

# THE STORY OF RUTH & THE HIDDEN HAND OF GOD

Sunday, December 1

## RUTH 1: SUMMARY

The Book of Ruth begins during a dark and tumultuous time in Israel's history, specifically "when the judges ruled" (Ruth 1:1). This was a period marked by moral chaos and spiritual decline, where people "did what was right in their own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Against this backdrop, we meet Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons. They leave their hometown of Bethlehem, which is called the "House of Bread," due to a famine. Seeking survival, they journey to Moab, a foreign land often hostile to the Israelites.

Tragedy strikes when Elimelech dies, followed by the deaths of Naomi's two sons, leaving her bereft of her husband, children, and hope. She is left with her two Moabite daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. After hearing that God has provided food in Bethlehem, Naomi decides to return home.

Naomi's grief is profound as she expresses bitterness toward God, even asking to be called Mara, which means "bitter," as she feels the Lord has dealt harshly with her. Despite Naomi's hopelessness, Ruth's loyalty and faith shine brightly. Ruth chooses to leave her homeland, her family, and her gods to follow Naomi, famously declaring, "Your people will be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16). This act of faith and devotion sets the stage for God's redemptive work in their lives.

## CONNECTING RUTH AND ADVENT

The story of Ruth is an Advent story: a story of waiting and longing, set in a time of spiritual darkness. Naomi and Ruth's journey back to Bethlehem foreshadows another journey to Bethlehem cen-

turies later, where the ultimate Redeemer, Jesus Christ, would be born. Ruth reminds us that God's providence is always at work, even when His hand seems hidden. He brings hope out of despair, and His plans for redemption often begin in the most ordinary or painful circumstances.

***We exist to help connect Jesus to people, people to community, and community to mission. Let's discuss how Ruth 1 connects to our mission as a church...***

## JESUS TO PEOPLE

The story of Naomi and Ruth begins with deep sorrow and loss but gradually unveils how God's hidden presence weaves through our ordinary struggles. At a surface-level, we can often think of Christmas as the happiest time of year, when in reality, many of us are carrying deep sorrow that is amplified in this particular season. Just as the opening chapter of Ruth is set in the context of great unknown, fear and pain, so was the first Christmas. During Advent, this theme comes alive through Jesus, who enters our broken world to bring redemption. Just as God provided for His people in Bethlehem, He offers us spiritual nourishment through Christ, the Bread of Life.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How does Ruth 1 reveal God's presence even when His actions are not immediately visible?
- How can Ruth being set in the context of tragedy provide comfort for you or someone you know who is struggling during the Christmas season?

