

# Emptiness

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're here to worship God. We're going to begin by singing to his praise in Psalm 139a. So the Sing Psalms version of Psalm 139, you'll find that on page 180 in your psalm books.

We're going to sing from the beginning down to the verse marked 10. These are words that remind us of God's awareness of everything about us. Psalm 139a on page 180. At the beginning, O Lord, you have examined me. You know me through and through. My sitting, rising, all my thoughts afar are known to you. Verses 1 to 10 of Psalm 139a to God's praise.

You have examined me. You know me through and through. My sitting, rising, all my thoughts afar are known to you.

My going and I'm lying down, I've been before you. Before I speak a word, O Lord, our heart is well known to you. You have me in behind before. You lay on me in your hand. Such The story is too wonderful, too high to understand.

Where can I draw your spirit dream, or from your presence go?

[ 2 : 43 ] If to the heavens you are there, or in the depths below.

If I should take the wings of dawn, and dwell beyond the sea.

There also you will be my guide, your right and holding me.

Let's bow our heads as we call on God's name in prayer. Let us pray together. Lord, we praise you this morning for your knowledge of us, of all things.

There's everything, everything about us is known to you. And Lord, that can be a great comfort to us at times. It can also be something that unsettles us also.

[ 4 : 01 ] Lord, even as the psalmist penned these words, it's not clear. Whether he was comforted by that fact, or whether he was wanting to escape from you. But he knew that wherever he went, Lord, you would be there.

And Lord, even when our circumstances are bleak, when we're in dark and difficult situations, Lord, you're aware. You are with us. You know us.

We thank you, Lord, for that. And we thank you that you're here today. You're always there where your people meet to worship you. We thank you for every individual that has come here today.

We're a large group of people, and yet we're all different. And we're all known to you. Everything about our circumstances, everything that's going on in our lives, Lord, you are intimately aware of these things.

And we pray today, Lord, that you would meet us according to our need. Whether we're young or whether we're old, bless the children with us, we pray. And we desire, Lord, and long for your blessing on their young lives.

[ 5 : 06 ] Every single one of them is loved by you with a love that is even greater than the love of their own parents. And Lord, we pray for them today as they go out to Sunday school shortly.

We pray for those who teach them. We pray for those who look after them and crash. And we ask, Lord, that you would be part of their lives. And even as they grow up, that they would grow up loving and following and deciding to serve the Lord Jesus.

Be with the teenagers here as well, Lord, at a different stage in their lives when there are so many temptations and so many things that could draw them away from you and away from your word.

Lord, guard them and keep them, we pray. And draw them ever closer to yourself. May we all, Lord, regardless of age, young or old, may we be brought closer to you today.

Be pleased to bless us. Speak to us through the Bible. And forgive us for all our sins. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, I want to speak to the young folk for a moment.

[ 6 : 09 ] And I can see that you're dotted about all over the place. Today, I brought in an Advent calendar. So put up your hand if you have an Advent calendar. Let me see some hands go up. I bet

you some adults have one of these as well.

So, yeah, okay. Quite a few of you have an Advent calendar. An Advent calendar is a strange thing because the less that's left of it, the better. Because the less that's left of it, then the closer we are to Christmas.

But, you know, it would be really strange if you got an Advent calendar and it didn't have any doors open by this stage in the month. If you had an Advent calendar and you didn't actually bother to eat the chocolates.

That would be really odd. Because you would get... I knew somebody who had one like that last year, year before. Halfway through December, there was still no doors that had been opened on the Advent calendar. And I don't get that.

Because you get no benefit from the Advent calendar unless you open the doors. And, you know, people are like that with Jesus as well. Particularly at Christmas time.

[ 7 : 12 ] Christmas, we should be remembering Jesus. That he... His birth into the world. It was an amazing event. And the fact that he came to save us. And yet there are people who celebrate Christmas and they forget about Jesus.

Now, if you forget about your Advent calendar for a day or two and you miss a few chocolates, that's not going to do you any harm. It might actually do you some good to not eat so much chocolate.

