

Ruth (Love Defined) - Part 2

Sunday, January 28, 2024
10:30 AM

I would like our study to keep this thought in mind... **LOVE DEFINED**

It seems to me that so much of this book focuses on the issue of love.

We see different types of love illustrated and defined in this book. What should I look for in the Book of Ruth?

- The lack of true love in the world
- God's love for us
- Our love for God
- Our love for each other
- The characteristics of what love should look like

Last week we talked about the Pictures of Love that we see in Chapter 1

First we looked at the pictures that represented the LACK OF LOVE experienced by Naomi and Ruth, pictures that often mimic our own lives and what we experience

- **Days when the judges ruled.** (Verse 1)... An Atmosphere *(Culture) that lacked love
 - Wicked and selfish... every man for themselves (did what was right in their own eyes)
 - **Horrible atrocities of evil** (especially in chapters 17-21 much of which centered around Bethlehem)
 - **Lack of love** (For God, for each other, for righteousness)
 - **Really mimics what Jesus and Paul said would characterize the last days**

Matthew 24:12

12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,

2 Timothy 3:1-5

3 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

- **Famine in Bethlehem (Verse 1)**
 - No bread in the house of bread - (I would also say a famine of love... leaving people without something they need to live)
- **Death of husbands leaving them alone and without anyone to love and care for them**
- **The hopelessness's and bitterness of Naomi, even casting doubt of any possibility that God loved her or cared for her**

But then we turned our attention to the pictures that reminded us that God has made love available for us

- **Bethlehem** - The birthplace of "The Love of God"
- **Barley Harvest** - The Barley harvest happened in the spring and is most closely associated with the feast of Passover and First Fruits thus reminding us of the provision of salvation that God's LOVE made available to us. LOVE that breaks the stronghold of the enemy (as God did when he broke the stronghold of Pharaoh over the Israelites and set them free from the bondage of their slavery and as Jesus broke the stronghold of the slavery of sin when He gave his life on the cross for each of us)

We brought it in to the New Testament...

There is an interesting correlation to Barley and God's Love found in John Chapter 6...

- First we see it involved in the feeding of the 5000
- Then next day Jesus tells the people (who were looking for more "Barley Bread") that He was the bread of life

I point all this out to remind us that if we like Naomi are starving for LOVE, God has more than enough for us today. LOVE DEFINED begins by understanding that God alone is the source for real love. The fake imitations of the world will never give us the nourishment that we need. Elimelek and so many others today are desperately searching for love but in all the wrong places. But we don't have too. Have you heard the good news... Jesus is LOVE DEFINED!

Today I want to talk about THE WHO'S of love, again keeping our focus on Chapter one of the book of Ruth.

Ruth 1

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. 2 The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

3 Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

6 When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. 7 With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. 9 May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband."

Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud 10 and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

11 But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? 12 Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— 13 would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has turned against me!"

14 At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

15 "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

16 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." 18 When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

19 So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?"

20 "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. 21 I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."

22 So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

PART 2 - THE WHO'S OF LOVE

GOD'S LOVE TOWARDS US

- **FORIEGNERS (People who don't know or love God)**
 - Moab - The son of the oldest daughter of Lot
 - They had their own God's (Chemosh or the Baal of Peor)

Numbers 21:29

29 Woe to you, Moab! You are destroyed, people of Chemosh!

- King Balak was a prominent Moabite Figure during the time of Israel's journey's from Egypt to The Promised land. He tried to get Balaam to curse them and when he couldn't, he took Balaam's advice to trip them up by enticing them to sin by sleeping with Moabite women and then following their advice to serve the Moabite gods rather than the one true God of Israel

Numbers 25:1-3

25 While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, 2 who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. 3 So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the Lord's anger burned against them.

Numbers 31:16

16 "They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and enticed the Israelites to be unfaithful to the Lord in the Peor incident, so that a plague struck the Lord's people.

"God loves because of who God is, not because of who we are." - Philip Yancey

Romans 5:8

8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Deuteronomy 7:7-9

7 The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. 8 But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.

1 John 3:1

3 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

The Who of God's Love is US... NO matter who we are... NO matter what we've done, God Loves US!

Now let me be clear, that does not mean that God's loves our sin... We must never equate the two. God's love died for our sin so that we could be free to live in His love.

What a powerful picture of God's redeeming love we see in the book of Ruth. His love redeems a foreigner and makes her the great-grandmother of King David and a part of Christ's family tree.

- **PRODIGALS (Those who walk away from God)**

If Ruth represents those who have never known God, Naomi represents those who have walked away from God. With her husband, she left Bethlehem, left the land of Israel, left her faith. We see that continued picture of her backslidden faith, when she demands that her friends no longer call her Naomi

Ruth 1:20-21

20 “Don’t call me Naomi, (Pleasant) [a]” she told them. “Call me Mara (Bitter),[b] because the Almighty[c] has made my life very bitter. 21 I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted[d] me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.”

Even when we walk away from God, even when we go our own way, even when we are mad at God and blame Him for the circumstances our own choices create for us, even when we don't believe in Him anymore; He still believes in us and He STILL LOVES US.

Without realizing it, Naomi testifies against herself with her statement "I went away full..." Like the Prodigal son, she didn't realize how much she had by being a part of God's family. Even though things can get hard, even though we might not understand the difficulties we face; it is still better to face them with God and try to face them on our own. What she didn't is that she removed herself from the blessings of God and thus her life was emptied. The Prodigal son removed himself from the Father's blessing and soon lost all he had. He, like Naomi, found himself empty... But that emptiness is what drove him back to the Father.

Hosea 14:1

14 Return, Israel, to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall!

Using these same to people (Ruth & Naomi)

OUR LOVE TOWARDS GOD AND OTHERS

- **Love God**

We have already seen that God loved both of them, but we also see a picture of their love of God

- Ruth - a foreigner - pledges that Naomi's God will be her God
- Naomi - a prodigal - makes the journey home to Bethlehem

Luke 10:25-28

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

27 He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

- Love Our Neighbor

(This includes our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as all other we meet along the way)

John 13:34

34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

Who does that include and what does that mean? I am glad you asked... Someone asked Jesus the same question

Luke 10:29-37

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii[[a](#)] and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

This incredible act of love and I want to remind you that Jesus used a Samaritan as the hero in this story not an Israelite.

In the book of Ruth I am reminded of this when I consider that Ruth loved Naomi, even though Naomi was her mother-in-law (not the typical relationship we would think of to define love) but that's how God defines it.

- Love Our Enemies

The other picture I want to return to one more time to help us define the Who of love is that of Ruth being a MOABITE. We have already established that the Moabites were enemies of the Israelites... Now daughters-in-law may not be sworn enemies of mother's-in-law (however I've seen) some pretty possessive moms when it comes to giving up their sons to their daughters-in-law - Monster In Law) but given the fact that Ruth was not only a daughter-in-law, but also a Moabite, the picture seems pretty clear

Matthew 5:43-48

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor[a] and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Luke 6:35-36

35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

So we see that Love is defined by THE WHO'S

US... GOD... OTHERS... and even OUR ENEMIES

By those standards, how well is LOVE DEFINED in your life?