

Ruth Ch1v8-18

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 October 2023

Preacher: Peter Kenny

[0 : 0 0] Glyne Baptist Church for a good few years and Maeve, even before we got married, before I knew you all, was coming along here. I'm part of the church family so it's lovely to be back, a bit of a homecoming in a sense and we do bring greetings from Cork Baptist Church. So I'm the pastor over in Cork Baptist Church in the city centre and we do pray for you on a regular basis. So we pray for the different churches on a Sunday morning and we keep Cary Glyne Baptist Church in our prayers and we're going to spend some time looking at part of the book of Ruth. So this can be found in your church Bible on page 267 if you're using the Red Church Bible. So it's 267 and the book of Ruth is in the Old Testament so if you're using something other than a Red Church Bible feel free to look it up in the index and find that there. So we're in Ruth and it's chapter 1.

So it's Ruth chapter 1 on page 267. So we'll read the first 18 verses and we'll just focus on verses 8 to 18. So let's read from Ruth chapter 1 and verse 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. The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi and the names of his two sons were Malon and Killion.

They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah and they went to Moab and lived there. Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband died and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about 10 years both Malon and Killion also died and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. 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. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and she set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. 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. 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 and said to her, we will go back with you to your people. 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?

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, would you wait until they grew up?

[3 : 1 5] 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. At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye. But Ruth clung to her. Look, said Naomi, your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods go back with her. 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. 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. When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. Let's take a moment to pray and to ask for God's help as we look at his word. Heavenly Father, we want to thank you for your word to us this morning.

Thank you that you promise to work through your word on our hearts and on our lives by the power of your Holy Spirit. And so, Father, we ask that this morning you would help us not just to hear what you are saying to us, but Lord, to respond, to act accordingly, to become more like Christ and to have our eyes lifted to see our Saviour again. Amen.

I want to encourage you to keep Ruth chapter 1 open in front of you as we look at it together. And the question we want to ask this morning as we look at this is what will carry us through? What will carry us through? So, you could ask that question in many different areas of life. So, we've had a number of students coming to Corp Baptist in the last few weeks as the semester has started. Some of them are from very exotic places like Antigua, the Netherlands, Dublin even. And as they move to be with us, a question for them might be what is going to carry them through? They're away from family, away from friends, away from all that is familiar. Others have been displaced in our world this morning by conflict, far more serious displacement. And the question for them, for those who are believers, is this, what is going to carry them through when their lives have been turned upside down? For some of us this morning, perhaps, it is as we looked at the future. [6 : 13] And we're not sure about how the future is going to unfold. And again, it's this question, what will carry us through? For others, again, it is facing the loss of a loved one, facing deep-rooted, profound grief. And when we experience that, the question is, what will carry us through? And the reason we want to ask this question is because this is something of what is being experienced by these ladies in Ruth chapter 1, and especially Naomi. In verse 9 of chapter 1, the second half of the verse, Naomi kissed her daughter's-in-law goodbye, and they wept aloud.

And in those few verses, you realize that these women who have left Moab and are on the way to Bethlehem, they're in the middle of nowhere, in a sense. They are facing uncertain futures. They don't know how things are going to unfold. They have experienced profound upheaval in their lives. They have left their home of more than 10 years. In the case of Orpah and Ruth, it's their whole lives.

And they have experienced profound grief. In verse 5, both Malon and Kilian also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. And so for Ruth and Orpah, they have lost their husbands. For Naomi, she's lost her two sons and her husband. And the question for them is what will carry them through, and that's what we want to consider this morning together.

And as we consider that, we're just going to ask, what have they lost, and what will they find? So what have they lost, and what will they find? So let's think first of all about what they have lost.

[8 : 10] And we see this in verse 3, what they have lost. In verse 3, Elimelech, Naomi's husband died, and she was left with her two sons. In verse 5, both Malon and Kilian also died.

So for each of these women, they have lost their husbands. And as we've said, for Naomi, she's lost her sons. And these are people who are dear to them. These are loved ones who they've lived their lives with, whose lives have been shaped together, and they have grown together. And as they have lost their husbands, it will bring to mind the memories of their lives together, the conversations that they've had, the happy times, the sad times, the regrets, the things they wish they had said and didn't.

