

Turning and Clinging

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[0:00] I want to be with honor and joy to preach God's word to you. After nearly two years, we have finished the book of Matthew. So this morning, turn with me in your Bible for the book of Ruth. If you don't have a Bible, please wave your hand. We'll give you a copy that you can use while you're here and take one with you.

How did I know what James said? Ruth is situated after the book of Judges and before the book of 1 Samuel. And that location between those two books is deliberate and ancient.

Ruth 1.1 begins, in the days when the Judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. If you turn back one page from the beginning of Ruth to the end of the book of Judges, you'll find this summary of what the days of the Judges were like in Judges 21-25.

In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own time. So then the days of the Judges were lawless times.

I don't know why that hasn't changed. A time when everyone did as they saw fit and did abide by God's word. It was a time when there was no king to rule and guide the people of God according to the will of God.

[1:15] It is therefore no coincidence that the book of Ruth, which comes right after Judges, begins with that verse, Ruth 1.1, and then ends with a genealogy that says, Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

That's the same King David that we know so well. This is one of the main purposes of the book of Ruth, to explain the origin of the Davidic royal dynasty.

That's why it's preceded by the book of Judges and followed by the book of 1 and 2 Samuel, which chronicle the rise and reign of David. We're never told who the author of the book of Ruth is.

We can't know for sure. But Jewish tradition, as recorded in the Babylonian Talmud, holds that Samuel, Prophet Samuel, was the author. Some people think that Samuel was too early to have been the author of Ruth, since he died before David ascended to the throne.

However, since Samuel is the one who anointed David as king in 1 Samuel 16, and it was according to Samuel's prophecy that David eventually did rise to the kingship of Israel, I personally think that Samuel is as good a guest as any.

[2:29] With the man who had anointed King Saul, but later said that God had rejected and has chosen David to be king instead, wouldn't he want to explain that to some people? Who is this David?

Perhaps when Samuel got to meet David's family when he went over to anoint him, he got to hear this story about his ancestors and decided to pen it for the sake of Progeny. But I speculate and digress.

Whether Samuel is the author or not, the apparent purpose of the Book of Ruth, which is to explain the origin of the Davidic dynasty, it would date around the time of the Davidic dynasty, which is around 1000, 1000 BC.

Ruth is a beautiful and compelling love story. It is told with remarkable tenderness and artfulness and delicacy. It is a literary masterpiece about which Rudolf Alexander Schroeder, the 20th century German poet and a five-time Nobel laureate in literature, he once said, no poet in the world has written a more beautiful short story.

In this book, you will find no great wars or spectacular miracles. God does not thunder from a fiery mountain, nor does he split the Red Sea.

[3:47] There are no awe-inspiring building projects like the tabernacle or the temple. There are no larger-than-life kings, prophets, priests. Ruth is a humble story about two widows and how God redeems them from their loss and widowhood through Ruth's marriage to Boaz and the birth of

Obed.

But if, for that reason, you deem that, well, nothing really important happens in Ruth, then you'd be badly mistaken. If not for the steadfast love and covenant loyalty of Ruth to her to see her husband, Nellon, and to her mother-in-law, Naomi, there would be no King David.

And if there's no King David, down the line there is no King Jesus, the Son of David. The very redemption history and the plan of God hangs in the balance in this humble story of two widows and their small family.

Our world doesn't celebrate women like Ruth. Think about it. From a worldly perspective, Ruth didn't accomplish very much. Some might truly dismiss her as saying all she did was get married and have a kid.

Our world thinks that that's a waste of a woman's gifts and talents and that a woman can only realize her full potential when she does something other than that. This week, while I was studying Ruth, I saw a quote from a Bible scholar who criticized the book of Ruth as a, quote, pernicious, exploitative trap.

[5:24] Because, according to her, it promotes a patriarchal culture where women's primary goal is to bear children. That's a narrow and cynical perspective. But that's how much of our world thinks.

Our society doesn't celebrate women like Ruth, but God does. God wrote a whole book in the Bible to recount her story so that wherever God's words proclaimed in the whole world that what she has done will be told in memory of her.

