

Ruth 1:1-6

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: 03 April 2016

Preacher: David Moser

[0 : 00] Join me in prayer. Lord, it is such a wonderful thing to approach your word.! Lord, it is such a wonderful thing to approach your word.

! Lord, in these next moments, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.

Amen. Last week, we celebrated Easter, and before that, we observed Good Friday.

Today, Christ died on the cross for our sins so that we could be reconciled to God. And he rose from the grave so that we could live with him forever.

And so we know what God has done for his people for eternity. But what does that have to do with today? What does that have to do with you and me now?

[1 : 23] Does the Bible have anything to say about what happens this afternoon or tomorrow or the next days? And especially, I'm thinking about when we go through life, and frankly, it's awful.

What about the things we lose in this life? What happens when we lose our job? What happens when we have to move?

And we lose all of our friends and have to start all over again? What happens when death takes a loved one from us? What happens when death takes a loved one from us?

What happens when death takes a loved one from us? What happens when death takes a loved one from us? The book of Ruth begins not with Ruth, but with Naomi. And as we're about to see, Naomi loses every one of those things in chapter one.

And we're going to see through the book of Ruth what God does with that. Now, your story and my story, they're not going to look just like Ruth's.

[2 : 37] But we belong to the same God. And so this message belongs to us too. So I invite you to turn with me to Ruth chapter one, and we're going to start in verse one.

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. And a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab. He and his wife and his two sons.

The name of the man was Elimelech. The name of his wife, Naomi. The names of his two sons were Malon and Kilian. And they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah.

They went into the country of Moab and remained there. In the days when the judges ruled, what does that mean? In the period between when God brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, brought them to the promised land, between that and the days when he installed the kings, and just a hint, chapter four ends with the name of a king.

In between that time, there was a time when God essentially was king in Israel. There was no central government.

[3 : 56] And the Lord installed judges in important times in the nation's history to serve them, to protect them, and to guide them. And it's in this time. And actually, if you turn the page back, you'll see Ruth happens right after the book of Judges.

And it's sort of a transitional period between that time. The judges, as we see the line of David, is going to be established. The common thought, there's a refrain that happens throughout the book of Judges.

And God's people kept abandoning him. And he kept bringing discipline to them.

Many of those were discipline of outside oppression. And some of it took the form of a famine. Now, Naomi's family lived in Bethlehem.

And if you're paying attention and you've been to Christmas service ever, probably you've heard that name. But at this point in the nation's history, it's not special. It's a tiny backwater town five miles from Jerusalem.

[5 : 09] But we know that something special happens in Bethlehem. It hints at greatness to us. And it hints at where this story is going.

But what's happening there in Naomi's day? Well, Bethlehem, it's a compound word, and it means house of bread. Which is really interesting because there's a famine there.

And so we're keyed off at the very beginning that there's something amiss. There's something wrong here. This place, this community, which is supposed to be a place of sustenance, it has no food.

Now, what happens in a farming economy when there's a famine? When there is no farming? There is no economy.

The United States in the last several years has been experiencing an economic downturn. Some of you might have had difficulties with that. You might know people who have lost jobs.

[6 : 15] It might be you who have lost jobs. But we're aware of what it looks like to have a downturn in an economy. But what about an economy with essentially 100% unemployment?

What does that look like? Well, that drives people to do strange things. Or hard things, at the very least. Naomi's family, what did they do?

Well, her husband, Elimelech, moved his wife and his two sons to the neighboring country Moab. What does that mean for Naomi and her family? After they lost their employment, they've now lost their home.

They've walked away from it. And perhaps that's something you can relate to. Either you've had troubles with that. Or you've had troubles with the result of leaving your home.

You've moved to a new place. Or you're moving to a new place. You've left behind all of your friends and all of your family.

[7 : 19] And this is in the day before modern communication technology. It's not like you can whip out a phone. Have a phone call. Send a message. And it's...

I'm not just talking about modern, really modern communication. This is before Pony Express days. And so if you wanted to stay in touch with someone back home, you had to find somebody who was already on a journey in that direction.

And what's more is they've moved to Moab, which is probably not a country you know much about. Moab neighboring Israel to the east. And they were not friends, really at all.

On the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, Moab, the kings there, had tried to resist Israel's movement through their country. They were the last stop on the way to the Promised Land.

And they had resisted them. And during the period of the judges, actually, Moab was one of the countries that the Lord strengthened to discipline his people. And so for 18 years, King Eglon ruled, in a sense, over Israel.

