

Theme: When suffering comes into our lives, it is hard to see God's purposes accurately, but He will bring us through the valley of tears.

I. Intro – The Book of Ruth

- A. Ruth – great story, literary masterpiece
- B. Great mine of theology, character studies

II. Into the Valley – Background (vv1-5)

- A. When judges ruled (v1) – time of upheaval
 - 1. No king yet (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25)
 - 2. Right in own eyes – chaos (Jd 17:6; 21:25)
- B. Famine in Bethlehem (v1) - the house of bread
 - 1. Family from Bethlehem – ‘house of bread’
 - 2. Famine strikes – no food – (drought?)
- C. Elimelech & family – go to Moab – (vv1-2)
 - 1. Elimelech – my God is King – has to leave
 - 2. Family goes to Moab (map) – approx 50 miles
 - 3. Moab & Israel – alternate friends and enemies
 - a. Friends – from Lot (Gen 19); not conquered (Dt 2:9)
 - b. Enemies – Balaam (Num 22); invade Israel (Jdg 3:12)
 - 4. Pagan people

- a. People of Chemosh – evil false god – Num 21:29
- b. Not allowed in assembly – Deuteronomy 23:3

D. Calamity strikes the family

- 1. Elimelech dies – Naomi a widow (v3)
- 2. Sons marry Moabites and die (v4-5)
- 3. Naomi (unnamed in Hebrew) is vulnerable
 - a. Widows had no finances, no job – no food
 - b. Naomi had no children to help
 - c. She was in a foreign land

III. The Return to Judah

- A. God is blessing His people (v6)
 - 1. God visited His people (came to aid)
 - 2. There is now food in the ‘house of bread’
- B. Naomi's return to Judah – Orpah goes back
 - 1. Ruth and Orpah start with her (v7)
 - 2. Naomi says ‘Go back’ but they refuse (vv8-10)
 - 3. Naomi tries again - & Orpah goes back (vv11-14)
- C. Ruth's amazing response (vv14-17)
 - 1. Ruth clings to Naomi (v 14; Gen 2:24)

2. Ruth's oath to Naomi (vv15-17)
3. A vow – together even in death (v 17)

IV. Naomi's Crisis of Faith

- A. Naomi clearly had faith in Yahweh (vv 6; 8-9)
 1. She hears Yahweh has visited & returns (v6)
 2. She blesses in Yahweh's name (vv8-9)
 3. She believed in God's Sovereignty (vv13, 21)
 4. She must have impressed Ruth as well
- B. Naomi was hurt & wavered in faith (vv13b; 20-21)
 1. Lord's hand has gone out against me (v13)
 2. Not Naomi – 'pleasant' – but Mara – 'bitter' (v20)
 3. Went away full – God brought me back empty
 4. God testified against me (see NASB; KJV)
 5. God did evil to me (afflicted/humbled me)
- C. God begins to restore Naomi
 1. She had returned home – no longer a foreigner
 2. Ruth had stayed with her – no longer alone
 3. It was beginning of harvest – food was coming

V. Conclusion & Summary

- A. The reality of the valley of tears
 1. Life has trying moments and trials for all
 2. This is not always due to sin - Job, Jesus
 3. God can move in a mysterious way!
- B. The proper response to the valley of tears
 1. Don't deny God's sovereignty – He is in control
 2. Be honest with God – like Psalms - & Naomi
 3. Remember we don't know God's plans
- C. Trusting God to keep and restore us
 1. God is always at work – even in the valley
 2. He provided for Naomi – even thru Moabitess!
 3. Faith – trusting God when we cant understand
- D. Communion

In the Valley of Tears

Ruth 1
 August 7, 2005
 Communion
 Numbers 6

6 In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.
Judges 17:6

1 In those days Israel had no king...
Judges 18:1

1 In those days Israel had no king...
Judges 19:1

25 In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.
Judges 21:25

6 In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.
Judges 17:6

25 In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.
Judges 21:25

MAP

9 Then the LORD said to me, "Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them to war, for I will not give you any part of their land. I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession."
Deuteronomy 2:9

12 Once again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and because they did this evil the LORD gave Eglon king of Moab power over Israel.
Judges 3:12

29 Woe to you, O Moab! You are destroyed, O people of Chemosh! He has given up his sons as fugitives and his daughters as captives to Sihon king of the Amorites.
Numbers 21:29

3 No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation.
Deuteronomy 23:3