Ruth is the only non-Israelite who has a book in the Bible named after her. Ruth is named in the very genealogy of our Lord and Savior, Jesus himself, in Matthew 1.

So let us labor instead to have God's perspective and not man's perspective on these matters. I hope that's enough of an introduction to wet your appetite for the series.

This is completely underrated. Oh, actually kind of related. These illustrated note-taking notes, notebooks for the book of Ruth. I know some of you guys collect these and get one for every sermon series you do.

[6:27] Elena, of her own court, she used her own money to purchase some of these and she has some extra. So if you want some, go talk to Elena. Can you raise your hand? Yes, yes. All right. And thank her because she thought that herself. Please, let me read Ruth 1, but before I do, let me pray and ask God for her.

Heavenly Father, your word is wiser and more powerful than anything we can imagine to come up with ourselves.

Would you please, by your word, humble us in our pride, exalt your mercy and grace and salvation, and fix our eyes on your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer.

Do that this morning in Jesus' name, we pray. Amen. Please stand so we can honor God as we read from his word again.

I'm going to read the whole first chapter. Let's read the chapter. Let's read the chapter. 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.

[7:51] The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife, Naomi. And the names of his two sons were Melon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites 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.

The name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other, Ruth. They lived there about ten years. And both Melon 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.

[8:58] 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? 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 to her gods.
[10:05] Return 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.

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. 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, Do not 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.
[11:11] 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.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated. The story begins with an all too common tragedy.

There's a famine in the land so that a limelight decides to up and move his family out of Bethlehem to sojourn in the country of Moab. A cross-country move which is fraught with risks their migrants, immigrants.

Elimelech's initial plan was to sojourn there a temporary stay, a brief stay to outlast the famine in Bethlehem and then to move back. But one year turns to two years, two years turns to three years. For one reason or another their stay gets extended. He says in verses two to three they went into the country of Moab and remained there about ten years. Naomi has two sons take Moabite wives and indication that they're assimilating and settling down in the country.

[12:36] But during those ten years Naomi's husband dies then both of her sons die leaving her with only her two Moabite daughters-in-law. And verse five summarizes her for one's fate so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

Most of us haven't suffered half as much as Naomi at least not yet. We can discern Naomi's grief and bitterness in the things that she said in this passage.

She says to her daughters-in-law in verse 13 Later in verses 19 to 20 when they returned to Bethlehem the whole town is above us.

Imagine someone from our church or someone from Boston leading and coming back for ten years and the woman of the town are wondering is this Naomi? And that's probably a loaded question is this really Naomi?

Can this really be the Naomi who left town ten years ago? Is this the Naomi who left with her husband and two sons looking for better days and better future? What happened?

[13:55] Where's her family now? Her suffering has probably taken a physical toll on her body. Her wrinkled face and her white hairs probably tell the tale of the hardship and grief that she endured in Moab.

Can this really be Naomi? Naomi? And Naomi responds curtly. Do not call me now. Call me Mara for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

The name Naomi if you have footnotes in your Bible it probably tells you Naomi means pleasant. To highlight the word play we can translate that as sweet. But she says call me Mara instead which means bitter.

Don't call me sweet. Call me bitter. The Almighty has made my life very bitter. That old me that you knew ten years ago is gone.

My innocence gone. My youth gone. My optimism gone. My family gone. Don't call me sweet. Call me Mara.

[15:00] Bitter. That's my name from her life. Naomi is beginning to lose her very sense of identity. She's going to even bitter her. And pay attention to the way Naomi speaks of God.

She says the hand of the Lord has gone out against me. She's not wrong. She seems to have a good understanding of the sovereignty of God.

The Lord says in Deuteronomy 32:39 see now that I even I am he and there is no God beside me. I kill and I make alive.

I wound and I heal and there is none that can deliver out of my hand. And in Isaiah 45:6-7 I am the Lord and there is no other.

I form light and create darkness. I make well-being and create calamity. I am the Lord who does all these things. The Lord is in control of all these things of both well-being and calamity and it is his prerogative to do so as the creator who exercises worship over all of his creatures and creation.

[16:11] So she gets the sovereignty of God but her understanding of the character of God, his love, his mercy, his justice is profoundly wrong.

