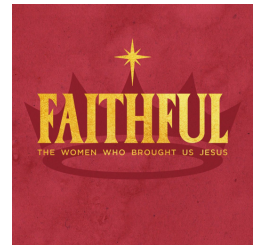


Ruth – Welcome to the family.

Ruth 1-4

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



The news always felt like it was either more of the same... bad news. Or, like things were developing so fast that it was overwhelming to keep up with it. She would find herself listening, scanning, cruising the reports... anything new? Any word from home? Then, one day it came... things were better; she could go home.

See, they never meant to be here long. It was an in-between place. But, here she was, her in-between place, well it took everything she ever wanted. First, her husband. Then her boys. And now, even with a faint whisper of good news, it is going to take her daughters. Well, they're her daughters-in-law... but they might as well have been daughters. No, it won't take them in the same way it took the men in her life... but they can't go where she needs to go.

Sorrowful, lonely, and heartbroken... she makes a plan, gathers the few remaining earthly possessions, and they take off for the border. Her in-between place will shortly be in her rearview mirror. But, her future... it's not all that promising. At least she won't be in the place that took everything from her. In the end, Naomi, through the faithfulness of Ruth, will come to experience that **God is present in our everyday lives, even when we don't feel like it.**

1. God is present with us, even when best-laid plans go to waste. (Chap. 1)

a. This is a core truth we are reminded of in the season of Advent. → Jn 1:1-18

- i. **God is with us!** → A wonderful truth that Advent declares!
- ii. In the prologue to John's Gospel (verses 1-18), he unpacks that Jesus, who was God and the author of creation, had compassion and care for humanity and came to be with them.
 1. **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (vv.1-5)**
 2. **⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. (v.9)**
 3. **¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (vv.12-13)**
 4. **¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (v. 14)**

- iii. **Advent** -Literally meaning “coming” or “arrival,” this term refers to the coming of Jesus Christ to earth to provide salvation by his life, death, resurrection, and ascension.
 - 1. **We remember when God fulfilled his promise to send his son.**
 - a. **Again, according to John’s Gospel, we are reminded that God came to be with us even though we had rejected him.**
- iv. Christians now anticipate a second advent when Christ will return to earth in bodily form to receive the church and to judge the nations.
 - 1. **We look forward in hope and expectancy for Jesus’ promised second coming.**
- v. It is a season of increasing light.
 - 1. The Advent wreath has five candles. The candles represent:
 - a. Hope – Love – Peace – Joy – The Messiah
- b. They didn’t plan to be there long. → Elimelech & Naomi make temporary plans.**
 - i. There was evidently no intention of permanent migration. The use of the verb *gûr*, ‘to sojourn’, shows that the man planned to return in due course (Berkeley renders, *to live for a while*). It is the regular word for a resident alien.¹
- c. A famine had popped up in Judah → Judges 6
 - i. The period of the Judges was a turbulent time.
 - 1. 21:25 → **“There was no King in Israel... and everyone did what was right in their own eyes.”**
 - 2. There are 7 cycles of Judges... People sin... Cry out.. God sends a judge to rescue them.
 - 3. “There was no King...” **Descriptive** of the spiritual condition of the people → God was supposed to be their king.
 - a. **Prescriptive** of their next political / spiritual leadership situation.
 - ii. Droughts were sporadic and common... it is not unlikely that a regional or local drought could have caused a famine. → Again, not exactly a time period marked by generosity and care for others.
 - iii. Or, some scholars link this to the time of Gideon... Judges 6:1:1-6
 - 1. Midian depletes Israel’s agricultural resources.
 - 2. **6** The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. ² And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel, and because of Midian, the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. ³ **For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them.** ⁴ **They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey.** ⁵ **For they would come up with their livestock and their tents; they would come like locusts in number—both they and their camels could not be counted—so that they laid waste the land as they came in.** ⁶ **And Israel was brought very low because of Midian.** And the people of Israel cried out for help to the Lord.
- d. Ruth’s husband makes the call... We’re moving for a while.**