But, you know, if we forget about Jesus, that will not be good for us at all. So, I want you, if you have one of these, I want every single day that you open a door to have a chocolate.

I want you to remember Jesus. And I want you to remember that Jesus came to save us from our sins. So, every day when you have your chocolate, thank the Lord for Jesus.

He came to save you. And I hope and pray that you will grow up to trust and follow him. We'll do the Lord's Prayer together now as a congregation.

[ 8 : 14 ] Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen. I'm going to sing again now. This time we're singing from Psalm 146 in the Scottish Psalter.

You'll find that on page 446. Page 446.

Psalm 146. And at verse 5, the top of the page, singing to the end of the psalm. Psalm 146 at verse 5.

[ 9 : 14 ] Oh, happy is that man and blessed, whom Jacob's God doth aid, whose hope upon the Lord doth rest, and on his God is stayed.

Psalm 146. We're singing verses 5 to 10 to God's praise. O happy is that man and blessed, whom Jacob's God doth aid, whose hope upon the Lord doth rest, and on his God is stayed.

Who made the earth and heavens high, who made the swelling deep, and all the cliffs within the sea, who took the heaven of the Lord doth.

Who made the righteous judgment and saviour, for those so blessed that he, who to the hungry giveth food, God sets the listeners free.

The Lord doth give the blind their sight, that the legend doth raise.

[ 11 : 17 ] The Lord doth fear the wise, that walk in a bright place.

Let stranger's shield the widow's sting, they o'er flat self-esteem, but yet by him the wicked's clay, turned up sight and shall be.

The Lord shall reign forevermore, like God, O Zion, he.

Praise to all generations, Praise to the Lord give thee.

We're going to read God's word now, from the Old Testament, in the book of Ruth.

[ 12 : 49 ] So we're going to Bethlehem this morning, but not for the birth of Jesus, but for the story of one of his ancestors, Ruth, from whom the Messiah was descended.

So we're going to read the first chapter of Ruth. The first chapter of Ruth, maybe on page 267 in your Bibles. We'll read the whole of this chapter together.

So let's hear God's word. Ruth chapter 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, and the name of his wife, Naomi, and the name of his two sons were Malon and Kilion. They were Ephratites from Bethlehem in Judah.

They went into the country of Moab and remained there. But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives.

[ 14 : 00 ] The name of one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, and both Malon and Kilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

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.

So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each of you to her mother's house.

May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that you may find rest each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

And they said to her, No, we will return with you to your people. But Naomi said, Turn back, my daughters. Why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands?

[ 15 : 09 ] Turn back, my daughters. Go your way. For I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, would you therefore wait till they were grown?

Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake, that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me.

Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. And she said, See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods.

We turn after your sister-in-law. But Ruth said, Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you, for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge.

Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts me from you.

[ 16 : 15 ] And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said, No more. So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them.

And the woman said, Is this Naomi? She said to them, Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? When the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me.

So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab, and they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Amen. This is the word of the Lord, and we trust and we pray that he will follow it with his blessing. Let's just bow our heads once more in a word of prayer. Let's pray. Amen. Lord, we thank you for your word, the Bible, that is just so honest and shares with us the struggles that your people have.

[ 17 : 24 ] Most of us would be fearful of using the kind of words that Naomi used when she said that the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. But not only did she say that and more, but the Bible reports it for us, and it doesn't condemn her for it.

Lord, her pain is evident, and her pain is understandable. After she had lost so much that was precious to her in the world. And Lord, we want to pray today for those who have pain in their hearts and those who are struggling this morning.

We thank you, Lord, that while we can feel powerless to help people very often, we can pray to a God who is able. And so we ask you today, Lord, that you would come alongside those who are struggling.

The Bible tells us that those that are broken in their hearts and grieved in their minds, God heals, and their painful wounds he tenderly abides. So, Lord, we ask that you would deal tenderly with all who face challenging situations in their own lives, in their own homes, in their own hearts, in their own families today.

We pray, Lord, for those whose turmoil may be in their minds, those who are cast down, those who feel that are in a dark place. Lord, may you shine your light of hope into that darkness and transform their situations, we pray.

