

Ruth 4

God's Faithfulness at Work

Ryan Perz – December 29, 2019

Intro: It's a really helpful spiritual exercise from time to time look back and recount how God has been faithful.

It is good as we wrap up a year, and even a decade, to look back and reflect on God's faithfulness.

As we tie up our short series in Ruth, we can approach it the same way. We can reflect on God's faithfulness.

—There are many ways to see God's hand of faithfulness at work in this story, but the simplest way is to connect God's faithfulness directly to the characters.

Packed into this chapter are two scenes, an epilogue and genealogy. But woven through it all is the picture of God's faithfulness to Boaz, Ruth and Naomi.

God's faithfulness through Boaz (1-6)

- Boaz dominates this first scene in the final chapter.
- Here he makes good on his previous promise (v13): he finds the closest kinsman redeemer and lets him in on the situation (3-4).
- We also get one final insight into God's *Providence*. Just like how Ruth happened to wind up in Boaz's field—the exact man Boaz was looking for just “happened” to appear.

“Behold” is a trigger for us to have our *eyes open* to how God's providence is going to unfold in the rest of the story!

We have stories also. When we believe that a personal God is directing all the movements of each of us. We have our stories where we just bump into someone, or cross paths with someone who has a connection to someone we know, and we say, “What a small world!”

Small world...or personal God? Do you readily have your eyes open to see what God's providence is doing around you?

(Ps 139:2-3)

²You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.

³You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.

Nothing in life just happens randomly; every detail is directed by a personal God who knows and loves us.

- In the culture the town gate was like the courthouse, town-hall, and community center all in one; the elders acted like the council.
- The proposal is to buy Naomi's property. Since she has no son who will later try and claim it, this seem like a perfect investment.
- Yet there are some strings attached...rather a person attached: Ruth, *the Moabite* (v5).
- Here's the deal. If the man buys the land, and Ruth has a son down the road, the land becomes his. Furthermore, adding a wife and potential children, gets expensive.

In other words, this move requires sacrifice on a big scale. A sacrifice that he is unwilling to make. It's a sacrifice that would need to trust God with an unseen future and walk by faith, not by sight.

This man does not have it. He seems to live by one rule: self-protection. He missed out on a massive blessing because of self-protection.

How many blessings do you and I miss out on for self-protection?

- All this sets us up to see how kind, generous, sacrificial and loving Boaz really is!!

Now again, we need to step back and remember the culture and law for Israel. The main principle of the Levirate marriage was so that the family name does not disappear (5b). Taking on a wife was not for the romantic itch to be scratched but was for the greater good of future generations.

The Bible is thick with emphasis on the next generation. We really need to hear this, since our culture is so focused on the immediate and now.

True godliness cares deeply about the next generation!

Ps 78:4

⁴We will not hide them from their children,

but tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might,
and the wonders that he has done.

Ps 145:4

⁴ One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts

Eph 3:21

²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Some years ago, someone studied the generational legacy of Jonathan Edwards —it includes a lot of influencers: spiritually, politically, socially: 1 U.S. Vice-President, 1 Dean of a law school, 1 dean of a medical school, 3 U.S. Senators, 3 governors, 3 mayors, 13 college presidents, 30 judges, 60 doctors, 65 professors, 75 Military officers, 80 public office holders, 100 lawyers, 100 clergymen, and 285 college graduates.

Max Jukes' legacy came to people's attention when the family trees of 42 different men in the New York prison system were traced back to him. He lived in New York at about the same period as Edwards. The Jukes family originally was studied by sociologist Richard L. Dugdale in 1877.

Jukes' descendants included: 7 murderers, 60 thieves, 190 prostitutes, 150 other convicts, 310 paupers, and 440 who were physically wrecked by addiction to alcohol. Of the 1,200 descendants that were studied, 300 died prematurely.

<https://www.ywam-fmi.org/news/multigenerational-legacies-the-story-of-jonathan-edwards/>

The point I'm making is this: God's people best invest their energy and sacrifice for the next generation. It's often ordinary faithfulness in the small things that God calls us to. Marriage. Discipling relationships inside the family or with friends. Hospitality. Missions work in some obscure difficult place largely unnoticed.

Boaz was the conduit of God's faithfulness. We are called to be conduits of His faithfulness also.

