

“God’s Hand of Kindness in Our Suffering”

Ruth 1: 7-22

⁷ With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. ⁸Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. ⁹ May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them and they wept aloud ¹⁰and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

¹¹But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? ¹²Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—¹³would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me!"

¹⁴At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵"Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." ¹⁶But Ruth replied, "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. ¹⁷Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me."

¹⁸When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. ¹⁹So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?" ²⁰"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. ²¹I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me." ²²So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Study:

1. What wisdom is there for us in Naomi's choosing to return to Bethlehem? Why does Naomi discourage her daughters-in-law from returning with her? How does this affect her emotionally?
2. Ruth responds in love and faith (17) even in the face of certain hardship. Have you ever given up comfort for a chance to know God deeper? What discourages you from clinging to Jesus?
3. In what ways do you see God's sovereignty and goodness in these verses? Where do you observe God's providential hand of kindness (hesed) so far?
4. Think on the devastation and suffering in Naomi's life: How does her story help us to embrace "sanctified affliction" as part of a Christian's journey?
5. Imagine as Naomi returns to her hometown: what is she feeling as she returns destitute? With nothing? How can you empathize with her response?
6. Think on Ruth: have you ever been in a situation where you did not fit in? How have you seen God provide or help you in those times?
7. In what ways do you identify with, connect and learn from: Elimelech? Orpah? Naomi? Ruth?

Prayer - Reflect on the attributes of God and the elements of the Gospel you see in this passage.

- Where do you see God's providential hand of kindness [hesed] in your life? Thank Him for this.

“God’s Hand of Kindness in Our Suffering”

Ruth 1: 7-22

⁷ With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. ⁸Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. ⁹ May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them and they wept aloud ¹⁰and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

¹¹But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? ¹²Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—¹³would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me!"

¹⁴At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵"Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." ¹⁶But Ruth replied, "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. ¹⁷Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me."

¹⁸When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. ¹⁹So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?" ²⁰"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. ²¹I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me." ²²So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Study:

1. What wisdom is there for us in Naomi's choosing to return to Bethlehem? Why does Naomi discourage her daughters-in-law from returning with her? How does this affect her emotionally?
2. Ruth responds in love and faith (17) even in the face of certain hardship. Have you ever given up comfort for a chance to know God deeper? What discourages you from clinging to Jesus?
3. In what ways do you see God's sovereignty and goodness in these verses? Where do you observe God's providential hand of kindness (hesed) so far?
4. Think on the devastation and suffering in Naomi's life: How does her story help us to embrace "sanctified affliction" as part of a Christian's journey?
5. Imagine as Naomi returns to her hometown: what is she feeling as she returns destitute? With nothing? How can you empathize with her response?
6. Think on Ruth: have you ever been in a situation where you did not fit in? How have you seen God provide or help you in those times?
7. In what ways do you identify with, connect and learn from: Elimelech? Orpah? Naomi? Ruth?

Prayer - Reflect on the attributes of God and the elements of the Gospel you see in this passage.

- Where do you see God's providential hand of kindness [hesed] in your life? Thank Him for this.