[ 18 : 50 ] Bless your word. Bless the gospel today as it is preached up and down our land and to the ends of the earth. We pray, Lord, for the preaching of your word here and in the other churches in the town and throughout this presbytery.

We thank you, Lord, that we have a promise that your word will not return to you empty. It will accomplish your purposes. And, Lord, we pray that you would purpose that it would do us good today, that your word would be the means of drawing us closer to yourself.

And we pray, Lord, that you would send workers into your harvest field. You've asked us to pray that prayer, to pray for laborers, Lord. And you know that the need is great within this presbytery, within our presbytery in the north and sky in Westeros.

Lord, we ask that you would be calling men into ministry and calling others to serve you in different ways and that you, Lord, would provide for the need is great.

Bless this congregation. Be with its minister, its office bearers. Be with all those who are members and adherents of it, Lord. Bless the children who've just gone out to Sunday school and creche.

[ 20 : 03 ] And, Lord, we pray that you would be at work in their young lives. Help calm them in all the responsibilities that he bears. Be with himself and Joan and with the family and uphold them, Lord, and equip them for the work, we pray.

And bless the congregation in all its efforts to reach out to others. For the Christmas outreach next Saturday and the family service on Sunday, we ask, Lord, that you would be in it and that you would be using these means to draw people to yourself.

So bless us now as we turn to your word, as we continue to sing it and as we shortly will study it.

We ask, Lord, that you would bring this book alive to us and bring us alive to it.

And may your Holy Spirit be our teacher and our guide today and make us willing students of your word, ready to learn from it and to be changed by it.

And all of these things we ask, Lord, we ask with the cleansing and the forgiveness of our sins. In Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing once more this time from Psalm 55 in Sing Psalms.

[ 21 : 09 ] You'll find that on page 71. Sing Psalms 55 on page 71.

And we're going to sing from the beginning down to the verse marked 8. Page 71. O God, please listen to my prayer.

Do not ignore my plea. My anxious thoughts make me distraught. O hear and answer me. Psalm 55. We're going to sing verses 1 to 8 to God's praise.

O God, please listen to my prayer.

Do not ignore my plea. O God, please listen to my prayer. My anxious thoughts make me distraught.

[ 22 : 11 ] O hear and answer me. I'm troubled by the voice of hope.

By their malicious fear For they bring suffering to me The hatred I must bear Within the anguish lifts my heart It's ever shot the near I tremble out of dead and fire I know the wealth I fear Though that I lie not on the wings

Then I would fly away And be at rest I'd live from here And in the desert stay Then would I do My hiding place Forever you see my fight But from the raging of the storm And from the tempest might As we seek God's help

Can we turn back in our Bibles To the passage that we read together In the book of Ruth And we're in chapter 1 today We're looking at most of this chapter But we can read again a verse 21 Ruth chapter 1 And at verse 21 Naomi is speaking And she says this I went away full And the Lord has brought me back empty Why call me Naomi When the Lord has testified against me And the Almighty has brought calamity upon me I went away full And the Lord has brought me back empty If this first chapter of the book of Ruth Were to be made into a film It might be called Three Funerals And a Famine It is a chapter filled with hardship And with pain It's a story of a family going through An incredibly challenging And sad experience But it also reminds us That God is interested In our families The book that comes before it The book of Judges Gives us an insight into The life of the Israelites In broad brush strokes You could say But then when we come into Ruth It's as if the camera zooms Right in To focus on one household And one family And this particular family Is a family that is struggling A family that is hurting And if the camera were to zoom in On your family

today Might it be a similar picture Difficulties Trials Struggles Pain But what this book reminds us of Is that God knows What's going on

[ 26 : 35 ] As you read through this chapter He ensures that The name of every person In this family Is recorded then A reminder that God knows each of us by name God knows us intimately And God knows whatever struggles Or hurts Or pains Or trials That you might be experiencing today And this book of Ruth Also reminds us of this fact That the Bible Always deals With reality There's no sugar coating here No airbrushing Of the fact that Life is incredibly tough There are times when it's painful There are times when it's really sad And yet even in the midst Of these sad circumstances In Ruth chapter 1 God is at work here God's at work And the heartwarming Aspect of this story Is that Ruth This complete outsider