Look at the way she uses the title of God, the Almighty in verse 20. The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. That title, Almighty, El Shaddai, is a title that is the key word in the book of Genesis and it's used over and over again in places where God is making covenant promises specifically of fertility.

I'm going to give you a people, sons and daughters, progeny. So the use of the title here is quite cutting. Look at what the Almighty has done for me.

He's taken away my husband and both of my sons. See how fertile and fruitful he's made me. Now it continues in verse 21.

I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back in a day. Note the symmetry of that sentence.

[17:27] Naomi doesn't say the Lord sent me away full and the Lord brought me back empty. No, she says I went away full, but the Lord brought me back empty.

The fullness she once had, she attributes to herself, my family, my husband, my children, I went away full. But all her loss, all her tragedy, she attributes to the Lord.

Bitterness and sin doesn't have a way of skewing our perspective, okay? And we see that that's in full force in Naomi's perspective. What do you mean you went away full, Naomi?

You literally left Bethlehem because you have no food to you. Because of the family, you left empty. Oh, you mean your family, you had family back then, your husband and sons then, is that what you mean?

But what do you mean that the Lord has brought you back empty? How rude. I don't know if you've ever this happened. It's like you agreed to meet some friends at the gathering and you go to the gathering and your friend's calling somebody and it's like, oh, who's there?

[18:41] And I was like, oh, no one's here. It's like, whoa. Sorry for giving no one. Ruth is right there with the mother-in-law, right?

And later in chapter four, the woman of the town will say of Ruth, your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons.

That's the kind of precious and value the woman and Ruth is. She's brought Ruth back with her to this new country and yet she said, no, the Lord brought me back empty. Sorry, Ruth.

Our griefs and sufferings have a way of making us either bitter or humble. When I was a student at seminary, I attended a debate between a Christian apologist and a Christian apostate.

The apostate had grown up in evangelical circles. He claimed to have had a born-again experience as a high schooler, went to what he calls a fundamentalist Bible college, eventually got a Ph.D. in New Testament studies and became a Bible professor, but eventually he lost his faith because, according to his words, he couldn't resolve the problem of evil in his mind.

[19:59] If God is all power from all good, why is there much evil in suffering in the world? He became a very vocal and famous atheist and wrote a book entitled God's Problem, How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question, Why We Suffer.

Recounting how he lost his faith because he couldn't make sense of the suffering in the world in that whole book. That debate that I attended was on that very topic of suffering and evil in the world and this was part of the promotional circuit to promote that very book.

After watching the debate, I exchanged a couple emails with him. He was academic whose email wasn't hard to find. Be warned, all you academics. I concluded the email by gently nudging him and encouraging him to reconsider the book of Ruth.

Because I believed then, as I still do now, 16 years later, that it offers a compelling answer to the problem of evil and suffering in the world. And what was interesting was that by his own admission, this man hadn't suffered much at all in his life.

And yet, he lost his faith because of other people's suffering that he himself had never experienced. But throughout the world, so often, people who have suffered the most find their faith in God strengthened and deepened.

[21:21] Our brother Daniel Jenkins once told me about a book entitled, *When Sorrows Like Sea Billows Roll*. It's a memoir written by a friend of his, Brad Franklin.

It's a memoir about the sudden death of Franklin's wife, who became ill and died shortly after giving birth to their seventh child, leading Brad Franklin as a widower and a single dad of seven children, one of them an infant.

Franklin, as you can imagine, endured unimaginable grief and hardship. But he didn't have a crisis of faith. Instead, his experience deepened his faith and trust in God.

He writes, I so desperately wanted God to be glorified and healing men. That didn't happen. But he was glorified in ways I didn't anticipate.

He says he took things one day at a time. If you still love God and want to serve him, that day is a success. Whatever else happened that day, God has kept you.

[22:30] That's a good day. such a study in contrast. Extreme pressure can crush and collapse rocks and mills, but that same extreme pressure also makes diamonds.

Nathaniel actually brought a copy of the book, I think, right? If you guys want to borrow it, first come first to the copy. Naomi doesn't have that perspective yet.

God adjusts her perspective by revealing his faithfulness and steadfast love and mercy toward her throughout the book, and I think she gets there by the end of the book, but she doesn't have that perspective yet. And I think, I was going to share this example.

