

Introduction: Last week we heard the greatest commandment is to love God with all that is in us. God spoke these words through Moses as He was about to give His people the land He had given His word to Abraham would be theirs (*Deuteronomy 6:4-9*). Jesus confirmed this commandment days before He went to the Cross (*Mark 12:28-34*). But the human heart is easily led astray to worship all kinds of idols in place of God (*Deuteronomy 5:6-10*). ** This is our only hope: we can love God because He first loved us (*1 John 4:13-19*). There are two promises God gave through the prophet Isaiah to those who love Him. People of all nations who join themselves to Him in love to serve Him will be brought to His holy place and be made joyful in His house (*Isaiah 56:6-7*); and, He has something unimaginable prepared for those who love Him (*Isaiah 64:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9*). *** There are two sides to God's LOVE: salvation and judgment. Both sides are held together by a word people do not like to hear: Discipline. However, discipline is the mark of a true father (*Hebrews 12:3-11*). God uses discipline to bring people to Him for the first time, or to bring them back to Him when they stray. *** God becomes our Father when we surrender our lives to Him by faith in the work of His Son. All people of all nations can become His children by the gift of reconciliation to Him by faith in Savior-Jesus. People of all nations can then learn to love God and be united to Him in one family. (*Ephesians 2-3*)

All who love Yahweh are His family* **

The book of Ruth is an appendix to the book of Judges. Judges is a dark book. God's people fell into great idolatry and un-belief after Joshua's generation died. There were rare moments of revival under a handful of God-chosen, Spirit-filled judges. But soon the people lapsed into deeper darkness. *** Elimelech and his family were not fully committed lovers of God. They disobey God's will twice in our passage. Still, there were sparks of faith and love to God in Naomi. Because of her, a foreign woman came to love God and leave her 'gods' to join with God's people. *** Thirteen hundred years later Jesus asked people He was teaching about His family. Answering His own question, he said whoever does God's will is in His family. Let's look deeper.

I. Elimelech takes his family to Moab during a famine where he dies, his sons marry and die, so his wife is left without husband and sons. (*Ruth 1:1-5*)

A. During a famine in the time of the judges a man of Bethlehem sojourns in Moab with his wife and two sons. (*Verses 1-2*)

1. And it was, in the days of the judges, there was famine in the land. (*Verse 1a*)

UN-faithfulness: A summary of Israel's un-faithfulness is in the beginning of Judges. (*2:10-22*)

Famine: Famine was one curse for disobeying Yahweh. (*Leviticus 26:18-20; Deuteronomy 28:22-24*)

2. A man from Bethlehem went to sojourn in Moab with his wife and two sons. (*Verse 1b*)

Sojourn: To sojourn is to dwell for a time in a place away from home.

3. His name was Elimelech, his wife was Naomi, and his sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites living in Judah. (*Verse 2a*)

Names: Elimelech means 'my God (is) king', Naomi 'my delight', Mahlon 'sick', Chilion 'pining', Ephrathites were from Ephraim ('twice fruitful'). Perhaps the sons' names are not descriptions of their physical condition, but a reflection of the parents' spiritual sensitivity to the idolatry of God's people in God's land. Idolatry is sickening. God's people should pine for the true God among such evil.

4. Then they entered Moab and had been there. (*Verse 2b*)

Moab: Moab means 'from father' and his brother's name Ben Ammi means 'son of my people'. Their names reflect the result of the sordid affair of Lot and his two daughters after Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed (*Genesis 19:30-38*).

B. After he dies, his sons marry women of Moab, then the sons die, and his wife has her daughters-in-law. (*Verses 3-5*)

1. And Elimelech died, and Naomi was left behind and her two sons. (*Verse 3*)

Sons: Her husband was dead, and her sons were left from her husband.

2. These sons took wives from the women of Moab and they dwelt there ten years. (*Verse 4*)

Sin: Marriage to non-Israelites was forbidden in the Torah (*Deuteronomy 7:1-6*). Orpah means 'gazelle' and Ruth 'sisterly friendship between women'.

3. Then Mahlon and Chilion died and Naomi had been left behind of her two sons and husband. (*Verse 5*)

Death: After ten years death came to all of Naomi's family who entered Moab with her. Only she ('my delight') remained. If her parents meant she was Yahweh's delight, her name was truer than she could imagine at that time.

II. After hearing of food in Judah, Naomi plans to return and commands her daughters-in-law return to their mothers, but Ruth will not leave Naomi. (*Ruth 1:6-17*)

A. As she rises to return from Moab, Naomi commands her daughters-in-law to return home; Orpah returns, Ruth cleaves to her. (*Verses 6-14*)

1. Then she rose, and her daughters-in-law, and returned from the fields of Moab because she heard Yahweh visited His people to give bread. (*Verse 6*)

Grace of God: After ten years of disciplinary famine, God showed His people grace by giving bread. We must all be encouraged because though God may discipline, He will give grace to return to Him

2. Then she went out from where she was, and they went on the way to return to Judah. (*Verse 7*)

Loyalty: Orpah and Ruth are staying with Naomi. She is more than their mother-in-law.