A Moabite From among the enemies Of God's people She comes To be Attached to the people of God And more than that She comes to trust The Lord And even more than that The Lord Jesus himself Is descended From her You don't need to read Very far Into the genealogy At the beginning Of the New Testament In Matthew chapter 1 To find the name Of this outsider Ruth Amongst the ancestors Of Jesus So God's great plan Of salvation For the world His plan for the coming Of the Messiah It's being worked out Right here In this chapter Among the mess And the misery Ruth Is one of only two women Who have a book Of the Bible Named after them The other is Esther And they're two Very different people Esther was a queen Who lived in a palace Ruth was a peasant Who lived In poverty Massively different Circumstances Opposite ends Of the social spectrum And yet God cared For both of them So today We're just going to study This first chapter In the book of Ruth You need to go home And read the rest Of the story You may already Be familiar with it Maybe you're not But in this first chapter The focus is actually More on Naomi Than it is on Ruth So we'll spend a little Of our time Talking about Ruth But most of our time Will be focused On Naomi So I want to look at this Under four headings This morning First of all The problem This famine That caused them To have to leave Their homes The problem And then the parting There are several Partings Bereavements In this chapter And then thirdly The pledge We'll look at Ruth As she pledges Herself to Naomi And to her people And to her God The pledge And then finally The poverty From the verse That we took As our text Where Naomi Talks about Going out full And coming back Empty So we'll break it up Into these four sections And we'll work our way Through the chapter The problem The parting The pledge And the poverty So let's begin With the problem What is the problem here Well verse 1 Sets the scene For us By telling us That this took place In the days When the judges ruled And that immediately Alerts us to the fact That these were dark And difficult days In Israel We know that Because you only have To look across the page To the end Of the book of Judges To find out What these days Were like The closing verse Of the book of Judges Says in those days There was no king In Israel Everyone did What was right In his own eyes

There was no leadership And the people Had drifted away From the faith And then the next thing You find out In Ruth chapter 1 It's also something That should surprise us That is that There was famine In Bethlehem Because the very name Bethlehem It means house of bread And it was given Part of the reason It was given that name Was it was a fertile place So it was unusual To have famine In Bethlehem And then we meet The family In verse 2 All of them are named And we're told That they decide To go to Moab For a while Verse 1 uses The word soldier Which just means A short trip But clearly The situation changes Because by the end Of verse 2 We're told that They remained there So the plan Has changed They're going to go For a time

[ 31 : 42 ] Because there's famine But they end up Staying there Now going to Moab Is a strange choice Of place To go Because Moab Was enemy territory The Moabites Were enemies Of the people Of God If you read Through the book Of Judges You'll find that Moab Had attacked And subdued Israel Ruled over them For 18 years So it's an odd Place To go It's even worth Bearing in mind Where Moab Came from The Moabites Were descended From Lot From that Incestuous Encounter He had With his own Daughter When he got Drunk And one of The children Born Was called Moab The Moabites Came from there And they were Long term Enemies Of the people Of God And it's just A reminder to us That sin Has long Lasting Consequences

Decades And decades And decades Later The Moabites Were a thorn In the side Of God's People We meet Elimelech He's the head Of this home His name Means my God As king Although Some will Suggest that He's not Really living Up to his Name If he's Leaving Bethlehem The house Of bread Where God Has blessed Them To go To enemy Territory To Moab Well maybe That's the

case The passage Doesn't say So it doesn't Say that he Was wrong To go Should Elimelech Have stayed In Bethlehem Even when There was famine Would you Have It is hard To study this Chapter and Study this book Without forming A view Over whether He was wrong To go Or not But more Important Than what

We think Of his Decision Is how We respond When trials And difficulties And challenging Circumstances Face us There are three Main options That are open To you When life Gets difficult Escape Try and run From it Endure Simply put up With it in some Stoic kind Of way Or embrace It See it as Part of God's Plan for your Life Now Embrace might Be too strong A word I used it Obviously Because the Other two Were ease But just Simply Accepting This is what God has For me Just now That is how We should Deal With our Trials But I'm not Saying it's Easy to do So It wasn't Easy for Elimelech He took the Other option He went For the Escape Route But that's The problem That he Faced There was

