

Sermon Title: **The Road of Uncertainty**

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Scripture Reference: **Ruth 1:6-18**

Thesis: **The story of Ruth is a story of tragedy and trust;**

Purpose: **When we face tragedy in life we can learn to trust God as Ruth did to guide us on the Road of Uncertainty.**

Key Word: **"Trusting God"**

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I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **Ruth 1:6-18**

A) The Setting:

- 1) **We are going to spend our summer studying some of the women of the Bible.**
  - (a) This book is named after a woman; Ruth.
  - (b) Amazing considering, that she lived in a patriarchal society where men ruled.
  - (c) Even more amazing at the beginning of our story; she wasn't even an Israelite.
- 2) **Ruth is a Moabitess from the land of Moab and a descendant of Lot; the same Lot that traveled with Abraham.**
  - (a) The book opens with another woman, Naomi;
  - (b) And her husband from Bethlehem, in Judah along with their two sons.
- 3) **The story takes place during the times when Judges were in charge of the land as Israel had no king and everyone did as they saw fit.**
  - (a) A famine came and Naomi's husband, fearing that his family would starve, decided to take his family to the more fertile plains area in the land of Moab.
  - (b) To get there they would have traveled east from Bethlehem over the mountains and taken the long road down to Jericho.
  - (c) Then they would have crossed the Jordan River and traveled south to what is known as the Dead Sea or Sea of Salt.
  - (d) Today, this land is part of Jordan.
- 4) **In the first 6 verses of this book we learn that within ten years Naomi's husband dies;**
  - (a) Her sons marry Moabite women.
  - (b) One of them was Ruth and the other was Orpah.
  - (c) During that time both sons also die with no children of their own to carry on the family name.
- 5) **Naomi is devastated and wants to return home after the boys are buried.**
  - (a) We are not told why any of the men died; but the irony here cannot be missed.
  - (b) Instead of trusting God during the time of famine Naomi's husband decided to move the family out of God's promised land.
- 6) **He probably reasoned that he had to help God by taking matters into his own hands.**
  - (a) God helps those who help themselves you know.
  - (b) By the way, that is probably the most misquoted verse of the Bible as you cannot find it anywhere in the Bible and simply not true.
- 7) **You see we are all on a road, a journey of uncertainty in life.**
  - (a) We don't know what is going to happen even in the next minute or hour.
  - (b) Our time in this life could be over before we get to enjoy our next meal.
  - (c) Our relationship with God makes all the difference in the world on how we view our uncertainty.
- 8) **So, that brings us to our scripture reading for today in Ruth 1:6-18.**

B) *Sermon Prayer*

C) (The Hook)

- 1) **Have you ever felt as though the world was against you?**
  - (a) That nothing is going right for you?

- (b) Perhaps you are going through one of those times right now?
- 2) **A famine, the uncertainty of a choice you have to make concerning your future?**
- (a) A famine is caused by a lack of food;  
(b) but we are fed by a lot of things.
- 3) **We can be going through a spiritual famine.**
- (a) This was the real famine for Naomi's husband;  
(b) he lacked the faith to believe that God would provide for their situation.
- 4) **The book of Ruth is a story about tragedy and trust.**
- (a) The tragedy facing Naomi . . .  
(b) And how she learns to trust God through it all.

TS: **So now, Naomi is ready to travel the . . .**

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **Trip**

- 1) **Now Naomi is living in a foreign place having lost her husband and two sons.**
- (a) All she has is two daughter-in-laws who grieve with her.  
(b) She has packed up all she cares about and wants to go home to her family.  
(c) Her people who worship her God and practice her customs.
- 2) **After losing her immediate family Naomi learned that the Lord did provide for His people during the famine and she wants to go home.**
- (a) Naomi no longer has to do what her husband or sons want; she is free to choose for herself.  
(b) Ruth and Orpah obviously care for Naomi as they begin the journey out of town stating that they will go with her.
- 3) **They reach the end of town and the women are all crying as Naomi is trying to convince them to stay with their families, their customs and their gods.**
- (a) Naomi has no more children of her own that they can marry and she is trying to get them to see they will be better off staying behind.  
(b) Eventually, Orpah is convinced and heads for home still weeping.
- 4) **But Ruth wraps her arms around Naomi and pledges her undying allegiance to stay with her mother-in-law.**
- (a) Her words of commitment resound today: "**Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God!**" (Ruth, 1:16b)
- (i) What a statement of conviction!  
(ii) What a statement of Love and devotion!
- (b) **You see, this statement means even more considering that Moabites worshipped pagan gods.**
- (i) Ruth has pledge her devotion to Naomi and her God.  
(ii) Thus, Naomi is convinced that Ruth cannot be dissuaded; and so, the two go on together.
- 5) **We can safely speculate that Ruth came to worship the Lord God Jehovah through her relationship with her mother-in-law, Naomi.**
- (a) We can never underplay the opportunities that God gives us to introduce people to the living God.  
(b) Naomi lost a husband and 2 sons; but gained a daughter who greatly loved her.

