

## Men and Women of God – Ruth

### Some Amusing Church notices

- Weight watchers will meet at 8pm in the hall; please use the large double doors at the side entrance
- Ladies, don't forget the jumble sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget to bring your husbands.
- Don't let worry and stress kill you – let the church help.
- Next Sunday Mrs Evans will be soloist for the morning service. The pastor will then speak on 'It's a terrible experience'
- Due to the rector's illness, Wednesday healing services will be discontinued until further notice
- The 'Low Self-Esteem Support Group' will meet Thursday at 7pm. Please use the back door
- The peacemaking meeting scheduled for today has been cancelled due to a conflict
- Announcement in the church bulletin for a National Prayer and Fasting Conference: The cost for the attending the Prayer and Fasting conference includes all meals

**Worship:** Oh Lord you never let go, through the highs and through the lows

### **Big Picture:**

The book of Ruth tells the story of Ruth and happened sometime during the rule of the Judges Ruth 1 v 1. (Judges ruled from **BC1375** until the Saul, the first king, **BC1050**).

**The period of the Judges (post Joshua, pre the first king Saul).**

### **Pattern:**

- Rebellion (**Joshua 1 v 11** – 'Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord')
- Oppression (**Deuteronomy 28 v 25** 'The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies).
- Repentance and Restoration (**Deuteronomy 30 v 1-3** ..... and when you and your children return to the Lord your God ..... then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you...'

- Restoration = God's mercy and God's grace (the God of the new testament as revealed in Jesus is the same God of the old testament)

Pattern = rebellion, oppression, repentance, restoration. This pattern occurred on **six separate occasions in this 325 yr period during which God raised up 12 judges (12 men and 1 woman - Deborah)**. God raises up judges (**read Judges 2 v 16-19**)

### **Ruth**

Ruth was not a Hebrew but married Mahlon, son of Naomi and Elimelech. Ruth was from Moab (Ruth 1 v 4). Birthright did not exclude coming under God's covenant. Ruth chose to do so (Ruth 1 v 16). Ruth, a foreign woman, was mightily used by God. She was great-grandmother to King David and was one of Jesus's ancestors – interestingly both on Joseph's side (not that Joseph had a biological part in Jesus' birth) in Matt 1 v 5 and in what is very likely Mary's genealogy in (Luke 3 v 32). Note that Naomi and Ruth lived in Bethlehem, the hometown of Naomi's husband, Elimelech and the birthplace of Jesus.

The Moabite people descended from Moab who was a son borne out of an incestuous relationship between Abraham's nephew Lot and his eldest daughter (Gen 19 v 30-38). The land of Moab was on the eastern side of the Dead Sea and was a land that the Israelites passed through after 40 years in the desert on their way to the promised land (Numbers Ch 22 – Ch 36). Indeed the Israelites camped on the plains of Moab before entering the promised land and it was there that God, through Moses, gave commands and regulations to Israelites (Numbers Ch 36 v 13). Moses, who God did not allow to enter the promised land (Deut 32 v 48-52), saw the promised land from Mount Nebo in Moab and then he died and was buried in Moab.

Moab did not form part of the promised land and the Israelites had been instructed not to harass the Moabites or provoke them to war (Deuteronomy 2 v 9). Indeed in that verse, God says that he has given the land to the descendants of Lot as a possession. Moab however, did not meet the Israelites with bread and water on their way out of Egypt and hired Balaam to pronounce a curse on the Israelites which God turned into a blessing (Number Ch 22-24 and Deut 23 v 3-8).

The Israelites were expressly forbidden from intermarrying with the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (Deut 7 v 1-4) but we not expressly forbidden from marrying Moabites at the time of Ruth although the principle of potentially being turned away to follow other gods remained true. Much later 458BC, on returning to Jerusalem from exile, Ezra finds that the Israelites have been intermarrying with women from foreign nations and because of the impurity brought by the detestable religious practices of these nations, the Israelites were instructed not to intermarry (Ezra 9 v 10-12) including with women from Moab (Ezra 9 v 2).