And so for each of these women, they're experiencing profound grief. As they have lost their husbands, they have also lost their home. In verse 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.

But in doing so, that means they're leaving Moab where they had lived for a long time. In verse 7, with her two daughters-in-law, she left the place where she had been living.

And so now they have all the upheaval of moving from one place to another. And as we meet them on the road, they are between places. And so not only have they lost their husbands, they've lost their homes.

[9 : 53] Not only have they lost their husbands in their homes, they also have another loss. In verse 11, when Naomi says, Return home, my daughters, why would you come with me?

Am I going to have any more sons who could become your husbands? What she has in mind there is something that's unusual to us. It's something called leveret marriage. But the practice back then was that if a woman lost her husband, somebody who was closely related to him would marry her in order to raise up children to keep the family line going.

It was a way to provide for, to care for the woman who had lost her husband in a society where there was no social welfare, no child benefit, none of these provisions.

But as Naomi says this, she says there's no hope for blessing or provision through this means. And she elaborates on that in verse 12.

Return home, my daughters. I'm 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, would you wait until they

grew up?

[11:04] Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. And so you realize that Naomi has lost hope.

There's no hope for me, she says. And not only that, but they now are faced with the prospect of losing each other. In verse 11, Naomi says to her two daughters-in-law, go back, each of you, to your mother's home.

In verse 11, she says, return, my daughters. In verse 12, she says, return home, my daughters. So these women who have lived a significant amount of their adult lives together, 10 plus years, and now faced with the prospect of losing each other.

For Ruth and Orpah, the choice now is, do they go with Naomi and lose their family and friends back in Moab, or do they go back to Moab and lose Naomi?

And for all intents and purposes, this is essentially like them having a death. It's like an American wake.

[12:17] Back in the 1800s, you may be familiar with the idea of an American wake when Irish people emigrated to America. No Zoom, no Skype, no phones.

And so they realized that this was goodbye. It was as though they were saying goodbye. They were saying goodbye to their loved one forever. They would never see them again.

And so they would have a wake as though it was a funeral for that person. And for Naomi and Ruth and Orpah, that is what they are faced with. And so these women, they have lost much.

They have lost their husbands. They have lost their homes. They have lost hope. And they have the prospect now of losing each other.

And some of you know what that is like, to have lost so much. It's been about 10 years now since my dad died. He died in September 2013.

[13:18] And when we lost him, there's nothing that can prepare you for that. There's nothing that can prepare you for losing your parents. And so there was a suddenness to that.

And yet at the same time, we had been losing him for years. Because he had dementia. And I remember once when myself and Maeve, just before we got married, Dad came down to visit us in Cork.

And he turned to me in the car. And he said, did you hear Peter has moved to Cork? And I realized in that moment, he doesn't realize who I am anymore.

And so it was like losing him before we lost him. And for some of you, you know what that is like, to lose a loved one. And for some of you, you have layers of loss in your life.

It may be losing a loved one, losing a home like Naomi and Ruth and Orpah. Moving country. For some of you, it may feel like you have lost hope as you look to the future.

[14:25] Like Ruth and Naomi and Orpah. And sometimes those layers are for us as individuals. And sometimes those layers of loss come for us as church families.

Where it feels like wave after wave of loss crashes in upon us. Even one of these types of losses is significant.

To experience them all can be overwhelming. And so it's not surprising that these women cry. In verse 9, she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud.

In verse 14, at this they wept aloud again. And this is not the kind of polite dabbing the corners of your eyes, crying. This is the kind of weeping that you will hear before you see them on the road.

And you will give them space for this sacred moment of grief. It's not surprising that they cry. And it is not surprising that Naomi is struggling with God.

[15:33] In verse 13, she says, It is more bitter for me than for you because the Lord's hand has turned against me. And you realize that Naomi has a big view of God.

She doesn't think that all that has happened in her life is the result of chance and randomness. She's a big view of God.

If you have a small view of God in a moment like this or no view of God, what that view of God does is it leans into your ear and whispers, It's all meaningless. It was for nothing.

