

Ruth 4:13-22 “A Message of Hope for Moms in the Real World”^{**1}

Main Idea: We’re going to learn something families need to know in the real world. God specializes in bringing good results out of bad circumstances. He does so in two ways in Ruth 4:13-22.

- I. God can bring good out of bad for a family (13-17).
 - A. A family’s move to Moab was a bad thing.
 1. Naomi’s family left the promised land.
 2. Naomi’s sons married non-believers.
 3. Naomi lost her husband and sons.
 - B. A family’s move to Moab became a good thing (13-17).
 1. Ruth gained salvation.
 2. Boaz gained a godly wife (13a).
 3. Boaz and Ruth gained a special son (13b).
 4. Naomi gained a special daughter-in-law, son-in-law, and grandson (14-15).
 5. Israel gained a godly king (16-17).
 6. The world gained a Savior.
 7. The Lord gained praise (14a).
- II. God brought good out of bad for the world (18-22).
 - A. God works through undeserving people.
 1. The mother of Perez had sex with her father-in-law.
 2. The mother of Boaz was a prostitute.
 3. The mother of Obed was from a pagan family.
 - B. God works through unlikely people.
 1. David was from a common family.
 2. David was the youngest of eight sons.
 3. David was a sinner like us.
 4. David was a great king because God was great to David.

Make It Personal: Some lessons from Ruth...

1. Learn to see God in the ordinary events of life.
2. Learn to trust God in the perplexing events of life.
3. Learn to magnify God in all the events of life.

What picture comes to mind when you think of the word “mother?” I think of the mother of my own children, Sherry, the precious woman with whom I’ve enjoyed almost 29 years of marriage. And I think of my mother, who raised three children, and has been faithfully married to my father now for nearly 52 years. I also think of my grandmothers, my mom’s mom who was married over 60 years to my grandfather and raised three children, and my dad’s mom who enjoyed God’s blessing of some 45 years of marriage and five children with my grandfather.

That’s what comes to mind when I hear the word *mother*. I see a woman who’s committed to one man for life who enjoys the God-given fruit of that union and pours her life into those children, and then into their children.

But the reality is, that’s not a very common picture in the year 2012. My wife, Sherry, works with students at a local high school. She has regular interaction with mothers. I’m not talking about the mothers of the students. I’m talking about the *students themselves*.

Back in February of this year, *The New York Times* ran an article by Jason DeParle and Sabrina Tavernise with the headline, “*For Women Under 30, Most Births Occur Outside Marriage.*” Listen to how it begins:

It used to be called illegitimacy. Now it is the new normal. After steadily rising for five decades, the share of children born to unmarried women has crossed a

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a development of the entire book of Ruth, see the 5-part series preached at WBC in 2007.

threshold: more than half of births to American women under 30 occur outside marriage.

Once largely limited to poor women and minorities, motherhood without marriage has settled deeply into middle America. The fastest growth in the last two decades has occurred among white women in their 20s who have some college education but no four-year degree, according to Child Trends, a Washington research group that analyzed government data.

Among mothers of all ages, a majority — 59 percent in 2009 — are married when they have children. But the surge of births outside marriage among younger women — nearly two-thirds of children in the United States are born to mothers under 30 — is both a symbol of the transforming family and a hint of coming generational change.²

Don't miss that last sentence. We're seeing a massive generational change, and the family is being transformed right before our eyes. That means there are millions of kids in our country today who are not growing up in the kind of home God intended, with a mom *and* a dad who are in a covenant relationship called marriage.

Later the article has this to say about the “new normal” in motherhood³:

Almost all of the rise in nonmarital births has occurred among couples living together. While in some countries such relationships endure at rates that resemble marriages, in the United States they are more than twice as likely to dissolve than marriages. In a summary of research, Pamela Smock and Fiona Rose Greenland, both of the University of Michigan, reported that two-thirds of couples living together split up by the time their child turned 10.

Of course, statistics don't tell the whole story. The article concludes by sharing the testimonial of Lisa Mercado, an unmarried mother who lives in Lorain, Ohio.

