

Sermons on Ruth:

A Royal Grandma (Ruth 1:15-18)

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I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. For two solid hours, the lady sitting next to a man on an airplane had told him about her grandchildren.
 - 1. She had even produced a plastic fold out photograph album of all eight of her grandchildren.
 - 2. After talking for two hours about the grandchildren, she finally realized that she had dominated the whole conversation.
 - 3. “Oh, I’ve done all the talking, and I’m so sorry. I know you certainly have something to say. Please, tell me—what do you think of my grandchildren?”
- B. Can you imagine what that poor guy’s plane ride would have been like if that woman had a prince or a king for a grandchild?
 - 1. That poor guy wouldn’t have gotten any rest on that plane ride, but he would have heard all about the great things her grandson was doing, how powerful he was, & all the great people he had met.
 - a. This morning, we wish to examine a woman who became the great-grandmother of David, Israel’s greatest king.
 - b. In the Book of Ruth, we see how she became David’s great-grandmother.
 - 2. Grandparents often greatly affect their grandchildren’s lives.
 - a. We see this in Scripture. Enoch, for example, had a profound influence on his great-grandson.
 - 1) About Enoch we read, “Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him” (Gn 5:24).
 - 2) That influence extended to his great-grandson Noah, for we read: “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God” (Gn 6:9).
 - 3) We see here that godliness can be passed from generation to generation.
 - b. You grandparents here this morning can greatly influence your grandchildren—That’s why we’ll think of Ruth, David’s great-grandmother, this morning.

3. We know that Ruth was David's great-grandmother, for the Book concludes with a genealogy.
 - a. "They named him [Ruth's son] Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David" (Ruth 4:17).
 - b. The purpose of the Book of Ruth seems to be a demonstration of how a foreigner became the great-grandmother of Israel's most famous king.
 - 1) King David had a Moabite—a "bad apple"—on a branch of his family tree.
 - 2) How could a foreigner, an idol worshiper, become this famous king's ancestor?
 - a) This book seeks to answer that question.
 - b) When politicians of any persuasion have a 'bad apple' fall from their family tree, they send their "spin-masters" to explain it away.
 - i. That's a far cry from what we have here.
 - ii. We have here the Word of God—no spin, no half-truth, but God's very truth.
4. This morning, we shall examine that truth of God, for Ruth provides a model of what any family member—grandparent or not—ought to look like.
 - a. We'll see the steps it took for Ruth to become David's great-grandmother. We will see Ruth as she LEAVES, LOVES, LABORS & LISTENS.
 - b. We'll see her as she pulls out her pictures & says, "Look! My grandbaby is a King!"

II. RUTH LOVES, 1:15-18.

A. READ TEXT.

B. What an utterly amazing passage!

1. We are amazed by this text because of the great love Ruth shows Naomi.
 - a. In our culture, we aren't supposed to respect our mothers-in-law; there are supposed to be horrible, wicked people.
 - b. Maybe we're like the fellow who answered the phone & his mother-in-law was on the other end.
 - 1) The mother-in-law asked to speak to her daughter, but the son-in-law said that his wife was not home at the moment.
 - 2) He then asked if there was anything he could do for his mother-in-law. The mother-in-law stalled for a minute & then said, "Well, yes there is. I've thought about it long and hard, and I really want to be cremated."
 - 3) The son-in-law replied, "Stay where you are. I'll get the matches & be right over!"
 - c. Ruth knows nothing of our norms & she loves her mother-in-law unconditionally.
2. Had Ruth not shown such unconditional & amazing love, she would never have become David's great-grandmother.
 - a. In fact, we could make a strong case that it was this attribute that totally changed Ruth's life.
 - b. Why was Ruth willing to do everything else she did in this book? Because she loved Naomi!