¹ Cundall, A. E., & Morris, L. (1968). [*Judges and Ruth: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 7, p. 237). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

- i. There was evidently no intention of a permanent migration. **The use of the verb *gûr*, ‘to sojourn’, shows that the man planned to return in due course (Berkeley renders, *to live for a while*). It is the regular word for a resident alien.**²
- ii. Elimelech and his family move “for a while” to Moab.
 - 1. We’re not brought into the decision-making process...
 - a. There was a famine... they moved.
 - b. Who they decided that... not sure.
 - c. Right in their own eyes? Or, led by God?
 - i. The first option is far more plausible.
- iii. Ephrathites from Bethlehem - The use of the older name in such a connection may point us to the old established families, the local aristocracy (the Midrash records an interpretation of the word as meaning ‘aristocrats’, ii. 5).³
 - 1. **Note: When Naomi returns, “all the city is interested/ excited” (1:19)**
- e. God is with us, even when our best-laid plans fail. (v.8-9: May the Lord deal kindly with you... Just as you have done.)
 - i. Naomi prays that Yahweh may *deal kindly* with them as they have done with the dead and with Naomi herself. **We should not overlook the fact that she uses the name ‘Yahweh’, the personal name of the God of Israel.** It might have been expected that in speaking of Moabite women in Moabite territory, she would use either the general word ‘God’ (*’ēlōhîm*) or else ‘Chemosh’ the name of one of the principal gods of the Moabites (Num. 21:29; 1 Kgs 11:7).⁴
 - ii. **Naomi is convinced of the one true God... even in her suffering.**
 - iii. **The key word is *hesed*, often rendered ‘loving-kindness’.** It is a word which on occasion means something very like loyalty, and on occasion something very like love.⁵
 - 1. **Naomi is asking for Yahweh to show the same lovingkindness and loyalty to Ruth and Orpah that they have shown to her and her sons. (cf 1:8)**
 - a. **To the original audience this would have spoken about “covenant” ... an odd ring to it? → Would God really make covenant with those people?!?**
 - b. It also includes elements of: mercy, steadfastness, love, faithfulness, and loyalty.
 - c. This is the kind of commitment a mother / father makes to their child.
 - iv. **God’s faithfulness and presence are not dependent on our circumstances or prosperity.**
 - 1. God doesn’t remove his presence or his faithfulness from Naomi.
 - a. **She is rightfully struggling! → Much like Job. (v.1:20)**
 - i. She knows what is ahead of her, and behind her.
 - b. But, she doesn’t jump ship from the idea that God is loving-kindness. (*hesed*)

² Cundall, A. E., & Morris, L. (1968). [*Judges and Ruth: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 7, p. 237). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

³ Cundall, A. E., & Morris, L. (1968). [*Judges and Ruth: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 7, p. 240). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁴ Cundall, A. E., & Morris, L. (1968). [*Judges and Ruth: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 7, p. 245). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁵ Cundall, A. E., & Morris, L. (1968). [*Judges and Ruth: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 7, p. 245). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

2. This is a big part of the storyline of this book... God knows that life on this side of heaven is tough.
 - a. We experience the difficulty and brokenness of this age in three ways:
 - i. We make bad choices.
 - ii. Other make bad choices that affect us.
 - iii. The natural world is a broken place.
 - b. God doesn't remove his presence or faithfulness from us just because of our bad days.**
3. Again, this is the gracious reality of Advent... God is with us in the most real and personal way.
 - a. Matthew, as he begins his Gospel, includes Ruth in the genealogy to help illustrate this point.
 - i. Yes, she belongs because she marries Boaz.
 - b. God's love and presence is not abstract. Instead, it has taken on flesh, and met us where we were at.**
 - c. God's love is not indifferent and distant, instead it is working through ordinary people over the events of history to bring about God's glorious purposes.**