Between nursing classes and an all-night job at a gas station, she rarely sees her 6-year-old daughter, who is left with a rotating cast of relatives. The girl's father has other children and rarely lends a hand. “I want to do things with her, but I end up falling asleep,” Ms. Mercado said.

On Mother's Day, many churches will preach messages about the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31, and that's appropriate. I've done so myself. We need models of what God intends.

But does the Bible have anything to say to a mother like Lisa Mercado? And what about her 6-year-old, and the hundreds of thousands of 6-year-olds in our country today who had nothing to do with the fact that they are growing up without seeing the family function as God intended? Does God have anything to say to them? He most certainly does.

I've entitled this sermon, “*A Message of Hope for Moms in the Real World.*” I want to take you today to a true story in the Bible about a woman who became a single mom, and then, after scraping to raise her two sons, endured the incredible heartbreak of watching them die as young men. I think she's qualified to answer our question. She

² <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/18/us/for-women-under-30-most-births-occur-outside-marriage.html?pagewanted=all>

³ The article offers these statistics: “Large racial differences remain: 73 percent of black children are born outside marriage, compared with 53 percent of Latinos and 29 percent of whites. And educational differences are growing. About 92 percent of college-educated women are married when they give birth, compared with 62 percent of women with some post-secondary schooling and 43 percent of women with a high school diploma or less, according to Child Trends.” (Ibid)

faced incredible losses as a mom, and she experienced amazing gains too, by God's grace.

The woman's name is Naomi, and her story is found in the Old Testament book of Ruth. I want to give you the main points of the story right up front. In the book of Ruth we learn a very relevant, hope-giving truth, namely, that the Lord God specializes in bringing *good results out of bad circumstances*. He can do it for a family—that's point one. And He did it for the whole world—that's point two.

I'll make it even more personal. God can bring good out of the bad in *your* family, and we'll find out how this morning by looking carefully at the final passage in the book, Ruth 4:13-22.

I. Point #1: God can bring good out of bad for a family (13-17).

The book of Ruth begins with the spotlight on one very ordinary family that lived in Israel during the time of the judges (about twelve centuries before Christ). It was the family of a woman named Naomi. Naomi's family (which consisted of Naomi, her husband Elimelech, and their two sons Mahlon and Kilion) made a decision to do something that was a bad thing, bad in the sense that it resulted in some very unpleasant outcomes. Yet as we'll see by the end of the story, God turned that which was *bad* into an amazingly good thing. To appreciate the outcome we need to go back to the beginning.

Ruth 1:1 says, "In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab." Note the decision. A family decided to move to Moab. Was that good? No.

A. A family's move to Moab was a bad thing. It ended up being bad in three ways.

1. *Naomi's family left the promised land.* They lived in Bethlehem which means "house of bread," but they left Bethlehem and went to Moab looking for bread. Why did they leave? A famine hit.

You say, "That sounds like a legitimate reason to leave." Not so fast. This famine was actually a God-sent wake-up call to His wayward people (see Deut 28:23-24). The proper response was not relocation but repentance. The fact that Naomi's family moved to Moab seems to indicate a lack of trust in the Lord. That's a bad thing. So is this...

2. *Naomi's sons married non-believers.* Moabite women, to be precise. That's what happens when you move your family to Moab. Your Hebrew boys meet Moabite girls. Kilion married Orpah. Mahlon married Ruth. Both young ladies were raised in families that worshipped false gods, like Chemosh (1:15). The fact that Naomi's sons married Moabite young ladies would indicate they married non-believers (we know that Orpah went back to her 'gods' in 1:15). That's a bad thing. And so is this...

3. *Naomi lost her husband and sons.* Her husband, Elimelech, died first, leaving her to raise her sons alone. And then they died. All three of her men died and left Naomi all alone as a widow in a foreign land. And that's a bad thing. No wonder Naomi had this to say to her friends after she returned back home to Bethlehem in 1:21—"I went away *full*, but the LORD brought me back *empty*." I think we can make a pretty solid case that the move to Moab was a bad thing, at least in the sense that it resulted in some great losses for Naomi and her family.