C. How much do we love our in-laws?

1. How much do we love that pesky mother-in-law or that overbearing father-in-law or that good-for-nothing son-in-law or that holier-than-thou daughter-in-law?
2. Scripture instructs us to love:
 - a. Rm 13:8-10.
 - b. "Love one another earnestly from a pure heart" (1 Pt 1:22).
3. Some of you might be thinking, "Wait just a minute, Justin. You haven't met my in-laws; there is no way that I could love them unconditionally."
 - a. Jesus thought differently.
 - 1) I do not use this text to be funny or to make a joke, but I use this text to make a point.
 - 2) Jesus says, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44). If I'm instructed to love my *enemies*, can't I love those of my own *family*?
 - b. How do we grow to love our in-laws?
 - 1) Appreciate what they have given you. Were it not for Tammy's parents, I would have neither my beautiful wife nor my wonderful children.
 - 2) Try to understand their motivation.
 - a) I know I can't speak for all in-laws in the world this morning, but I'm confident that I can speak about my own.
 - b) What motivates my in-laws to want to know what's going on in my home? Why do they care how I'm treating Tammy & the boys? Why do they care how I'm providing for them?
 - c) It's because they love my family, and I know that beyond any doubt, and I can greatly respect that.
 - 3) Make yourself a list of every admirable quality they possess.
 - a) Do you admire his or her character? Do you admire the religious devotion they instilled in your spouse or your grandchildren? Do you admire their work ethic?
 - b) Focus on those good qualities.
 - i. If you need to, get the list out on the way to Thanksgiving Dinner & concentrate on your in-laws; good attributes.
 - ii. The way we think greatly affects the way we act: "Out of the heart come evil thoughts" (Mt 15:19).
 - 4) Understand that if you really detested your in-laws you would not have married your spouse.
 - a) I trust that you've seen your own parents' attributes in yourselves. As I get older, I see more & more of my dad in me, and mom says that she sees more and more of his dad in him.
 - b) Thus, in a very real sense, you've married your in-laws, because your spouse possesses some of their attributes.
 - c) Just the other night, Wil saw an ad for an immoral ballot measure and asked what a casino was.
 - i. Tammy answered him **exactly** the way her mom would have answered that question, I got so tickled I could hardly stand it. Tammy was turning in to her mom right before my eyes.

- ii. Tammy said, “Justin, what’s so funny.” I said, “That’s exactly what your mom would have said.”
- iii. Tammy then said, “Aren’t you glad she’s like that & instilled those values in me?”
- iv. I could not begin to say how grateful I am that Tammy sees morality in black & white just like her mother, and I love her mother for it.

5) Let us love our in-laws, for that is the way of Jesus!

III. RUTH LEAVES, 1:15-18.

A. READ TEXT.

B. Let’s refresh ourselves with Ruth’s story.

1. There was a famine in Judah, and a man from Bethlehem named Elimelech took his wife Naomi & his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, and went to Moab.
 - a. Elimelech died & his two sons married Moabite women, Orpah & Ruth.
 - b. In time Mahlon & Chilion died, so there were 3 widows in this one family.
2. Naomi heard there was food again in Judah & set out to return to Bethlehem with her daughters-in-law.
 - a. Naomi had a change of heart & told her daughters-in-law to return to their own families.
 - b. After some pleading & begging, Orpah returns to go back to Moab. We read, “They lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her” (v 14).

C. We then read the famous exchange in vv 15-18.

1. Naomi encourages Ruth to follow Orpah & go back to Moab; Ruth refuses.
2. Instead, Ruth pledges to leave her family.
 - a. She says to her mother-in-law: “Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people.”
 - b. Think about the trust that Ruth places in her mother-in-law:
 - 1) Ruth had never been to Bethlehem, and it’s quite likely that the only thing she knew about Bethlehem was what Naomi had told her.
 - 2) Ruth says that she’s going to leave her own family—parents & siblings she’ll never see again—to go with Naomi.
3. Ruth further says that Naomi’s God will be her God.
 - a. Naomi gave Ruth an opportunity to return to the gods of Moab; she says at v 15: “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”
 - b. Ruth says, “No. I won’t go back to those lifeless idols; I’ll worship your God.”

D. Why would Ruth willingly give up her family, her homeland, & her gods?

1. How many of you would willingly—this very day—walk away from your family, your homeland, & your God? What would possess Ruth to make such a drastic, life-altering decision?
2. Could it not be that Naomi had lived such a life that Ruth knew that Naomi could be trusted & her God was worth following?
3. We all know the great power in examples:

