



READ: Selections from Ruth 1-4 (NIV)

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were... from Bethlehem in Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

When Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there... Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them goodbye... but Ruth clung to her. "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."

When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her... So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz... Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain..." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife... and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth." Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

ENTER THE STORY:

The town of Bethlehem, whose name means "house of bread" had no bread to offer, so a woman named Naomi and her family leave in search of food. They settled in the land of Moab, and Naomi's two sons married two Moabite women, but in a sad turn of events, Naomi's husband and both of her sons died, and she was left alone.

It was not easy for women to make money in those days, and Naomi knew she could not provide for her two new daughters-in-law, so she sent them back to their families, but Ruth clung to her. Ruth had already made up her mind that she wanted Naomi and the Israelites to be her family, and she wanted Naomi's God, Yahweh himself, to be her God.

Does this sound familiar? It should because yesterday, we read Rahab's story. A woman who was not an Israelite, but who desperately wanted to make Yahweh her God, and the people of Israel, her people, and her family.

So Naomi and Ruth travel back home to Bethlehem in search of family that could help them survive.

- In many places around the world at that time, women were not treated well at all, but Israel was different. God wanted
- his people to take care of women and treat them well, so he put laws in place to protect them, especially women who
- had lost their husbands.
- One of the rules involved gathering food. The men who owned the fields were supposed to leave some of the grain
- behind so the women could go around the edges of the field and collect it. We saw Ruth doing this very thing, and it just
- so happened to be in the fields of a family member named Boaz.
- But there was another rule, and this one was specifically for widows [*widows are women whose husbands have died*]. If
- the woman's husband died before they had children, then one of his other family members was supposed to marry the
- widow and help her have a son to carry on her husband's name.
- **This brother was called the "kinsman redeemer."**
- This was a very serious job because the "kinsman redeemer" would act as a rescuer! He would take care of the woman
- and her family by paying for food, giving them a place to live, and carrying on the family name.
- In this story, Boaz is the kinsman redeemer for Ruth and Naomi, and he chooses to marry Ruth and provide for her and
- protect her so that her family could continue. Much later in the Bible, we read about another kinsman redeemer. A very
- special someone who will come to rescue his people, but he will save them from much more than just hunger...he will
- save them from their sins.
- ***Do you know who this special someone is? It's JESUS!***
- Whether we know it or not, we are all just as helpless as Ruth and Naomi were. The Bible says Jesus is like the groom at a
- wedding, and the church is his bride. Like Boaz, he steps up to marry us, to join his life with ours and to rescue us.
- And Ruth and Boaz? Well, they have a baby boy named Obed, who is a great blessing to Naomi, who had lost so much.
- And Obed grows up to be the father of Jesse who grows up to be the father of David. Yet again, we find ourselves back to
- the stump of Jesse! But this time, we *KNOW* who the Shoot is, and we can't wait for him to arrive because, just like
- Naomi, when he gets here he will be a great blessing, and we will finally be happy.

■ **PRAY:** *Jesus, thank you for the story of Ruth, that shows us the beauty of a Kinsman Redeemer. Thank you for rescuing and redeeming us from our sins and grafting us into your family tree, just like you did for Ruth and Rahab! Amen.*