2. Regular obedience is God's love language. (Chap. 2)

- a. **The book of Judges tells of war and strife, but Ruth is a quiet story of ordinary people going about their quiet lives.**
 - i. This is an important contrast to the time of the Judges, and an important context note.
 1. The world at the time of Ruth's life was chaotic. Knowing that makes what is about to happen all the wilder and more amazing!
 2. But, it also has an important lesson for you and me.
 - a. Regular obedience is God's love language.**
- b. Let's recap: Ruth & Naomi**
 - i. Naomi... She is convinced of God's faithful presence and sovereignty.
 1. Responds to the provision of God (v.1:6)
 - ii. Ruth... I will go with you... Your God will be my God. (v.1:16)
 1. Naomi's God will be her God. This does not mean that she has no religious principles or that she rates friendship above faith. In the very next verse she invokes Yahweh, which indicates that already she has come to trust in him (cf. 2:12). **Her trust may not have been well informed, but it was real.**⁶
 - iii. **They are convinced of who God is, and although what is set before them is hard... they don't give up trust in the Lord.**
- c. We meet Boaz... A man of noble character ... or a worthy man.**
 - i. Boaz **may have been a warrior**, for these were troubled times and any man might have to fight. But in this book he appears rather as a solid citizen, **a man of influence and integrity in the community** and it is likely that this is what the term denotes here.⁷
 - ii. How do we see his character? Consider the practice of gleaning:

⁶ Cundall, A. E., & Morris, L. (1968). [*Judges and Ruth: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 7, p. 251). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁷ Cundall, A. E., & Morris, L. (1968). [*Judges and Ruth: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 7, p. 260). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

1. **The practice of gleaning is not dependent on the whims of the landowner, it is a law.**
 - a. **It was laid down in the law that at harvest time a man must not reap his land to the very border, nor should he pick up what was left after the reapers went through (Lev. 19:9; 23:22). Indeed, if he forgot a sheaf and left it in the field he was forbidden to go back for it. (Deut. 24:19).**
 2. However, it is wise for Ruth (a foreigner) to glean in the fields of a generous and would regard her with favor.
- d. **Obedience demonstrates our covenantal commitment to the Lord.**
- i. **“Obedience is the key to all doors; feelings come (or don’t) and go as God pleases.” - C.S. Lewis**
 1. Obedience demonstrates what is true of us farthest down deep in our cores.
 - ii. Jesus says it this way:
 1. **Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” – Jn. 14:23**
 - a. How do we know if we are joined in God’s eternal purposes? → We obey God’s principles.
 - iii. **What does regular obedience look like in my life?**
 1. Employee: Ethical hard work. A team player, who can say hard things in love (ie. a well polished way).
 2. Student: I do what’s right when no one is looking.
 3. Husband / Wife: I serve my spouse in a way that reminds them that God is good.
 4. Son / daughter: I respect my parents and honor their wishes when they line up with God’s wishes.

3. Regular obedience makes more than a small difference. (Chap. 3&4)

- a. **These events aren’t just a matter of sheer coincidence.**
 - i. Do you remember Naomi’s prayer in 1:8? → May the Lord be kind to you…?
 - ii. This entire book has the fingerprints of faithfulness all over it.
 1. God’s faithfulness to Ruth and Naomi.
 2. Ruth’s faithfulness to Naomi and the precepts of God.
 3. Boaz’s faithfulness to the precepts of God and to Ruth and Naomi.
 - iii. The faithfulness of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz are all predicated on God’s faithfulness.
 1. I.e., Because God has acted this way… we should too.
- b. Ruth didn’t just “happen” to be in Boaz’s field.
 - i. She came to the field and, apparently by chance, worked in a particular section of the field, the section which belonged to Boaz. Almost exactly the same expression is found in Ecclesiastes 2:14f. (‘one event happeneth’ to all men) and nowhere else in the Old Testament. **It points to the truth that men do not control events, but that the hand of God is behind them as he works his purpose out.**⁸
- c. v.20: Naomi rejoices and praises God for Boaz.
 - i. Initially, she is overwhelmed by Boaz’s kindness.
 - ii. **Then, she is praising God for his sustained love / faithfulness.**