And yet, on the other hand, by God's gracious intervention...

B. A family's move to Moab became a good thing (13-17). As you move through the book of Ruth, you'll see six demonstrations of goodness that resulted all because Naomi's family had moved to Moab. In other words, if the family had *not* moved to

Moab, none of the following would have occurred, at least, not from a human perspective.

1. *Ruth gained salvation.* Because of the move, Mahlon married Ruth—although not a forbidden decision it certainly was not a wise choice for a Hebrew boy to marry a Moabite girl. Yet God worked through this decision to rescue a hell-bound pagan and so transform her life that she testified to her mother-in-law in Ruth 1:16, “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.” Because Naomi’s family moved to Moab, a pagan girl named Ruth ends up gaining salvation. I’d say that’s a good thing! So is this...

2. *Boaz gained a godly wife (13a).* The couple met for the first time in a barley field in chapter two. Ruth, following Naomi’s instructions, made known to Boaz her willingness to marry him in chapter three, and Boaz reciprocated in chapter four. Boaz became this destitute family’s kinsman redeemer, paid the necessary redemption price, and secured Ruth’s hand in marriage (4:13).

Just think. If Naomi hadn’t gone to Moab, Ruth would never have come to Bethlehem and would never have met Boaz. But Naomi did go, and Ruth did come, and consequently Boaz gained a godly wife! And that’s a good thing. As is this...

3. *Boaz and Ruth gained a special son (13b).* Verse 13 says, “So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her⁴, and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.” Why did this dear couple bear a son? The text makes it clear that *the LORD* gave the child to them. He *enabled her to conceive*.

Parents, do you view your children that way, as gifts the Sovereign Lord has placed in your care? Sometimes I wonder when I hear things like, “We’ve decided we’re going to get our education first, then work for three years, and then after we’ve purchased our home—one with three bedrooms and a fenced in backyard—we’re going to have our first of three children; three years later our second, and four years later our third child.” I’m not against family planning, but I am concerned when we “plan” God right out of our lives.

If there is anything the book of Ruth makes clear it’s this. God is *sovereign*. Nothing just happens in our lives for in all things God is at work. That’s true when Naomi loses two sons in chapter one, and when Ruth gains a son in chapter four. That’s why Naomi says in 1:13, “The LORD’s hand has gone out against me!” And why 4:13 says this of Ruth, “The LORD enabled her to conceive.”

God is in control when ‘bad’ things enter our lives—a famine, the loss of a spouse, and the death of children. He also is in charge of the ‘good’ things that come our way—such as the conception of a child for Ruth and Boaz.

So Naomi’s family moved to Moab—not a good thing. But out of that not-so-good situation God brought about something very good—Boaz and Ruth gained a special son! Yet there’s more.

4. *Naomi gained a special daughter-in-law, son-in-law, and grandson (14-15).* “The women said to Naomi: ‘Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.’”

At the end of chapter one, the women of Bethlehem witnessed Naomi’s bitter lament. Now at the end of chapter four the women gather around this new grandmother to

⁴ Notice there was no sexual intimacy until after he took her to be his wife.

celebrate her joy. They affirm that the Lord has given her a kinsman redeemer, not referring here to Boaz but to this baby, who is the one God sent to take away Naomi's sorrow and to guarantee the future hope of her family.

My friends, God's blessings often come in unexpected packages. At the beginning of the story, Ruth seemed like a liability to Naomi, but not anymore! In Old Testament times people placed great importance on having sons, but the women of Bethlehem assert that Ruth is more valuable to Naomi than *seven sons*!

But there's more! Out of the losses of Moab, Ruth gained salvation, Boaz gained a godly wife, Boaz and Ruth gained a special son, and Naomi gained a special daughter-in-law, son-in-law, and grandson.

5. *Israel gained a godly king (16-17)*. Notice verses 16-17, "Then Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him [oh the joys of grand-mothering!]. The women living there said, 'Naomi has a son.' And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David."

