

The Parish of Wellow

Ruth the Refugee

Ruth 1:1-9, 16-19

Passage, Sermon Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these sermon notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during next week to consider the questions below.

1. Sermon Passage

Ruth 1:1-9, 16-19

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and 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 Elimelech, his wife's name 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 Elimelech, 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 she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi 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 kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead 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 and they wept aloud

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 anything but 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?"

2. Sermon Notes

2.1 Naomi, Ruth and Jesus all become refugees.

- Naomi does on four different occasions due to tragic circumstances.
- Ruth and Jesus both choose to become refugees

Being a Refugee is not easy. This happens to us when we leave the familiar and experience the unfamiliar.

- For Naomi this meant moving from Bethlehem to Moab, discovering what firstly life without a husband was like and secondly life without two sons was like and then ultimately having to move back to Bethlehem from Moab.
- For Ruth this meant moving from Moab to Bethlehem
- For Jesus it meant moving from Heaven to Earth

2.2 Naomi becomes a refugee on three separate occasions: Ruth 1:1-9

1. The whole region of Israel was suffering from a famine. Naomi's family-Elimelech her husband, Mahlon and Kilion her sons leave the famine-plagued area and emigrate to Moab becoming refugees in the process.
2. After their move to Moab Elimelech her husband dies and Naomi is forced to experience the unfamiliar territory of having no husband.
3. Ten years later after her sons die Naomi is again forced to experience the unfamiliar territory of losing her children
4. Having lost her family Naomi becomes a refugee for a fourth time moving back to Bethlehem from Moab.

The result of these three tragic occurrences is:

- Naomi is left alone in a foreign land. Her daughters-in-law Orpah and Ruth are still young enough that they can marry again and have children, but they have no obligation to care for Naomi. Naomi decides to go home to Bethlehem alone.
- Moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar can often make us feel isolated
- At times when we are experiencing great change in our lives we need Christian companionship. God created us to lean on one another. It is good for us to have someone in whom we can trust and on whom we can lean.

2.3 Ruth refuses to abandon Naomi and becomes a refugee herself. Ruth 1:16-19

- Ruth becomes the refugee now by leaving her people and her gods and she determines to return to Bethlehem with Naomi. Naomi's people would become Ruth's people. Naomi's God would become Ruth's God.
- Ruth speaks some of the most beautiful words ever recorded in chapter 1:16-17. "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. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me."
- Ruth's loyalty is life-changing. It changes not only her but also Naomi. Naomi now has someone she can really trust in her hour of need.
- But what about us? How loyal are we to God? How loyal are we to the people who matter in our life. Let Ruth be a model for our loyalty.
- As well as being loyal Ruth was also present with Naomi.
- Naomi now has someone she can really trust in her hour of need. She has a rock on which to lean.
- Ruth foreshadows what Jesus does for each one of us.

2.4 Ruth and Jesus have certain things in common

- They both left their homeland with no thought of their own happiness or security.
- They were both refugees.
- They both left the comfort of their home for the discomfort of a far away place.
- Why did they do it? Because of their love for the one or ones who were hurting and without hope of relief.

2.5 In Philippians we are told Jesus emptied himself for us.

- This means He voluntarily laid aside his omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence to put on the frailty of flesh so that he could save us.
- If we are to cope with all the difficulties that being a refugee throw at us then our trust ultimately must be placed not in a man or even in a woman, but in Jesus.

2.6 For every Naomi, there is not always a Ruth. We need to put our trust in Jesus

- We may feel like Naomi, but cannot find a Ruth. Maybe we need to stop looking for the potential Ruth's around us and to start looking into the face of the Son of God. He is the one who knows us best.
- Jesus understands us better than anyone can because he experienced every form of temptation, yet was without sin.
- Jesus knows what we are feeling because he has felt it. Jesus perfectly fulfils for each one us the ministry of presence.

3. Questions to consider back at home

3.1 In what areas of your life do you feel like a refugee at the moment? What do Naomi and Ruth teach us about how to leave the familiar and experience the unfamiliar?

3.2 What do Ruth and Jesus have in common? How does Ruth foreshadow the ministry of Jesus?

3.3 What if anything does the story of Ruth and Naomi have to teach us about how we should deal with refugees and asylum seekers in our country today?

3.4 Who would we consider to be the 'refugees' in Wellow? What should we as a church be doing to help them?

3.5 Maybe you want to prayerfully consider who the person or people: friends, colleagues, family, or neighbours who God is calling you to be a 'Ruth' to? What is God calling you to do or say this week to this person or people?

If you would like to discuss these questions further please feel free to call me on 01761 432293