The reason why her perspective is so skewed is because she thinks that she doesn't deserve anything that's happening to her. She sees herself as blameless.

I don't deserve this God. My family didn't do anything to deserve this. And it's that mindset that ultimately leads to bitterness, isn't it? But her perspective, once again, is skewed.

[23:51] God has specifically stipulated when he made his covenant initially with Israel, that if they sin against him, that he will withhold rain so that the land does not produce fruit.

You can find that in Leviticus 26, 18 and 20, and Deuteronomy 28, 23, 24. There is not only a meteorological reason for the famine, but there is a theological reason for the famine.

It's the Lord God who brings rain and makes the heavens give showers. And remember during the time of the judges, the lawless times when people did whatever they saw fit and were following the whims of their own wicked hearts.

Is it any wonder then that the Lord God struck them with famine? Moreover, now you should not have left Bethlehem in the first place. Abraham once sojourned in Egypt because of a famine and bad things happened to him there.

Isaac once sojourned among the Philistines because of a famine and bad things happened to him there. the story of the patriarchs reminded us over and over again that you're not supposed to leave the promised land, Cain, unless the Lord himself tells you to leave.

[25:01] You're not supposed to go to Moab. Moabites are the ones who refused Israel passage when they came out of Egypt. Moabites are the ones who seduced the Israelites into idolatry.

Moabites are the ones who conquered and oppressed the Israelites in Judges 3, 15-30. They're the ones of whom Moses specifically said in Deuteronomy 23, 3-4, no Abonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord, even to the tenth generation.

None of them may enter the assembly of the Lord forever because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way when you came out of Egypt and because they hired against you Balaam, the son of Baor, from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.

Naomi's family's actions are far from innocent. There are several workways in this passage, in the names of this passage.

The name Bethlehem, the name of the town, literally means the house of bread or the house of food. It's the same word in Hebrew. So Naomi is literally leaving the house of bread to the land of Moab, the land that refused Israelites' bread when they were coming out of Egypt.

[26:13] Naomi's husband's name means Elimelech, which means God is king. God is still king there in Bethlehem, and instead of submitting to him, they are moving to a land that worships the god Chemosh, who is no god and no king at all.

It's from Israel that God will raise up a deliverer. He will raise up King David. It's from Israel that God will raise up King Jesus, and yet, here you are leaving the promise. In Amos chapter 4, verses 6-8, the Lord said to his people, I gave you lack of bread in all your places, yet you did not return to me. I also withheld rain from you, yet you did not return to me. The word return is the same Hebrew word that is sometimes translated as repent, and that key word is used 15 times in the book of Ruth, 12 times in chapter 1 alone.

That's the point of the passage. Ruth, Naomi, return from Moab to Bethlehem. That's why the passage keeps mentioning Bethlehem five times in those passages.

That's where you're supposed to be. That's where the promises of God are. That's where the Lord God is king over you. The proper response to famine is not to flee, but to repent, to return to Yah.

[27:41] That's why verse six is such a turning point in this narrative. Then Naomi 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.

Where would the Lord visit his people and give them bread? In Bethlehem, of course, the house of bread, she needs to return to the land and the people that have the favor of the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, when you fall upon hard times, when things are not going your way, when you struggle in the loneliness of your singleness, in the pain of infertility, in the nagging effects of chronic illness, do you flee elsewhere?

Or do you turn to the Lord? To whom do you turn? Do you try to numb yourself emotionally by refusing to confront these issues and escaping to substances or to shows or even to your work? Do you just try to tough it out or go through life like a zombie carried along by your grief, rather than carrying your griefs and sorrows to the Lord? When push comes to shove, when the lower gets to throne, what are the functional gods in your life that you turn to for help and for rescue?

[29:09] There are no gods at all. Is it your own industry and intelligence? Your own resourcefulness? Is it your parents, your boss, your spouse, your boyfriend, or girlfriend?

Do you take things into your own hands by packing up and moving to Moab when the Lord calls you to stay and to pray and to wait on the Lord?

That's the point of this passage. Even in your bitter circumstances, return and cling to the Lord. Recall what David did in Samuel, 2 Samuel 24.

