

Week 1: To Stay or Not to Stay

Opening.

The story of Ruth begins with a Hebrew man who decided to walk away the Promised Land and taking his family with him. When one leaves the promised land (fellowship with God) for a land of empty but attractive promises, he may find fullness but will not find fulfillment. This sermon is about learning and choosing to stay in the promises of God.

Scripture. Ruth 1:1-5

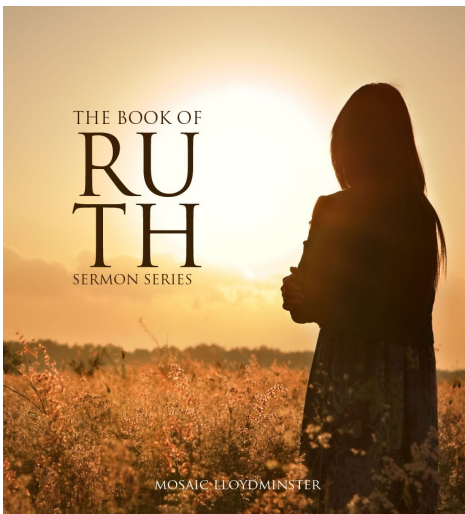
Observation.

- While the background story begins with a man named Elimelech and his family, the deeper context is that they were Ephratites (from the tribe of Ephraim, one of the sons of Joseph the Dreamer). Elimelech most likely belonged to the second generation of Israelites born in the Promise Land. When the Israelites entered the Promise Land, the land was divided between the descendants of the 10 sons and 2 grandsons of Jacob. The tribe of Levi did not get land because they were put in charge of the priesthood, so their share was given to one of Joseph's son Ephraim, and Joseph's share was given to his other son, Manasseh. The Promise Land was supposed to be fruitful (Numbers 14:8). When Israel started as nation, they were ruled by tribal judges.
- Read Judges 21:25.
- Elimelech decided uprooted his wife, Naomi and their sons, Mahlon and Kileon because of a famine (verse 1). Not long after he moved his family to Moab, Elimelech died (verse 3).
- Against, the command of God not to marry idol-worshippers, the two sons married Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah (verse 4). Moabites were considered impure because of their origin (read Genesis 19:36-38). Unfortunately, both Mahlon and Kilion died, leaving all three women helpless widows.

Application.

- During a time when everyone did what was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25), Elimelech did what he thought was best for his family. His urgent needs became more important to him than God's purpose for them as a family. What are some dangers that come with doing what's "right in your own eyes"? How can you practice looking to God for wisdom?
- When times get tough, it can be tempting to question God and take control of our situations. Share about a time when you were tempted to control your situation without God. What was the outcome, and what did you learn?
- One major lesson we see in Elimelech's story is: don't walk away from a situation just because it's tough. Tough seasons don't last, tough people do. Have you ever walked out of a tough situation? What would have been different if you stayed?
- Like the Israelites who wandered in the desert, we sometimes go through a season of movement to in order to get to our destination. Each step we take can be life-changing, but the goal is to get to where God wants us to be, not where we want to be. When do you know when it's time to stop moving and start settling?
- What one decision or action do you need to take to change the trajectory of your life and legacy?

Prayer. Is there an area of your life that you need to surrender to God?



SCRIPTURE

Ruth 1:1-5

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab.

2 The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephratites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

3 Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons.

4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years,

5 both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.