God's Faithfulness for a bride (7-13)

- I've already said that I'm not convinced that Ruth is primarily a romantic story.
- But, there is a marriage in it, and a marriage is a call to rejoicing.
- Starting in v7, there is a legal transaction. Instead of using a notary, they just transferred sandals.
- V13 the marriage is consummated.
- And a final note that again points us to the Lord's sovereign hand - "The Lord gave her conception".

The story starts with the Lord intervening (1:6 the Lord visits Bethlehem with bread) and ends with the Lord giving Ruth a son.

Here we see God's faithfulness to Ruth—and again an answer to the prayer from Naomi.

One way to look at the story of Ruth is a prayer report update.

Don't neglect the significance of God hearing and answering prayer when we cry out to him!

- Ruth find's rest in the home of her husband. *God has been faithful to a bride.*

God's faithfulness to secure a bride helps us with the big picture of the Bible:

—Gen 2: God declares that it's not good for man to be alone (2:18), so he brings a bride to Adam.

—According to Eph 5, marriage is not an ultimate...it's a type (pattern) that points to Christ.

(Eph 5:31-32)

³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

As the drama of this age comes to a close, Rev 19 and 21 pictures God's people prepared as a bride.

Rev 19

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult

and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his Bride has made herself ready;

⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure”—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

****Pursing a pure life causes us to be more bride-like.**

Rev 21:2

² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Ruth finds rest in the home of her husband. The story goes from hardship to finally arriving at home. That's also the story of all who are bought by the precious bride of Christ. Christ loves his bride and gave himself up for her. Her house, the church here on earth, and God's dwelling in eternity, *is a place of rest*.

The book of Ruth is especially relevant for those experiencing hardship. We even catch a glimpse back in v 5 with "the widow of the dead". Life is never always peachy. There is death and loneliness. You can identify with the struggles. 2 Cor 4:17 calls them "light and momentary afflictions"...but in our frailty they often seem heavier than that.

Yet our hope is the same as Ruth's rest. God's faithfulness endures forever!

God's faithfulness in a blessing (14-22)

- Here is Naomi the grandmother.
- I hear many grandmas say they are blessed; grandchildren are a blessings.
- (Prov 17:6)

⁶ Grandchildren are the crown of the aged,

- But this is not some sentimental, Hallmark card blessing. Naomi receives the real deal, Kosher—Yahweh, God-driven blessing.
- At the beginning, the women were talking about Naomi. Remember her response: Don't call me Naomi, call me bitter (1:20). But that has all changed. The story ends...with blessings. Naomi, the bitter, is now blessed.

- Notice who the blessing is actually directed toward? The Lord. There has been a lot of human activity in this short drama. And who gets the praise? The Lord, who conducted it all.

Just like our lives. A lot of drama; a lot of movement. But at the end, God be praised. The Lord be blessed.

- And finally. Naomi's redeemer is surprising: It's not Boaz; it's the child (v15).
- The language is very escalated that points not just to present blessings, but future hope.

The final part of the story is a surprise. This story is full of them. So is life.

The surprise is that Obed (Naomi's grandson) becomes the grandfather of King David. When a grieving, hopeless widow prayed, God did exceedingly more than she could ask or think!

Like the closing credits of a movie, the genealogy rolls off the screen.

It spans about 8 centuries and is written with royal bloodline running through it.

Conclusion/ Summary of Ruth

If there are two words that I can leave you with that sums up Ruth they would be -
Providence and Promise. God is faithful in both.

Providence

—He is faithful in how his providence unfolds, even in times when life does not make sense.

William Cowper's Hymn *God Moves in Mysterious Ways*

v.3 Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,

But trust him for his grace.

Behind a frowning providence,

He hides a smiling face.

v.4 His purposes will ripen fast,

Unfolding every hour.

The bud may have a bitter taste,

But sweet will be the flower.

Promise

—God is faithful to the things he has promised. Let's focus on one - the genealogy. Ruth's ancestors had a sinful past. For example, great, great, great... grandma Lot's daughter; Tamar – she is a pretty raunchy sinner; even King David falls into his own web of sin. The Genealogy in Matthew 1 continues with the Genealogy of David.

(Mt 1:6) And David, the father of Solomon, by the wife of Uriah.

Jesus was born into a world and web of sinners. He spent his earthly life surrounded by sinners. His dying hours were spent between two sinners. All for the promise that God makes good on.

Mt 1:21—

“You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sin”.

God's Faithfulness at Work.

This is the promise that has gotten me through another year, and decade. It's the promise I cling to each day, each hour and moment. It's the promise we build our life and praise on.