Famine And he Had a Family Who were Hungry So that's Our first Point today The problem Life was Incredibly Difficult For this Family But we're Going to Look secondly At the Parting Life Wasn't Going to Get Easier By taking The escape Route The very Next thing We're told After we Read that They go to Moab Is that Elimelech Died How tough Was that They're in a New place Unfamiliar Territory And the Head of the Home is Gone Now There must Have been Some good Times in Moab as Well because They celebrated Two weddings While they Were there The two Boys Marlon And Killian Found Wives And got Married But clearly The good Times were Short lived Within ten Years It had all Fallen Apart And I've Called the Second point The parting Because there Are repeated Partings If you look

At verse Five It says The woman Was left Without Her two Sons And her Husband It's just A few Verses And everything Changed Everything Changed First there's One widow Then there's Two widows And then there's Three widows And you know It's easy to Suggest Maybe even Tempting To conclude That they Must have Been wrong To go If it all Went So Pearship But we Need to Be careful We need To be careful In forming That kind Of view Because The bible Doesn't say So What we Can say With certainty Is that Naomi Believed That this Was God's Chastisement For something Wrong In her Life So you'll Notice That in a Few verses So say At the end

[ 36 : 44 ] Of verse Thirteen She says It's exceedingly Bitter for Me For your Sake That the Hand of The lord Has gone Out against Me God's Against Her She says And then Look at Verse Twenty One Middle of The Verse Towards the End of The Verse Why call Me Naomi When The lord Has Testified Against Me The lord Has testified Against Me She's Saying God Has Some Evidence Against Me And that's Why she Believes Everything's Gone So Pearship Why she's Had so Much Trouble Now Maybe She's Right Maybe She's Right But even If she Is Even If This Is And This Is Just Her View Okay This Is Not Scripture That's Saying This Is A Chastisement From God This Is Just Naomi's!

Conclusion! But even If she's Right That this Is A Chastisement From God For Some Wrongdoing In Her Life We Can't Be Sure What Wrong What It Is That She Did Wrong Was It The Fact That The Family Left Bethlehem When They Ought Not To And Went To An Enemy Country Was It The Fact That She Allowed Her Sons To Marry Heath And Wives From Moab Was It Something Else All Together Or Was It None Of These Was She Just Misled In Thinking That This Was A Punishment Or A Chastisement Of Some Sort We Don't Know There's Lots Of Things We Don't Know What We Do Know Is That We Are Looking At A Woman In Turmoil!

Hard For Her To Think Straight Maybe You Know What That's Like When You Go Through Circumstances Like This You Can't Think Straight The Following Verses They Show Us That Naomi Is All Over The Place Because She Decides To Go Back To Bethlehem With Her Two Daughters In Law And Then At Some Point On The Way She Decides No Maybe They Should Go They Should Go!

She Tells Them To Go Back And She She Is At One Point Praying That The Lord Will Bless Them And Then In Another Moment She Telling Them Go Back To Your Own Gods This Is A Woman Who Is Deeply Confused Notice Her Prayer Or At Least It's A Desire For God's Blessing Verses 8 And 9 Naomi said To Her Two Daughters Go Return Each Of To She Is Asking God's Blessing On Them One Moment And Then Not Long After That She Is Telling Them Go Back To Your Own Gods Verse 15 She Said See Your Sister In Law Is Going Back To Her People And To Her Gods Return After Your Sister In Law If You Want To Be Whether You Want To Be Sympathetic With Naomi Or

You Want To Criticize Naomi You Could Find A Verse To Support Your Argument And What We Actually See From This Is This Is A Woman Who Is In Torment Who Is In Turmoil!