But Naomi is a big view of God. Not a pocket-sized God that she brings out on a Sunday morning. She knows that the Lord gives. And she knows that the Lord takes away.

And she's right in seeing God like that. But it is a hard question to ask. Why then has this happened?

[16 : 39] It is hard to live in a life, live in a world where life can sometimes feel overwhelmed by grief. And as she wrestles with God, she has lost sight of something.

She still knows he's a big God, but she has lost sight of what he is like. Verse 13, it is more bitter for me than for you because the Lord's hand has turned against me.

In that moment, Naomi thinks that God is against her. And isn't it striking that that's how she's thinking about God relating to her? Because she has already said back in verse 8, May the Lord show you kindness.

Verse 9, may the Lord grant that each of you will find rest. She's able to say to these ladies in their moments of grief and loss, that the Lord, may he show you kindness and rest.

But she can't say that to herself. She says, the Lord has turned against me. And I wonder, have you ever felt that in the moments of loss that you have experienced?

[17 : 47] That God has turned against you. And it doesn't even need to be profound loss. I remember when our boys were younger and we would be up at 3 o'clock in the morning and 4 o'clock in the morning and 5 o'clock in the morning and I'd be thinking, I've worked to do tomorrow, God.

I mean, don't you realize I have to get up in three hours' time? Thinking that somehow God was against me in those moments, not appreciating that this is the reality of life in this world.

It's a hard place to be and that's where Naomi is. She has lost much. She's lost her husband. She's lost her home, her hope.

And has the prospect of losing these women who are dear to her as well. And so we've reflected on what they've lost. Let's reflect a little on what does she find.

What does Naomi find to carry her through? In verse 14, Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye.

[18 : 59] And you can't really blame her, can you, for going back to Moab. But look at what Ruth does. Ruth clings to Naomi.

And in verse 15, Naomi says, Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go with her. And what we have now is one of those moments like you experience every time you walk into an Irish home and they ask you, Do you want a cup of tea?

And you say, No. And you're thinking to yourself, I'm not sure, do they really want a cup of tea? And so you ask them again, Do you want a cup of tea? And they say, No. And then the third time, You'll have a cup of tea.

Okay, I will. So, and there's this ballet of tension as you're trying to figure out where the other person stands with relationship to tea. And for Naomi and Ruth, what's going on is, Ruth, go back, go back.

And we're wondering, is Ruth just being polite? Is Ruth just saying, No, Naomi, I'll go with you. And is she going to crack under the pressure to return home?

[20 : 04] Will she or won't she? This is Ruth's opportunity now. Nobody would blame her for leaving Naomi and going back to Moab.

But look at Ruth's response. Verse 16. 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. Ruth, in these verses, in these words, is expressing a commitment to Naomi.

It's the kind of commitment that is saying to Naomi, Look, you may want me to return. And Naomi is being very kind.

Naomi is putting a brave face on it. You may want me to return, but you need me to be with you. You need somebody with you now.

[21 : 06] Ruth recognizes that Naomi needs somebody. And so Ruth says to her, I'm sticking with you. I'm going to stay with you.

Where you go, I will go. And where you stay, I will stay. Ruth is expressing the kind of commitment to Naomi that gives to her what she needs, even if it's not what she wants.

It's the kind of commitment that sticks with you. And very often, that's just what we need, isn't it? In our moments of loss. For just somebody to be with us.

It's the kind of commitment, even though it's between Ruth and Naomi, that grows community.

Verse 16, Your people will be my people.

Even though they're alone on the road, Ruth recognizes that they are going to be heading back into a community. And it's the kind of commitment that is rooted in this shared faith.

[22 : 16] Your God, my God. And as Ruth says this to Naomi, it's remarkable. It's profound because, humanly speaking, there's nothing in it for Ruth.

It's at great cost to Ruth that she says this to Naomi. And in fact, she's willing to pay any cost, in a sense, when she says in verse 17, Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried.

Not even death will separate us, Naomi. These are incredible words of commitment at great cost. And they're incredible because in our culture, commitment is not always rewarded. It's not always admired. It's not always honored. Your internet provider will charge you more the longer you stay with them.

