to that. And Dr. Pitts, a very great man, he stopped by on Monday. He wasn't my surgeon. He just stopped by on a social visit and said hello. And they were amazed at how well I was doing. And I may get this a little bit wrong, but what did he say? It was amazing to see me on Resurrection weekend. So I appreciate you all and God is good and I thank God for being alive. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you that even when we make bad decisions, even when we go the wrong way, that you remain faithful. Even when we are unfaithful, God, you are faithful to us. Please, God, draw our hearts back to you. In the areas of our lives where we have wandered away, where we have forgotten you and neglected you, please do what it takes to draw us back to you. Bring us back to that place of the house of bread. And we also want to say a very special thank you, God, for this meal that we are going to be sharing later today. Bless the hands that have prepared it. And as we go about our church business, please give us your spirit in our hearts to give us wisdom and clarity and insight and help us to make wise choices about our future. I pray in Jesus' name, amen.