- a. How many of you have been converted, in part, because of the good example of family?
 - 1) Several of you have told me how that you were converted through the example of your in-laws, your spouse, or a sibling.
 - 2) Where would you be without the power of a great example?
 - b. That undoubtedly is why Paul wrote to Timothy: “Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tm 4:12).
 - c. “Wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives—when they see your respectful and pure conduct” (1 Pt 3:1-2).
 - d. Naomi had undoubtedly demonstrated God’s love & grace to Ruth.
 - 1) What type of example do we set before our families—our in-laws, our grandchildren, our children, our parents?
 - 2) Do we demonstrate God’s love & grace?
- E. But, even with a wonderful example, some people refuse to follow.
- 1. It has been said, for example, that only 39% of American teens want to be like their parents. While we do not know quality of all those examples, undoubtedly some teens do not want to follow good examples.
 - 2. Ruth did not have to follow Naomi’s example, but she chose to do so.
 - a. When she left her family and gods, Ruth provides us with a powerful example:
 - 1) Ruth likely knew that staying in Moab meant that she would know nothing of Yahweh, the true God & she knew that God is more important than family or homeland: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:26).
 - 2) Ruth also knew that nothing in this world is more important than following God: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Mt 22:37).
 - b. Had Ruth not left her homeland & her gods, she could never have become David’s great-grandmother—she would never have gone to Bethlehem, she would never have met Boaz, and her life would have been vastly different.
 - c. How much like Ruth are we?
 - 1) Are we willing to leave whatever devotions tie us to this world & follow the Lord God with a single devotion?
 - 2) How different would our lives be if we possessed a single devotion to the Lord God?

IV. RUTH LABORS, 2:2-4.

A. READ TEXT.

B. Ruth volunteers to go to glean grain from the field.

- 1. God had earlier provided his law about gleaning: “When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands” (Deut 24:19).

2. Notice that God says the sojourner, the fatherless, & the widow were to be allowed to glean.
 - a. That means that Naomi is allowed to glean! She is just as much a widow as is Ruth.
 - b. Why didn't Ruth say to Naomi, "You know what? I'm hungry. You go into the field & you glean some grain & come home and fix me supper"?
- C. Ruth's attitude was service.
 1. She was willing to go out of her way to serve her mother-in-law.
 2. Are we willing to serve?
 - a. God desperately wants us to be:
 - 1) Jesus says to his disciples, "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all" (Mk 10:43-44).
 - 2) After Jesus demonstrated service to the disciples by washing their feet, he says to them, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do just as I have done to you" (Jn 13:14-15).
 - b. Do we labor in our families? Are we willing to serve our in-laws, our spouses, our parents, our children and do what they need?
- D. Had Ruth not labored, she never would have met Boaz. She never would have become David's great-grandmother. How would our lives be different if we labored in the home?

V. RUTH LISTENS, 3:1-5.

- A. READ TEXT.
- B. Naomi provides Ruth with instructions on how to find a husband.
 1. Naomi tells Ruth to wash herself, put on her cloak, not make herself down until after Boaz has gone to lie down & then uncover his feet and lie down.
 2. That's strange!
 - a. I seriously doubt that any of you mothers have encouraged your daughters to find a husband that way.
 - b. However, we cannot forget that Boaz, as the redeemer, the next of kin to Ruth's husband, had an obligation to marry her.
 - 1) "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her" (Deut 25:5).
 - 2) Therefore, what Naomi counsels Ruth is solid counsel of a woman seeking to serve God in her culture.
- C. What amazes me so much about this exchange is not Naomi's advice, but it's Ruth's reaction to that advice: She says, "All that you say I will do" (3:5).
 1. If I were to die today, two things would happen: 1) Tammy would be thankful she doesn't have to marry one of my brothers; and 2) My mom isn't going to tell Tammy whom to marry.
 2. Can you imagine getting a phone call from your in-laws & they say, "We want you to marry somebody we've picked out for you if our son (or daughter) dies?" I seriously doubt such a conversation would go well.

- D. But, Ruth recognizes good advice when she hears good advice & she's willing to listen.
1. Are we?
 - a. "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety" (Prov 11:14).
 - b. "By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom" (Prov 13:10).
 2. Are we willing to receive counsel from those who have walked the road of life before us?
 - a. Don't hear me say that we must jump & do whatever our in-laws or parents or children advise. Not every piece of counsel is wise.
 - b. But, on the other hand, we dare not reject counsel just because it came from our in-laws or our parents or our children.
 - 1) It was Tammy's mom who taught me to care for a baby. I had never been around children that much & now all of a sudden I was a father.
 - 2) Tammy's parents came & stayed with us for several weeks after RJ was born, and I recall very vividly the time that my mother-in-law taught me to change a diaper.
 - a) I had absolutely no clue as what to do with a dirty diaper.
 - b) But, on the front pew of the church where I was preaching on RJ's first Sunday at church, Ann taught me to change a dirty diaper.
- E. Had Ruth not followed Naomi's counsel, she would not have made herself known to Boaz, she would never have married Boaz, & she would never have become David's great-grandmother.
1. What counsel is there that we need to heed?
 2. Paul gives some solid counsel:
 - a) "We appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor 6:1).
 - b) Have you received God's grace in vain? Have you received that grace at all?