[ 40 : 09 ] And No Wonder Bereament Is Painful And One After Another After Another Incredibly So Naomi Has Been Parted From Three People Who Were Precious To Her In Just One Decade Of Disaster And Now We See Her And She's All Over The Place So That's Our Second Point To The Parting The Parting There Were Several Partings Here So We Looked At The Problem We Looked At The Parting I Want To Come Now And Think About The Pledge The Pledge From Verse!

Takes Its Name And Ruth Refuses To Stay In Moab Even Though Her Sister In Law Orpah Has Decided To Go Back And She Makes This Impassioned Plea To Naomi That She Really Must Go With Her You'll See It In Verse 16 And 17 And As You Read These Verses You'll See That This Is A Professional!

Faith! She's Come To Trust The Lord! Let Me Read 16 And 17 But Ruth Said Do Not Urge Me To Leave I Will Die And There Will I Be Buried May The Lord Do So To Me And More Also If Anything But Death Parts Me From You This Is It's More Than Just A Commitment To Israelite Religion In Verse 17 She Calls God The Lord The Hebrew Name Yahweh Which Is Covenant People The name That The Covenant People Would Use This Is Her Showing Her Allegiance To The Lord And You Have To Ask How Did That Happen Here Is A Woman Brought Up Steeped In Idolatry The Moabites Worshipped Chemosh One Of The Worst Idols One Who Accepted Human Sacrifice That's How This Woman Was Brought Up Steeped In Idolatry How Is It That She Come To Trust The Lord Well Conversion Is Always A Work Of God God Alone Can Do Circumstances You Might Think That The Loss Of Her Husband Might Have Had The Opposite Effect Might Have Driven Her Away From Any Thought She Might Be Having About God And Yet It's Quite Possible That It Was Standing At The Graveside Of Her Husband That Ruth Realized There Must Be More To Life Than This You Know It's Not Uncommon For Beream To Bring Us Face To Face With The Realization That We Need God Ruth Lost Her Husband She Lost Her Father In Law She Lost Her Brother In Law

And Yet It's To God That She Turns In The Middle Of Her Pain It's To God That She Turns And Here She Is Professing Her Faith And There's Nothing More Wonderful Than Hearing Someone Say That For The First Time I'm Trusting The Lord I'm Trusting The Lord But I want You To Notice And That Is That In The Same Sentence That Ruth Commits Herself To The Lord She Also Commits Herself To The Lord's People Verse 16 At The End Your People Shall Be My People And Your God My God And That's The Biblical Pattern From Beginning To End Of The Bible That God's People Are Meant To Be Together We Are Sheep In A Flock We Are Soldiers

[ 44 : 16 ] In An Army We Are Stones In A Building God's People Are Meant To Be Together And That's Why It's Sad When Anybody Who Professes To Be A Christian Excludes Themselves Or Stays Away From The Fellowship Of God's People Ruth's Pledge Of Commitment To The Lord Also Included A Commitment To The Lord's People So That's Our Third Point The Pledge The Pledge We've Looked At The Problem We've Looked At The Parting We've Looked At The Pledge Fourthly And Finally!

The So I'm Taking That Word Poverty From Naomi's Statement On Returning To Bethlehem The One We Read At The Start Verse 21 Which Says I Went I Went Away Full And The Lord Has Brought Me Back Empty She Feels Impoverished And She Feels It's God That Has Impoverished Her And It Becomes Very Clear That The Hardship That Naomi Has Experienced In Moab Has Taken Its Toll On Her Even On On Her Appearance Because Look at What The Women Of The Town Say When She Returns Verse 19 Middle Of The Verse When They Came To Bethlehem The Whole Town Was Stirred Because Of Them And The Woman Said Is This Naomi Is This Naomi It's As If They're Not Even Certain If This Is The Same Woman Who Left There Just Ten Years Earlier And

It's Not It's Not The Same Woman In Many Ways That Had Left There A Decade Previous To That Because Hardship Changes Us Look at What She Says Verse 20 She Says Don't Call Me Naomi Because Her Name Meant Pleasant Don't Don't Call Don't Call Me Pleasant She Says Call Me Mara That Name Means Bitter Or Bitterness And She Explains Why For The Lord Has Dealt Very Bitterly With Me And Then Later The Almighty Has Brought Calamity Upon Me Naomi Felt Utterly Empty Maybe You can Follow That Today In A Gathering This Science