David takes a census that he's not supposed to take. He's supposed to trust in the Lord, not in the number of his soldiers. And after recognizing what he has done, he says David's heart struck him so that he acknowledged his sin.

And prophet Gad offers him three options as God's judgment. Three years of famine, three months of fleeing before enemies, or three days of pestilence.

[30:19] And David says, I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is great. But let me not fall into the hand of man.

So he chooses the three days of pestilence. I don't want to, even for three months, be pursued by men, by enemies. The Lord is merciful. I will fall into his hands.

Give me the pestilence for three days. And he was correct to throw his lot in with the Lord. Because while the pestilence is raging in Israel, it says that the Lord relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, is enough.

Now stay your hand. How was David able to make that choice? How did David know? Because David knows, not just theoretically, but experientially and viscerally, that the Lord is merciful and gracious.

because he knows what Hosea says in 11 to 8 when God says, how can I make you like Adma? How can I treat you like Zebulun? My heart recoils within me.

[31:27] My compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my burning anger. I will not again destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not a man.

A man would pursue you to your destruction. God is too compassionate and merciful for that, so he will not do that and David knows that about him. So he says, I'll take the best of us.

Hasn't God done enough to prove himself worthy of our trust and hope? What shall we say to these things?

If God is for us, who can be against us? 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?

If God gave his only son for us, can we expect him to give anything more? Is there anything more God can give to prove his love for us?

[32 : 32] His steadfast love for us? Has he not proven that he is trustworthy and worthy of our world? Can we say, as Job said, though you slay me, I will yet hope in you.

I will yet trust in you. Where our brothers will say, if the Lord strikes you one day with dementia, and you can't remember any of the new things you're learning, you can't form any new memories, and you can still say to the people, well then, I will rely on my old memories to praise the Lord.

Well then, I can't remember any new things I've learned about my God, but I will then relearn that same thing over and over again and praise Him. Where are my sisters who say, when you get into a car accident, and you become a quadriplegic, and you still say, well, I cannot raise my arms to worship God, yet still I lift up my soul and my heart to Him, and praise Him, because He is worthy of it.

those are diamonds that are precious to the Lord God. And so, Naomi turns back, and that brings them to a fork on the road, because now her two daughters-in-law, Lord Phi and Ruth, have to make a decision about whether they will go with her or not.

And even though Naomi tells them to go back and find rest, go find a husband, go back to your mother's house, help her find a husband, ask her to find a new husband for you. They say, no, we will return with you to your people.

[34 : 19] It's a hard and cheap scene. Lots of mutual affection, care, and tears. But Naomi insists, turn back, my daughters, why would you go with me?

Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I'm 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 will grow?

Would you therefore refrain from Mary? See what she's saying? Daughters, if you throw in your lot with me, you forfeit your future.

there is no prospect for marriage and happiness and progeny. Children, if you stay with me, off you come.

Orba is smart. She knows a hopeless case when she sees one. So she leaves, she kisses her mother and nod it by and goes. She's too young to throw away her life like that and idealism and loyalty.

[35 : 29] And then Naomi says to Ruth, see look, your opa, your sister is gone. Verse 15. She has gone back to her people and to her gods. Return after your sister-in-law.

That's what it says in verse 15. Ah, now we really see what's at stake. Once again the word return is significant here, there are two possible returns, not one.

You can either join Naomi's return to Bethlehem, to her people and to her god, or you can join Orba's return to Moab and to her people and to her gods.

The first return is repentance. The second return is apostasy or regression. But Ruth is an ex-bornary woman.

He says in verse 14, Orba kissed her mother-in-law get by, but Ruth clunged her. Mentioned this in Charles and Shirley's wedding recently.

[36 : 32] By the way, Charles and Shirley are married now. You guys get that. Thank you. That word clunged is the same Hebrew word that is used in Genesis 2.

2. 24 to describe the marriage of them. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Hold fast. That same word is the word cling, to clean. It's the word that's used in Isaiah 41.7 to refer to a metal worker, welding metal together, that one flesh union.

Ruth is saying, When I married your son Malam, I left my people and my gods behind. That old me is gone. I may have vowed to Malam until death do us part.