⁸ Cundall, A. E., & Morris, L. (1968). [*Judges and Ruth: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 7, pp. 261–262). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

1. He has not ceased his loving-kindness (**the word is that used in 1:8; it denotes both kindness and faithfulness**) and she makes specific mention of the dead as well as the living (though *living* refers to Ruth and Naomi the form of the word is masculine; cf. 1:8, where see note). There is a strong sense of family, so that any kindness that **God might show to Ruth and Naomi is a kindness to their dead relatives as well as to themselves.**⁹
- d. **We cannot underestimate the value of regular / boring obedience in God's economy.**
- i. God's love is expansive, a fact that Ruth's inclusion in the family line of Jesus only highlights.
 - ii. The tragedy that has fallen upon Naomi and her family is crushing. She is left to fend for herself and her two daughters-in-law in a foreign land without sons or a husband. Yet, God is faithful and his love is loyal. He will deliver Naomi, albeit through Ruth, a foreigner.
 - iii. But the implication throughout is that God is watching over his people, and that he brings to pass what is good.
 - iv. **The book is a book about God. He rules over all and brings blessing to those who trust him.**¹⁰
 1. **Again, we come back to Advent.** → The quiet faithfulness of Mary and Joseph and the generations that preceded them to cooperate with the plans of God in the small ways for God to then bring about the Messiah!

4. **God's presence is more significant than we will ever know. (4:17)**

- a. The author will reflect that God's hand is over all history. **God works out his purpose, generation after generation. Limited as we are to one lifetime, each of us sees so little of what happens.** A genealogy is a striking way of bringing before us the continuity of God's purpose through the ages. The process of history is not haphazard. There is a purpose in it all. And the purpose is the purpose of God.¹¹
 - i. **"God works out his purpose, generation after generation. Limited as we are to one lifetime, each of us sees so little of what happens."** – Leon Morris
- b. **God works out his eternal purposes for, and through faithful people.**
 - i. **Regular / ordinary obedience allows me to join into God's eternal purposes.**
 - ii. **My "boring / regular" obedience in God's economy is the currency that communicates both my love for God, and leads me into the rich blessings of an eternal Father.**

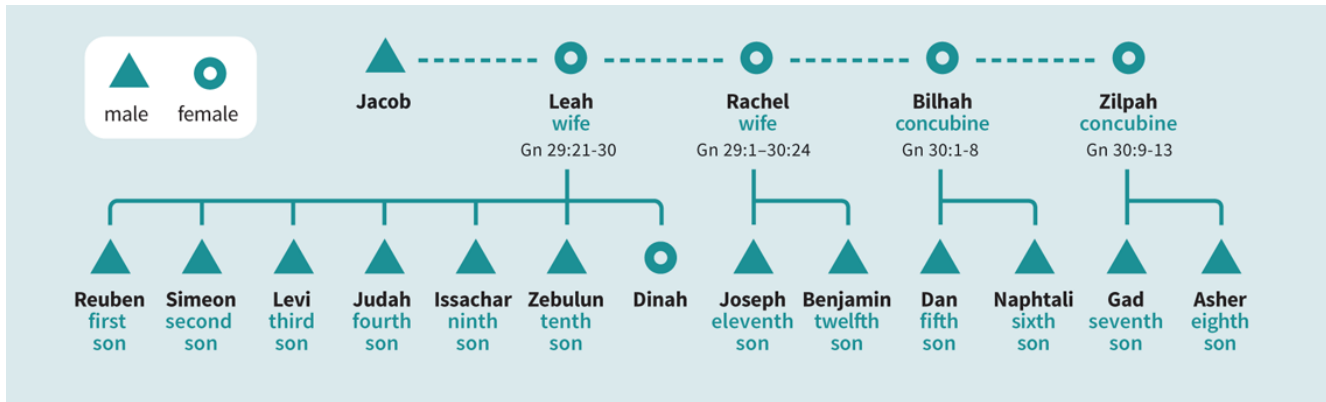
⁹ Cundall, A. E., & Morris, L. (1968). [*Judges and Ruth: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 7, p. 271). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