Maybe That's How You Feel Today Utterly Empty But The Wonderful Thing As You Continue To Read Through This Book And Read It When You Go Home God Is Just About To Change All Of

That God Is Just About To Fill Naomi With Reasons To Rejoice You Know Sometimes Sometimes We Have To Be Emptied Before We Can Be Filled I'd Like To Quote Some Verses To You From A Poem Called Treasures They Go Like This One By One He Took Them From Me All The Things I Treasure Most Until I Was Left Empty Handed Every Glittering Toy Was Lost And I Walked Earth's Highways Grieving In My Rags And Poverty Till I Heard His Voice Inviting Lift Those Empty Hands To Me So I Held My Hands Towards Heaven And He Filled Them With A Store Of His Own Transcendent Riches Till They Could Contain!

[ 48 : 12 ] No More God Had A Plan For Naomi And For Ruth And He's Working Out His Plan Right Here Even Through The Hardships That Naomi Experienced You Know Now Would Not Be A Time To Go And Visit Her And Quote To Her The Scripture That Says God Works All Things For The Good Of Those Who Love Him There Are Times When It's Not Appropriate To Quote A Verse Like That But It May Be That Somewhere Down The Line She Would Come To Understand That For Ourselves You See Trying To Work Out

Why The World Is The Way It Is Why So Much Bad Stuff Happens Why God Allows Suffering And So On These Questions Will Just Tie Us In Knots Sometimes Sometimes You Need To Just Trust God Rather Than Question Him Or By All Means Bring Bring Your Tormile To Him Pour Out Your Heart To Tell Him How You Feel Tell Him What You're Struggling With But Always Remember That God Doesn't Owe Us An Explanation He's God And We're Not God I Heard A Heard A Story Not That Long Ago But Maybe You've Heard It Or A Version Of It But A Dad He Was He Was Working From Home And He Was Looking After His Son And His Son Was Demanding Attention And Board And Wanting To Be Entertained And Dad Didn't Have Time To Entertain!

Him He Had Work To Do And So He Tore a page out of a magazine that had a map of the world on it. And he tore the map into pieces and gave it to his son. And he said, you put that back together the way it should be. And when you're done, come and show it to me. And he didn't think the boy would be able to do it because he'd never really seen a map of the world before. But before long, the boy came back, dad, he said, I've pieced it all together and he'd stuck it with tape. And his dad was shocked.

And he said to him, how did you do that? You don't even know what the map of the world looks like. And the boy said, yes, but there was a picture of a man on the back. And he said, I recognized him. And so by looking at him, I was able to put it all back together. He knew the man behind the picture and that helped to put it together. And friends, if you know the one who is behind the jumbled mess that may be your life today, that helps. That helps. It might not enable you to make sense of everything, but how reassuring to know that he's there behind it all. Notice one final thing just as we finish.

[ 51 : 35 ] Naomi said she was empty and we have no reason to doubt that she was. Her hands were empty. Her heart was empty.

Her head. Her home. But just notice this glimmer of hope in the closing words of the chapter where it says, they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

There will be food at least. There will be food at the very minimum should be fed. But we know because we know the rest of the story that there were further blessings to follow.

God was about to do something new in Naomi's life. God was about to do something new in Jerusalem as well. Amen.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you for your word. We thank you that it just tells us the story as it is, with all its pain.

[ 52 : 42 ] It doesn't seek to make people out to be better than they are. It doesn't edit comments that are made about you that we might be uncomfortable with.

We thank you, Lord, that it tells us how people dealt with the troubles that came into their lives. But we thank you also, Lord, that it reminds us there is a God who is in control, even when everything seems out of control.

So bless us today. Be with us, each one of us. We're known to you, Lord. Meet us as you see our need today. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

I'm going to finish singing in the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 126. You'll find that on page 419. Page 419.

Psalm 126. We're going to sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise. When Zion's bondage, God turned back. As men not dreamed were we, then filled with laughter was our mouth, our tongue with melody.