They want you to shop around. And that's the reality in other areas of life as well. And yet, what we see here is this beautiful commitment of Ruth to Naomi.

[23 : 34] It's nearly like a marriage vow, isn't it? Till death do us part. And what you realize is that this is going to carry Naomi through.

You don't yet see it, but as the book unfolds, it's Ruth's commitment to Naomi that carries her through. The commitment of just this one lady to this other lady will carry her through.

And one of the joys of coming back to Carigalline Baptist Church is that I see this, and I'm sure you see it as well, as we come back from time to time the same people committed to one another from different backgrounds, different nationalities, different ages of life.

But every time we show up on a Sunday morning or at a home group or pop over for a cup of coffee, we're saying, I'm with you. I'm here. I'm not going anywhere, even if it costs me.

And we say that to one another because we have this shared faith. Your God is my God. Your people are my people. We express that commitment to one another because it reflects God's commitment to us.

[25 : 01] When we were living over in the States, I'm sure I've told some of you before, we were involved in a car accident. Everybody was fine, but what we experienced in those moments was expressions of God's people's commitment to us.

So as the ambulance arrived, one of the ladies working in the ambulance was obviously a believer. She came up to me and she said to me, we've been praying, I've been praying as we got to the scene that everything will be okay.

And later on, after we left the hospital, a friend of ours left his Valentine's Day dinner to come and be with us in the hospital. He was committed to us. He was with us.

And when we got home to where we were staying, an Indian couple who were good friends of ours cooked us dinner. And what they were expressing to us was we're with you. We're committed. And then an older man and his wife brought us out for dinner afterwards to hear, to listen.

How are we doing? What they were expressing to us was commitment. We're with you. Where you go, we will go. I remember after my dad died, one man in particular intentionally meeting up with me just to see how I was doing.

[26 : 23] And what I realized in that moment was he is with me. He's with me in the midst of this. And you know, when we experience the commitment of God's people, it can carry us through.

And that's what Naomi is experiencing from Ruth here. It's really, really significant. Really, really profound. and largely because it reflects God's commitment to us.

We follow a Savior who is utterly committed to us, who will do for us what we need, even if sometimes it's not what we want.

a Savior who says to us, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. a Savior who saves us as individuals but brings us into a community.

He is so committed to us and a Savior who is committed to us at great cost. Isn't it interesting as Ruth says to Naomi, even death will not part us?

[27 : 45] And we could very well say that that's what Jesus says to us. Even death will not part us. And we know that for sure because Jesus went to his death in order to make us his own.

That is the level of commitment that Jesus has to you and I. That is what Mary experienced on that first Easter morning as she was weeping at the tomb not unlike how Ruth and Orpah and Naomi are weeping and suddenly she realizes that not only is Jesus committed to her in life, he is committed to her even through death as he says her name, Mary, and she turns to see him.

She realizes she has a Savior who is committed to overcoming death. and that carries her through and that will carry us through.

And you know there is coming a day when our Savior Jesus will wipe away our tears, when there will be no more suffering and no more grief, where we will no longer be between one place and another, when we will be home with him forever.

And we're not there yet. But what will carry us there, what will get us there, is his commitment to us. [29 : 27] And so let's pray and ask him to help us to hear that. Father, thank you so much for Jesus. Thank you that he is committed to us.

Lord, that he is with us by his Spirit and that not even death can separate us from him. We have seen that clearly. He has gone to the cross for us in our place.

And Lord, though it looked like all was lost, Father, we think of that first Easter morning as he speaks Mary's name.

And we know there will be a day when he speaks our name. And we will know that it is his commitment that has carried us through. Father, we long for that day.

Father, we cry out for that day. Father, in the meantime, we pray that you'd help us to reflect to one another that commitment that Christ has for us. Lord, that we would be with one another, that we would be for one another.

[30 : 42] Lord, even if it is at cost to ourselves. And so, Lord, we pray you'd help us to reflect our Saviour more and more. Amen. We're going to sing in response to what we've been thinking about.

It's a hymn, a song that reflects on God commitment. It used the word faithfulness, the idea of God being faithful to us, just to remember and reflect on how God is utterly committed to his people.

So let's stand and sing in response. Thank you. Thank you.