Obed means 'servant' (perhaps a shortened form of 'Obadiah' which means 'servant of Yahweh'). That's a strange name and it's even stranger when you consider that the women of Bethlehem gave the child his name. Perhaps the ladies are anticipating the fact that this newborn will serve and care for Naomi in her old age.

But that's not all he would do. When Obed grew up he had a son of his own named Jesse. Jesse later grew up and had eight sons (1 Sam. 16:1-13) and the youngest was a shepherd boy and slayer of giants who delivered Israel and became their king. It's ironic that the one the ladies called 'servant' ends up being the grandfather of Israel's greatest king, David himself!

It's also worth noting that David did not forget his Moabite roots, for during the time in his life when he fled from Saul, David asked the king of Moab to allow his parents to stay there for refuge (1 Sam. 22:3-4).⁵ A family's move to Moab, a bad thing? Yes, but out of it God gave to Israel a king who made God's reputation great in the world! And that's a good thing. But there's something even great, for out of a Naomi's losses...

6. *The world gained a Savior*. The book of Ruth ends with a genealogy which we'll examine momentarily. For now, please note where the Ruth genealogy ends, *with David*. What happened after David? We need another genealogy to answer that question. Turn to Matthew 1 and notice the names...

1:2 "Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers..." Let's skip a few names and pick it up at...

1:5-6 "Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David..." Look familiar? Those are the names we see in Ruth 4. Now move to the end of the genealogy...

1:15-16 "Eliud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." Now we know what the story of Ruth is ultimately all about! Twelve centuries ahead of time God was providing a vital link that would move His plan forward another step, a step closer to Jesus! But why? Why did Jesus come? We find the answer right here in Matthew 1...

1:21 "She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you [Joseph] are to give him the name Jesus, because he *will save his people from their sins*."

⁵ Huey, p. 547.

A family moved to Moab and experienced great loss, but out of their loss the world gained a Savior! And that's not only a *good* thing but the *best* thing. It means that you and I, no matter what we've done and no matter how messed up our lives may be, can be saved from our sins because Jesus took the penalty for those sins on the cross. And you and I can enjoy abundant life because Jesus conquered the grave and offers eternal life to any person who will repent of their sins and put their trust in Him.

That's what every single mom needs to know on this Mother's Day, and every married mom too, and every dad and child as well. Out of the losses of Naomi's life, God provided the world with a Savior.

But even that isn't the end. There's something else that's good that God brought out of Naomi's losses. You say, "What could be better than our salvation?" You need to realize that our salvation is a means to something, something that is the highest good in the entire universe...

7. *The Lord gained praise (14a)*. Notice verse 14 again, "The women said to Naomi: '*Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer.*'" That's why God gave Naomi a redeemer named Boaz. That's why God gave the world a redeemer named Jesus. That's why God does everything that He does, so that He might receive what He alone rightfully deserves. *Praise!*

Who brought this family through the pain they endured? Who then provided the redeemer, Boaz? Who blessed this couple with a child? The answer to each question is the One who deserves our praise. *God.*

May I ask you a question? Are you giving God what He deserves? Did your lips give Him heartfelt praise this morning, and did your life give Him deserving praise this past week for His redeeming love? He is worthy, my friend! He is worthy for many reasons and here is the one we're pondering today. He specializes in bringing *good results out of what presently may be very bad circumstances*. He can do it for a family, as He did with Naomi's. He can do it with *your family*, and the proper response is to trust Him.

That brings us to point two. Not only can God bring good out of bad for a family, but...

II. Point #2: God brought good out of bad for the world (18-22).

The book of Ruth is a great short story. But it has a strange ending, for it concludes with a genealogy in verses 18-22: "This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David."

Why does the author of this fascinating short story end his story with a boring genealogy? The answer is, he's not writing to entertain us, but to teach us. About what? About God, and about how God works. This genealogy makes it clear that God is working to bring good out of bad for two types of people in the world.