And even though death has parted us, and my burial obligation is fulfilled, I still have an obligation to you as my mother-in-law. I have thrown in my love with your people and with your God, and I am not leaving.

[37 : 39] For where you go, I will go. 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. That's a marriage. Forbearer for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in death. That's why Baraz later called Ruth a woman of kindness, in chapter 3, verse 10, to hear the word. which means steadfast love or loving kindness, the same word associated with the Lord God himself in verse 8, the word used to describe the eternal character of God.

In Exodus 34, the Lord, the Lord of God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

A constant love, a love that sticks by you through thick and thin. This is an extremely selfless and sacrificial act on loose part. Notice that Ruth himself, loose part doesn't think that she has great prospects back in Bethlehem.

[38 : 48] She doesn't say, I'll go where you go, where you have food, I'll have food, where you thrive, I will thrive. No, she says, where you die, I will die.

For you're buried, I will be buried. That's what awaits her in Bethlehem. Bethlehem. That's what she says. And yet, she says, I will throw in my lot with the eye, because the Lord is merciful and gracious.

That's exactly the kind of repentance that the Lord seeks from all of us. Remember, Ruth is a Moabite, and the narrator will not let you forget that throughout the book.

Again and again, he will refer to Ruth as Ruth the Moabite, Ruth the Moabite, Ruth the Moabite.

You really have to keep saying that? Can you just, I know I'm a Moabite.

I don't want the whole world to know I'm a Moabite. You know how Moabites came to be? In Genesis 19, 30 to 38, after Lot and his two daughters escape the judgment destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, they take refuge in a cave.

[40 : 02] And while living in a cave with no civilization around, the daughters realize, you know, if we sit here, we're just going to get old and die, and there's no hope for a future for us, we need to have kids. And so they decide to take matters into their own hands, and they get their father drunk, and they sleep with him.

And it's through that incestuous union that they have two sons, and the first son's name is Moab, who is the father of all the Moabites. It was the Moabite woman who seduced the Israelite man, and led them to idolatry, numbers 25.

Yet how gracious and merciful of our God that he receives even Ruth and Moabite into his kingdom, into his assembly.

A thousand years later, once again, in Bethlehem, a king will be born as was prophesied in Micah 5, 2, and that king is Jesus. And I mentioned to you briefly earlier the genealogy of Matthew, the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1.

It only mentions, it only names four women besides Mary, the mother of Jesus, and those four women that he names, they are all Gentiles.

[41 : 23] All people who had no business being in the genealogy of the Jewish Messiah. All whose people are a symbol of sin and shame and evil and injustice.

Why do you think God does that? That's the kind of thing that people will hide. Well, let's leave that one up. The next one.

Why does God do that? It's as if he's inviting us. Where have you been, friend? What is your family history?

What are the skeletons in your closet? What are your sins and your shame that you carry every single day and you don't know whether you'll be received in Bethlehem or not, in the house of bread or not, in the kingdom of God or not, and you come with fear and trembling.

And yet when you come, you find that God has made a way for you in Jesus Christ by sending that promised king and that he died on the cross to pay for your shame, pay for your sin, so that Moabites, Gentile sinners, can come and find salvation, forgiveness, acceptance.

[42 : 48] That's the amazing story of the book of the book. So brothers and sisters, where, with whom, with what are you throwing in your lot?

God, it's always a good idea to throw in your lot with the gracious, merciful Lord. No matter how hard your situation is, even in the bitterest of circumstances, return and cling to the Lord your God. Let's pray. O Father, yes, though you slay us, yet we will hold you.

No matter how hard our lives get, no matter how persistent, lingering, and longer our suffering is, O Lord, we will, we will rather be a doorkeeper in your house than dwell in the tents in the quick end.

We will rather suffer and wait on you and still throw our lot in with you because you are not like a man. you are gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love.

[44 : 39] Would you please reveal more of your character to all of us, your children, my brothers and sisters in Christ?

God, if David had reason to throw in his lot with you, how much more do we would have seen your full, the fullness of your revelation, of your love in Jesus Christ.

Help us to trust you, to hope in you, through all our days. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Amen. Amen. may