

**The Book of Ruth: “It Was the Worst of Times”**

Ruth 1

*God moves in a mysterious way,  
his wonders to perform;  
he plants his footsteps in the sea,  
and rides upon the storm.*

*Ye fearful saints fresh courage take,  
the clouds that you much dread,  
are big with mercy  
and will break in blessings on your head.*

*Deep in unfathomable mines,  
of never-failing skill;  
he fashions up his bright designs,  
and works his sovereign will.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
but trust him for his grace;  
behind a frowning providence,  
he hides a smiling face.*

(“God Moves in a Mysterious Way” by William Cowper)

**From Bad to Worse**

- The time of the judges was not a good time in Israel.

*In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (Jg 21:25)*

- It was a time of moral chaos and ethical compromise, of violence and bloodshed.
- It was a time that showed Israel their need for a good, godly king.
- A famine arose in the land. (v. 1)
  - Moab was not likely to be a friendly place of refuge for an Israelite family.
  - In the span of 5 verses, Naomi loses everything dear, becoming just “the woman” (v. 5).
- The reversal begins in v. 6.
  - Naomi arose “to return” from the country of Moab. (v. 6)
  - Naomi (naturally) discouraged her daughters-in-law from journeying with her.
    - They were Moabites by birth.
    - They would have very dim prospects as widows in a foreign land.
  - Orpah returned to Moab, but Ruth ventured on to Bethlehem.
  - Ruth demonstrates the possibility and the difficulty of faith.

*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)*

*Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24)*

*I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 8:11)*

- Naomi's return to Bethlehem is revealing...
  - She is bitter. (v. 21)
  - But the barley harvest is beginning. (v. 22)

### From Then to Now

- Honesty is welcomed.

*Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (Matthew 6:8)*

*Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. (Psalm 62:8)*

- Providence is mysterious.
  - Be careful about assuming certainty of all that the Lord is doing and why He is doing it.

*God writes straight with crooked lines. (Teresa of Avila)*

- God is never hands-off in His governance of the world or your life.

*"Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (Job 2:10)*

- We don't always know what else God is up to in our lives.

*We may indeed think, Cannot God bring us to heaven with ease and prosperity? Who doubts but He can? But His infinite wisdom thinks and decrees the contrary; and we cannot see a reason of it, yet He hath a most just reason. We see many rivers, but we know not their first spring and original fountain; yet they have a beginning. Madam, when ye are come to the other side of the water, and have set down your foot on the shore of glorious eternity, and look back again to the waters and to your wearisome journey, and shall see, in that clear glass of endless glory, nearer to the bottom of God's wisdom, ye shall then be forced to say, "If God had done otherwise with me than He hath done, I had never come to the enjoying of this crown of glory." It is your part now to believe, and suffer, and hope, and wait on. (Samuel Rutherford)*

*Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. (Psalm 30:5)*

- God is kind.
  - Ruth is not just an object of God's kindness; she is an instance of God's kindness.
  - Ruth points us to Christ, the ultimate kindness of God.

*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:32)*

*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; <sup>23</sup> they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)*