A. God works through undeserving people. The author mentions ten names covering a span of around 650 years from Perez to David. Many commentators feel that some names have been omitted from the list, that it took more than ten generations to cover the span of 650 years, and that's possible.⁶ The ten names in Ruth 4 can be

⁶ For instance, here Ram appears as the son of Hezron, whereas in 1 Chronicles 2:25, 27 Ram is listed as the son of Jerahmeel and the *grandson* of Hezron. The Hebrew word translated "father of" is flexible and is meant to show a connection but not necessarily a literal father-son connection.

organized into two groups of five. The first five names (Perez to Nashom) were men who lived during the time Israel was in Egypt and then in the desert journey after Egypt. The second five names (Salmon to David) all lived in the land of Canaan. Again, there were probably other names in David's ancestry, but these ten are sufficient to show a vital connection. In other words, the author's point here is to show the link between Judah (by his son Perez) and David. He wants us to know that David is from the tribe and lineage of Judah.

But why? The answer is, he wants us to know that God works through *undeserving people*. The one word answer is, *grace*.

This list mentions only *fathers*, but every time a child is born there is also a *mother*. Think about the kind of mothers God used in this link between Judah and David. The list begins with Perez so let's start there. What was true of her?

1. *The mother of Perez had sex with her father-in-law.* The x-rated story appears in Genesis 38. Judah married a Canaanite woman who bore him three sons, Er, Onan, and Shelah. When Er became of age Judah gave him a wife by the name of Tamar. But Er was a wicked man and the Lord put him to death childless. Judah proceeded to give Tamar to his second son, Onan, so he could have a son to carry on his brother's name. But Onan refused, so the Lord put him to death. Judah had one more son, Shelah, who was eligible to take the widowed Tamar. But Judah refused to give Shelah to Tamar, fearing he would die, too.

When Tamar realized Judah had no intent to allow her to marry Shelah, she took matters into her own hands. She disguised herself and dressed up as a prostitute, and enticed Judah, her own father-in-law, to have sex with her. She conceived and bore twin boys, the oldest named Perez. That illegitimate son, Perez, is the link God chose for the messianic line.⁷

The point of the story isn't to commend Tamar. It's to show that God in His grace works with and through undeserving people.

Let's look at another example. Verse 21 tells us who Boaz's father was, *Salmon*. Do you know who his mother was? The genealogy in Ruth 4 doesn't tell us, but the one in Matthew does. According to Matthew 1:5, Boaz's mother was Rahab. Why does Matthew record Rahab's name? Who was she?

2. *The mother of Boaz was a prostitute.* According to Hebrews 11:31, Rahab was the Canaanite harlot from Jericho that became a believer in the Lord and hid the spies.

In case you're doing the math and wondering, Rahab actually lived in Joshua's time—that's roughly 1400 B.C. Was Boaz a contemporary of Joshua? Probably not. Boaz probably lived towards the end of the period of the judges, about 250-300 years after Joshua and hence after Rahab.

"But Matthew's genealogy says Rahab was his mother, doesn't it?" Actually, the text just says that Boaz was, literally, "of Rahab," indicating that he came from her. It's likely that Rahab was Boaz's 'mother' in the sense that she was his ancestress (like the Bible refers to 'our father Abraham,' Rom. 4:12, which means 'our ancestor Abraham').⁸

⁷ Is there significance to the fact that ten generations are listed in Ruth 4 from Perez to David? Consider this stipulation of the Law recorded in Deuteronomy 23:2, "No one born of a forbidden marriage nor any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation." According to M. R. DeHaan, ancient rabbis interpreted it to mean that no descendant of an illegitimate child would sit upon the throne of Israel until the tenth generation. God never violates His own word. (M. R. DeHaan, *The Romance of Redemption*, p. 179).

⁸ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Ru 4:21). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Whether it's mother or great-grandmother, the point is still the same. Does Rahab deserve to be included in the genealogy that connects Judah to David, and David to Jesus? No, and that's the point. She didn't deserve it. Nobody deserves it. God works through undeserving people.

Let me give you one more example from this genealogy.