3. She commands them to go and return to their mother's house so Yahweh will love them as they did the dead and her, and He will give that they must find a resting place with a man, then she kissed them and they all wept aloud. (*Verses 8-9*)

Go-return: She gave three commands: go, return, find. She desired two blessings: Yahweh will love them and they have a resting place. Because they loved her and she loved God, she wanted Him to bless them. May we realize our disobedience to God may lead to death, but if we join ourselves to God and His people we may receive His LOVE and rest.

Weeping: All three of them wept with loud voices at being separated after many years.

4. They would return with her, but Naomi commands they return because she can't give them husbands: return and go, if I had hope of a husband tonight and bore sons, you will not wait for them to grow; it is more bitter for me because Yahweh's hand has gone out against me. (*Verses 10-13*)
Still loyal: They are still being loyal to Naomi who has been a mother to them.
Return-go: Naomi concludes by reversing her two main commands they not return with her.
Bitter: Because all her men died she is convinced God is against her. She changed her name (*1:20*). She will experience God's grace (*4:13-17*). She will learn a truth by which we should live: Bitterness due to disobedience to God can be overcome by accepting God's grace.
Experience: Experience taught her the family was wrong to leave the land God gave them, but she does not fully trust God.
5. Then they wept loudly again, and Orpah kissed Naomi, and Ruth clave to her. (*Verse 14*)
Ruth: This is the word used of Adam and Eve (*Genesis 2:24*). Though of different nations, there is a strong family bond between them.

B. Ruth makes a five-fold pledge to never leave Naomi or her God. (*Verses 15-17*)

1. Naomi said: Behold! Your sister-in-law returned to her people and 'gods', you must return after her. (*Verse 15*)
Pay attention: She demands Ruth to pay attention to return. Jesus used the same word.
2. Ruth said: do not entreat me to forsake you or return. (*Verse 16a*)
Not forsake: With wedding words, Ruth says she will not obey Naomi's four time command.
3. Because where you go I will go, where you lodge I will lodge, your people (are) my people, your God (is) my God, where you die I will die and be buried. (*Verses 16b-17a*)
Five-fold pledge of love: Ruth says she is one with Naomi and her God is Ruth's God. She has learned to forsake Moab's idol 'gods' and love the true God due to Naomi. Her bond with her mother-in-law made her love Yahweh and made them one family of different nations.

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4. Thus will Yahweh do to me and more, because death will separate between me and you. (*Verse 17b*)
Only death separates: This five part pledge will be done in the grace and strength of Yahweh. This is the second marriage bond allusion between these two 'sister friendship' women. Jesus said the Church, all with faith in Him, is His bride (*Matthew 9:15; 22:2; 25:1; John 3:29; see Isaiah 62:1-7*) Ruth and Naomi foreshadow God's Church IN Jesus made from people in every nation who love Him and are in the family of God by faith.

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III. Jesus says His family members do God's will. (Mark 3:33-35)

- A. Jesus responds to His mother and brothers waiting for Him by asking: Who is His family. (*Verse 33*)
Context: After Jesus did amazing healings and gave controversial teachings, His family came for Him saying He is out of His mind, 'insane' (*Mark 2:1-3:21*).
 1. And, having answered them, He said. (*Verse 33a*)
Miracles: His answer was about miracles done in the Holy Spirit (*verses 22-30*).
 2. Who is 'the mother Mine and the brothers Mine?' (*Verse 33b*)
Who is My family: He asks them who is in His family using seven words.
- B. After looking at those sitting around Him, He answers: Whoever does God's will is in His family. (*Verses 34-35*)
 1. And, having looked (at) those sitting round-about with Him, He said. (*Verse 34a*)
Those sitting: These are the ones who are open to His teaching.
 2. Behold! 'The mother Mine and the brothers Mine'. (*Verse 34b*)
Pay attention: Just as Naomi asked Ruth to pay attention to her, Jesus is asking them to pay attention to Him. All must seek to learn from the Teacher. In the introduction to His answer He uses the same seven family words as in His question.
 3. Because whoever might do the will of God. (*Verse 35a*)
Choose to do God's will: Jesus indicates that doing God's will is contingent on an individual choosing to offer himself as a living sacrifice, serving God to be transformed to approve God's good, pleasing and perfect will (*Romans 12:1-2*).
 4. The same, My brother and sister and mother is. (*Verse 35b*)
Family expanded: Initially, He talked about His mother and plural brothers. Now He expands to include sister, but all people are individual. He mentions every member of a family but a father. This is because His Father is everyone's Father. Jesus' family does His will, so we must also seek to know God's will to be in His family.

Jesus' family does His will

Conclusion: Elimelech takes his family to a foreign nation during a famine, his sons marry foreign women, and within ten years all the men die. Then, after God graciously provides food in His land, the widow Naomi sets out for home, commanding her foreign daughters-in-law to return home; but, Ruth gives a five-fold pledge to cleave in love to Naomi and her God. Thirteen centuries later, Jesus teaches that anyone who does God's will is in His family.

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