TS: **We will now learn about the . . .**

B) Key Point #2: **Tragedy.**

- 1) **Naomi and Ruth made the dangerous journey north to where they could turn west and cross the Jordan River.**

- (a) They traveled through the remnants of Jericho;
  - (b) Now remember, the Israelites destroyed this city when they first moved into the promised land.
  - (c) **They traveled the long climb up 1700 feet through the trails to Bethlehem.**
  - (d) This road was often where you would find robbers and bad men hiding so they could take advantage of those traveling through.
  - (e) And here, we had the two women traveling on their own.
- 2) **But God was with them and they safely arrived in Bethlehem.**
- (a) It had been more than 10 years since Naomi left this small village.
  - (b) And they could not believe she had returned as the whole village was excited to see her.
  - (c) But when they asked, "**Is this Naomi?**" Naomi told them in **verse 20**, "**Don't call me Naomi anymore, call me Mara, for God had dealt bitterly with me. I went away with a full family and I have returned empty.**"
  - (d) Naomi continues in **verse 21**, "**Why call me Naomi when the Lord has dealt harshly with me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?**"
- 3) **You see the Name Naomi means pleasantness or my joy.**<sup>1</sup>
- (a) And the name Mara means bitter.
  - (b) Naomi is blaming God for allowing her husband and sons to die.
- 4) **The lesson here is that when people move out of the Promised Land or put another way, the center of God's will they are venturing out into the wilderness.**
- (a) God's people do not belong out in the wilderness.
  - (b) This is out of God's will and we can reap consequences that we don't expect.
- 5) **People don't like to think about natural consequences.**
- (a) If you put your hand on a hot stove you get burned.
  - (b) If you speed and get into an accident; it is the natural consequence for a foolish action.
  - (c) When we leave the center of God's will we open ourselves up to the natural consequences of our actions.
- 6) **One natural consequence of Naomi's family moving to Moab was their sons marrying Moabite women.**
- (a) When we moved to Lisbon so I could go to New England Bible College . . .
  - (b) I fully expected that my children might find their spouses there and my daughter did.

**TS: But, God had a plan and if Naomi could have seen it she might have been able to better . . .**

C) Key Point #3: **Trust God**

- 1) **First of all, these two women trusted God to bring them safely to their destination on a very uncertain road.**
  - (a) Ruth has put her trust in Naomi
  - (b) And she has put her trust in the God of Naomi.
  - (c) This is a decision that God will greatly reward.
- 2) **Naomi left Jerusalem with a husband who did not trust God to provide.**
  - (a) She returned with a daughter-in-law who was putting all her trust in Naomi
  - (b) and her God.
- 3) We do not always have to DO something, just because it feels like we should.
- 4) As Christians, we must trust God to provide for our needs as promised by Jesus in Matthew 6:25-34,

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<sup>1</sup> Who's Who in the Bible, Publications International, Ltd. Lincolnwood, Illinois 1998

**25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? 28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' 32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

**34 "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."** (NRSV)

- 5) **The key here is to first seek to be right with God.**
- (a) Is this a promise to be rich . . . NO!
  - (b) But He does promise to supply what you need.

**TS: So, what does all this mean for us today?**

### III) Conclusion (Life Application)

#### A) **Remember, first that God will provide what we need.**

- 1) Don't forget all those stories about God delivering His people out of Egypt.
- 2) Don't forget all the times God fed the Israelites in the Wilderness.
- 3) Don't forget all the old stories given to us in God's Word to encourage us;
- 4) So the first principle we have learned here is that: **When we fail to trust God; we are headed for the wilderness.**

#### B) **Second, realize that we are all on the Road of Uncertainty.**

- 1) We never know what is around the next corner.
- 2) But God does; He is not surprised by anything that happens.
- 3) If you are right with God, then He promises to provide what you need and help you get through it.
- 4) That doesn't mean avoid it; but help you through it.
- 5) **But you can trust that God is with you when you are doing what God has asked you to do.**
  - (a) God can take our tragedy when we put our trust in Him and turn it into triumph.
  - (b) God has the best interests of His followers in mind when he allows us to face trials.
  - (c) But He is using it to help us grow into kingdom citizens.

### IV) Invitation: **Let us Pray!**