¹⁰ Cundall, A. E., & Morris, L. (1968). [*Judges and Ruth: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 7, p. 231). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

¹¹ Cundall, A. E., & Morris, L. (1968). [*Judges and Ruth: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 7, p. 307). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

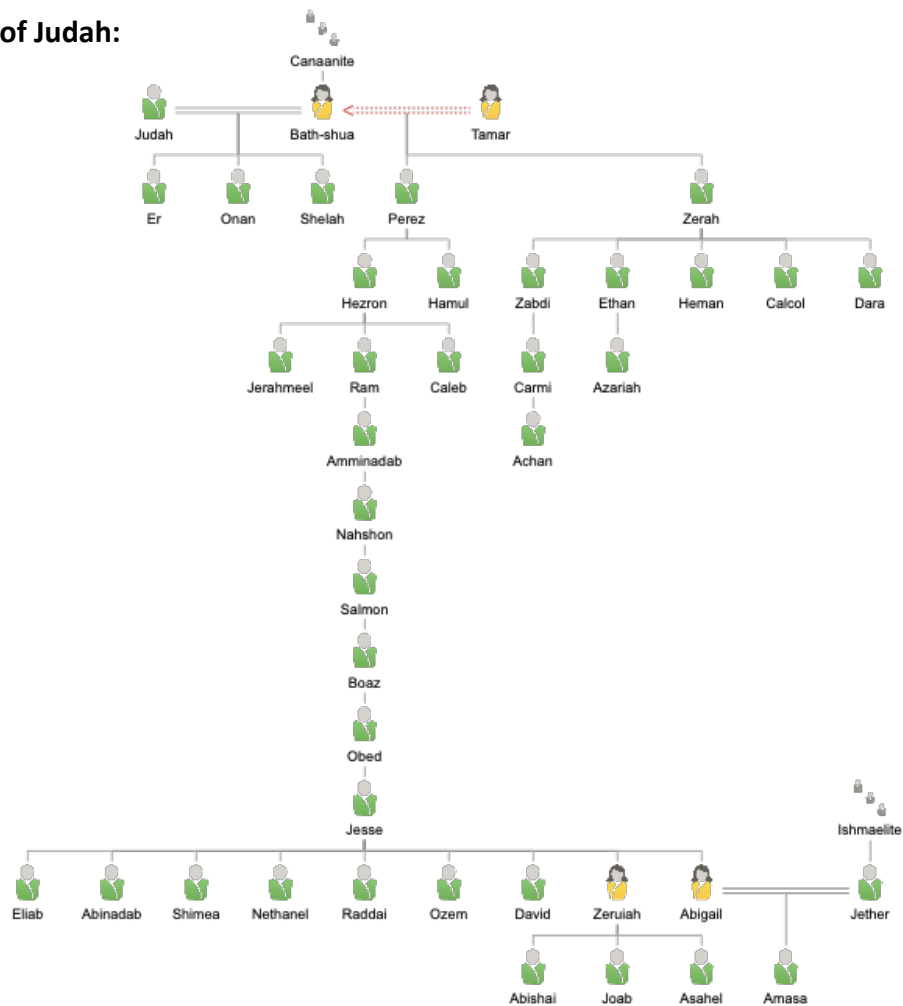
Addendum: Genealogical pictures of Jacob, Judah, and Jesus.

The family line of Jacob:



Judah to David (1 Chronicles 2:3-17)

The family line of Judah:



The family of Jesus from David:

Jesus' Family Tree According to Matthew (Matthew 1:1–17)

