



New City Church: Sermon Discussion Notes

“Mothers of Jesus: Ruth” – Ruth 3, 4:18-22

Purpose: These discussion questions are designed to help you apply the sermon to your personal life, church life or your city’s life. You can use these for personal, family, or small group reflection. To review the sermon, go to www.newcitychurch.ca/sermons.

Introduction

Pray – Take a moment to pray, asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture.

Read – Ruth 3, 4:18 – But the whole book is summarized in the sermon, so feel free to read any part of the book that strikes you and/or your group.

Sermon Summary – The story of Ruth is a “micro-story” that fits into the “macro-story” that God is telling in the Bible and in history. The time of the judges, when Ruth’s story takes place, was marked by licentiousness, murder and war. Taboos were falling as Israel plunged deeper into a time when they increasingly did “what was right in their own eyes”. While the nation seemed to be on fire, we come to this short story about a refugee and a petty landowner in Bethlehem. In this story we see the hope of Christmas captured as we see how God was at work, advancing his rescue plan through a group of people living out the “hesed” love of God in their own lives.

We read that Naomi’s life comes crashing down in the first five verses of the book. She has moved to Moab to escape the effects of famine and has lost her husband and sons, leaving her with her two daughters-in-law and no prospect of avoiding destitution. When Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem, Ruth decides to go with her. In “clinging” (1:14) to Naomi, we see Ruth realizing that if she clings to her own life, then Naomi may lose hers. But, if Ruth clings to Naomi, then there is a chance for life. Here we see God’s loyal, unrelenting love, his “hesed” being lived out by Ruth as she sacrificially clings to Naomi. It is God clinging to Naomi through Ruth, but Naomi cannot quite see it – her trials have (understandably) narrowed her vision, she only sees her trials what God might be up to.

We then meet Boaz, who falls for Ruth immediately. He treats her with such compassion, even forgoing social customs to welcome her to drink water that his Israelite men had drawn, that Ruth is overwhelmed. Ruth is then encouraged to pursue Boaz’ through a plan that strikes modern readers as bizarre at best and scandalous at worst. Ruth dresses up and goes to Boaz in the night and uncovers his feet as he sleeps and waits for him to wake. She then asks him to take up his claim as her and Naomi’s “kinsmen-redeemer”, or in Hebrew, their “go’el”. Boaz readily does this. He realizes that he will bear all the cost for redeeming the destitute women, but he does it anyways because he believes that Ruth is enough of a prize. Boaz, in acting as their go’el points us towards a greater redeemer who will not only rescue a couple women from shame and poverty, but will offer rescue for all the world and for all eternity.

The book closes with a ten-person genealogy which is odd. Most books open with genealogies. But, this is one of three ten-person genealogies in the Old Testament. The first and second show up to summarize the family lines before and after the flood (see Gen 5 & 11) and the third is here in Ruth 4:18-22. These genealogies are given to provide us with hints. That when the world was crumbling in the time of the flood, God was working through this family to save the world. Now, in the depraved time of the judges, God is again at work through Ruth and Boaz. This genealogy is a reminder of hope. We see a thread running through the book that connects us to the gospel in the word “wings”. In 2:12 Boaz commends Ruth for finding protection under Yahweh’s

wings. Then Ruth seeks protection under Boaz's wings in 3:9. Then in Matthew 23:37 Jesus will come and tell Jerusalem that he longed to protect them from the coming wrath, to protect them from their cosmic poverty and separation from God, by covering them with his wings. Ruth shows us that God is so committed to our salvation that he will not even let broken people and depraved nations stop him.

Questions

1. Review the passage (Ruth 3, 4:18-22) How does this speak to your life?
 - Have you ever felt like Naomi? Like God emptied you? How do you react to trials in your life?
 - Share a moment in your life when you, like Ruth, did something that seemed counter-intuitive.

2. What implications does Ruth's story have for us as a church community?
 - In what ways can you/we live out God's *hesed* love inside the church?
 - We don't have any custom of relying on "go'el" or redeemers, and yet, the church should be a place where we care for those in need. How might we serve as go'els for one another today?

3. How does this text speak to our city?
 - Calgary is a city that knows famine. Our economy fluctuates with the price of oil. How can we respond with hesed when those in our city are suffering financially and personally from economic downturns?
 - Hesed love has a very practical side. How might New City/your life group show hesed for the city?

Concluding Question

What is the one thing you want to take away from this study to remember or to make a change in your life?

Prayer

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