[8 : 31] And so there is bad blood between these two nations. So moving to Moab, isn't exactly going to be smooth sailing for Jews.

And maybe you can relate to that. Maybe you have moved to a place where you are not very welcome. Cadets, I'm thinking of you. But maybe you're there now.

Maybe you know what it's like. Maybe you know somebody who feels unwelcome. Maybe they find themselves in a situation like this. So Naomi has lost her economy.

She's lost her home. She's lost her friends. She's lost her family. She's lost her security. She's lost a friendly place to live. But in the Lord, Naomi's story is not over.

and what we have to say too is that if we find ourselves wrapped up in a story like that in the Lord your story is not over either God's people in every age have suffered loss the spring of 1871 Horatio Spafford was living the good life he was happily married he had four daughters he was a partner at one of the most important law firms in Chicago he was an elder in his church and a friend of the famed evangelist D.L. Moody what's more he had made recently a very large investment a large section of real estate in Chicago now things were going great for Spafford in the spring of 1871 what happened in the fall of 1871 the great Chicago fire burned down almost all of Chicago and so in that moment all of his investments went up in smoke but like Naomi but like us in the Lord

[10 : 53] Spafford's story was not over in the next few years the Spafford family worked hard to help the community recover and to recover their own investments now that's hard work church planners know what it's like to you all your church planners you know what it's like to work hard to make a little thing like this happen try rebuilding a whole city try rebuilding significant investments it's hard work and so after a few years the Spafford family needed a break and they scheduled a

holiday to Europe but in the last moment Spafford ran into some conflicts with the zoning board that paralyzed the rebuilding of his investments and so he'd suffered a huge financial loss and now he was caught up in politics suffering indeed so he sent his family on ahead of him and he stayed behind to deal with the politicians loss doesn't just impact what you have it also impacts your plans too and that might be something you guys resonate with but in the Lord

Spafford's story wasn't over yet let's rejoin Naomi and her family see how that maps to us verse 3 but Elimelech the husband of Naomi died and she was left with her two sons these took Moabite wives the name of one was Orpah and the other the name of the other Ruth they lived there about 10 years and both Malan and Kilian died so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband in an unfriendly land Naomi who had already lost her financial stability her home her friends her family then she lost her husband too then she lost her sons too and for her in that day it wasn't just a loss of beloved family members it was also a loss of something greater it's not just an opportunity for grief because in that society a widow would rely on her sons for her financial future without sons a widow would starve there was no opportunity for her economically and so in the death of her husband and her sons she also saw the death of her future and in this room there are people like Naomi there are people who have a lost spouse there are people who have lost a child I'm sure there are people who have come to a point in their lives where they have said I do not have a future it is dead and it feels like the end of the story it feels like the end of the line and outside those doors are people who have felt the same thing what can we tell them what can we tell ourselves the same thing that we can say about Naomi in the Lord your story is not over how did Horatio Spafford fare stuck at home while his family went on vacation ahead of him he received a telegram from his wife it read simply saved alone what had happened as they steamed across the Atlantic Ocean they collided with another ship one two three four daughters drowned at sea his wife was saved clinging to a spar from the ship that actually struck them and he very much like Naomi had lost his children now up until this point I've said your story's not over your story's not over your story's not over and it's just gotten worse it's all been bad news no hope no light at the end of the tunnel every time I've said the story isn't over it's gotten worse but in the Lord your story is not over look at verse 6 with me then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food and here is the first hint at where this story is going here here's the first ray of sunshine after an endless night what Naomi doesn't know is that though the days ahead are going to be tough for her her story ends in glory she's restored to her home she's brought into a new family but the Lord sees to it that her story doesn't just end with food on the table it ends with royalty it ends with glory it ends with a king because in the Lord her story is not over and that's where it begins to connect to us there's that phrase in verse six that's so key the

[17 : 22] Lord visited his people now we know that Ruth's and Naomi's story ends with King David that's the spoiler sorry and it's through David's line that the Lord visited his people again in Bethlehem but this time it would be not by way of providing food but the Lord himself would visit them in person and Jesus God in the flesh was born there the house of bread he visited his people and when he came he came at the cost of those same losses interestingly enough in Philippians chapter two Paul tells us Christ Jesus though he was in the form of

God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself taking on the form of a servant being born of the likeness of man and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow and in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father when Jesus came and the Lord visited us in Bethlehem he lost his home he gave up his home in heaven to rescue us and the birds have nests and foxes have dens he had nowhere to lay his head when the Lord visited us he lost his riches taking on the form of a servant when the