Chemosh (ke-mosh) was the national deity of Moab. This god was honoured with cruel and perverse practices including child sacrifices like those offered to Molech, a Canaanite god. The Moabites also worshiped Baal, the god of the rains and the harvest that was represented by a bull symbol of strength and fertility. Prostitution played a large part in

Baal worship and so, when in Moab on their way to the promised land, some of the Israelites were induced into Baal worship (Gen 25 v 1-3).

Through the prophet Amos, God foretells the destruction of the nation of Moab (Amos Ch 2 v1-2).

### **Ruth**

Name: Ruth (meaning friend or compassionate)

Husband: Mahlon (Ruth 4 v 10) became widowed and then later Boaz (Ruth 4 v 13)

Sister-in-law: Orpah

### **VAK Moment**

Have a Cadbury's Easter egg hunt. (The point later being that Ruth finds something but that she finds something of worth).

### **Bible Study**

#### **Ruth knows she has found Something of Real Worth (Ruth 1 v16,17)**

Naomi, had something about her that made Ruth give up everything, to leave her homeland her blood family and to take Naomi's God for her own, Naomi's country as her own as to live as a foreign widowed daughter-in-law of a widow. Naomi leads Ruth to God. Naomi's witness transforms Ruth's life.

Read the passages Matt 13 v 44 (Jesus tells the Parable of the Hidden Treasure) and Matt 13 v 45,46 (Jesus tells the Parable of the Pearl Merchant).

To what extent do we know that, in the kingdom of heaven, we have something of real worth?

To what extent do we live our lives in reference to the thing of real worth (the kingdom of heaven) and to what extent do we live our lives in reference to other things? (Matt 6 v 33 – 'But seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness...')

How might we focus our lives on the things that really matter?

#### **Ruth's Godly Character Shines Through (Ruth 2 v 11,12 and Ruth 3 v 10,11 and Ruth 4 v 15)**

When Ruth came back with Naomi, Ruth would have been under the spotlight as a foreigner. People would have undoubtedly been watching her every move, perhaps suspicious of Ruth's motives for choosing to come to a foreign land and to live as a widowed daughter-in-law of a widow.

What were the characteristics that Ruth showed?

- Love (Ruth 4 v 15)
- Politeness (Ruth 2 v 7)
- Loyalty (Ruth 1 v 16,17)
- Determination (Ruth 1 v 16-18)
- Hard work (Ruth 2 v 7)
- Obedience (Ruth 3 v 5)
- Kindness (Ruth 3 v 10)
- Humble (Ruth 2 v 13)

How would our actions stand up to close scrutiny by others?

To what extent do we think that the seemingly small things we do go unnoticed?  
(Col 3 v 23 - Do everything you do as if for the Lord).

If we asked our family, friends, work colleagues to describe our character in three words, what would they say?

How much of Jesus would others see in our character and behaviour?

Ruth's character was described by Boaz in v 11 as noble (a description given by Boaz and his fellow townsmen)

You might want to read Proverbs Ch 31 v 10-31 – The Wife of Noble Character. Many of the qualities listed apply to women as well as wives. Verse 30 says this: 'Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.'

Thought: If in Jesus, we are a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2 v 9) should we have noble characters?

**From something seemingly small can come something wonderfully great (Ruth 4 v 17)**

Ruth marries Boaz Ruth 4 v 13 and the Lord enables Ruth to conceive (note that Ruth had no children despite being married for what seems like a considerable time – Ruth 1 v 4) and the blessing spoken by the elders and all those at the town gate (Ruth 4 v 11,12) turns out to be prophetic.

That Ruth then goes on to become a part in the kingly line of Israel then Judah and part of the genealogy of Jesus should encourage us that God can bring great blessing from our ordinary things, even if we don't see the full blessing in our life times.

### **Conclusion**

Our status, birthright, wealth etc is not important to God. That Ruth was not a Jew was not relevant to God. God loves all people and wants them to come to faith in him (2 Pet 3 v 9). At one level this is a nice story about decency, love and honour but it is more than that. It is a story about someone - Ruth - who found something of real worth and gave up the easy option, probably to be worse off materially, accepting lower prospects in a foreign land because she knew that what she had found was worth so much more.

This is a story too about the effect of witness (Naomi's and Ruth's), how our characters leave impressions on others and finally that the things we do in this life, however ordinary they may seem can be used greatly by God.

**Prayer:**

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