Lord visited us he lost his friends they abandoned him in his hour of need as we observed last good Friday when the Lord visited us he lost loved ones too remember Lazarus died though even there there was a hint when he brought him back from the grave that there was something different but then he lost when he visited us even his own life he lost it on the cross so that he could redeem his people but the Lord's story isn't over we don't only celebrate good Friday we also celebrate Easter Sunday and so on the third day he rose so that his people though they suffer loss too great loss

might know that the Lord has definitively won the future for his people he has restored us through his son who suffered loss on our behalf and though we might grieve today and grieve mightily we don't grieve like those who have no hope because we have hope because we know that in the Lord our story is not over and that's what Horatio Spafford knew and so he knew that in the Lord his story wasn't over he got on a ship and sailed after his wife partway through that voyage the ship's captain pulled him aside and told him this is the latitude this is the longitude this is where the collision happened this is where you lost your daughters now he was shaken by the nearness of that tragedy he retired to his cabin and penned the song that we just sang it is well with my soul when peace like a river attends my way or when sorrows like sea billows roll whatever my lot thou has taught me to say it is well with my soul though

Satan should buffet though trials should come let this blessed assurance control that Christ has regarded my helpless estate and shed his own blood for my soul that is such good news and then he finishes my sin oh the bliss of this glorious thought my sin not in part but the whole is nailed to his cross and I bear it no more praise the Lord praise the Lord oh my soul Spafford knew that whatever his lot in life whatever fire burned to the ground whatever the man whenever he stood against him and impeded his progress whenever the sea took from him his story in the midst of all those things was not over because the Lord had visited him and had nailed

[23 : 09] Spafford's sin to his cross and reconciled him to himself and so he didn't grieve like those who have no hope because his story wasn't over because he was in the Lord now this isn't a trite message of God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life Naomi doesn't get her husband back she doesn't get her sons back that's not her story and Spafford did not get his daughters back in this life that's not his story either and so this is not a simple you're going to be just fine there will be real grief in our lives and after suffering great losses in our lives we might not be made whole the way that we hoped but we do not have to grieve like those who have no hope in the midst of great loss the

Lord has visited his people and so we know that in the Lord our story is not over now we're about to celebrate communion the Lord's table and in it we remember how the Lord visited his people and shed his blood for them Jesus born in Bethlehem the house of bread he came he lived among us he loved us and he taught us and he gave his body and his blood to redeem us so that our story might continue in him that's what these elements represent for us and so as we approach the Lord's table we recall again exactly the realities that Spafford put pen to paper for Christ has regarded my helpless estate and shed his own blood for my soul my sin not in part but in whole is nailed to his cross and

I bear it no more praise the Lord oh my soul if that's your story if you belong to Christ and your sins are nailed to his cross and your story continues in him you've been reconciled to the Lord this remembrance is a tangible reminder that your story isn't over because he has visited you now I have been careful today not to simply say your story isn't over I have been careful to say in the Lord your story isn't over and that's a key distinction if you don't belong to Jesus I want to call to you your story doesn't look like his unless you are in him and so this hope that we have only is for those who belong to

Christ and so your story will end apart from him if you aren't in him apart from the one who conquered the grave apart from the one who showed the greatest love the love that this bread and cup signify apart from the one who calls you to himself calls you to heaven to his presence wants to make an end of all your sin wants to give you a new heart and so if you don't belong to Christ please don't receive the cup and the bread today instead receive Christ run to him call on his name cast yourself on him and when you come to Jesus your story will be wrapped!

up in his and you too will have the hope that verse six points to that in the Lord your story will not be over either will you pray with me Father in heaven we are grateful that you have not left us without a testimony of what to do when things get hard and Lord we are so grateful that you have suffered loss on our behalf and you've redeemed it and so you have redeemed us so that in the midst of every trial every loss every grief we can know that our story is not yet over because of you

[28 : 24] Lord let that ground us let that comfort us not just for the future but each and every day but I pray that that would stoke our hearts to love you more and more every day we pray that in the mighty name of Jesus who visited his people and gave himself for them so that our story might not be over we pray that in his name amen now the musicians are going to play for us play for us yes okay there is bread there is a cup in the back take some time to meditate on Christ visiting you and

us and go take part in those physical tangible reminders that he has visited his people and
then we'll sing!
he he he!! he he