3. *The mother of Obed was from a pagan family.* Who was that? It's Ruth. Ruth wasn't exactly the kind of girl you wanted your son bringing home. She belonged to a people group that came into existence out of incest between Lot and his daughter. Ruth was an idol worshipper and was raised to worship Chemosh in a religion that practiced child-sacrifice. (Num. 21:29).

You think you have a background that didn't prepare you to live the Christian life? Think about Ruth. We don't live a God-pleasing life by doing what comes natural. We live by grace. The Lord saved Ruth by grace. And then the Lord transformed her into a beautiful woman and mother in Israel, by grace.

It's worth noting that in his genealogy Matthew makes reference to four women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba (whom he simply calls the one who 'had been Uriah's wife'). And why are they there? Because of *grace*. God works through *undeserving* people.

But that's not all. The genealogy in Ruth 4 takes is a step further and shows us that...

B. God works through unlikely people. Look at the final word of the book. *David*. What was true of David? Much could be said, but allow me to point out four things...

1. *David was from a common family.* The book of Ruth shows us that.

2. *David was the youngest of eight sons.* When Samuel came to Jesse's house to anoint one of his sons as Israel's next king, he was impressed by Eliab, the oldest son. But God told him no and explained (1 Sam. 16:7), "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." David was so unlikely a candidate that he wasn't even invited to the meeting!

3. *David was a sinner like us.* Who can forget his adulterous blunder with Bathsheba, or his murder of her husband? David never did. So what made David such a great king?

4. *David was a great king because God was great to David.* David himself gave this testimony in Psalm 20:7-9, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm. O LORD, save the king!"

That's what made David great. Sure, he was a sinner, but he put his trust in the God who saves sinners. There's no greater lesson that a mom in the real world needs to know. Or a dad, too. Or anyone else, for that matter. If you are a sinner, and we all are, you can experience God's help and hope if you'll put your full trust in Him, and specifically, in the Savior He sent into the world.

Make It Personal: Some lessons from Ruth...

1. *Learn to see God in the ordinary events of life.* When you read the book of Ruth you don't see blazing and spectacular miracles. There is no parting of the Red Sea, no staffs turning into snakes, no children being raised from the dead. Instead, you see God working in the way He seems to prefer most, behind the scenes in the *ordinary events of life*.

Have any sick kids this week? Any ailing parents? Any unexpected job challenges? I have good news for you. Those things didn't catch God by surprise. Nothing just

happens in His universe, and He is orchestrating every detail to bring about His good and perfect will for His people. So look for His hand. See Him in the ordinary events of life.

2. *Learn to trust God in the perplexing events of life.* When you don't know what God is up to, be assured that He does. Even in the bad times, He is working something for *good* in the life of every person who loves Him.

That's what Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." In *all things* God works for the good of His people. And verse 29 tells us that the good that He's working is to form a people who resemble His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what He is doing in the book of Ruth. He is fulfilling His plan to form a people who share the likeness of His Son. Without Naomi, there would be no Ruth. Without Ruth, there would be no Boaz. Without Boaz, there would be no Obed. Without Obed, there would be no David. Without David, there would be no Son of David, Jesus. Without Jesus, there would be no people for God to conform to the likeness of His Son, and that means there would be no hope for you or me.

Dear friend, life is filled with perplexing events. Perhaps yours is even now.

William Cowper, a friend of John Newton the writer of *Amazing Grace*, suffered with severe bouts of depression throughout his life. At times he was so low that he became suicidal. Is depression a good thing? Yet God worked through Cowper's struggles. Cowper learned to meditate on the deep truths of God that sustained his soul. He even wrote some amazing hymns that we sing today, such as *There Is a Fountain Filled With Blood*. He also wrote the following poem filled with amazing insight into the nature and ways of God.

*God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines of never failing skill
He treasures up his bright designs and works his sovereign will.
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head.
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.
His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.
Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter, and he will make it plain.*

On no day in human history was God's work any more perplexing than on the day the perfect God-man, Jesus Christ, was falsely accused, brutally tortured, and nailed to a Roman cross. Yet God was there, guiding, even using that terrible deed to bring about the greatest of goods, the salvation of helpless sinners like you and me.

Dear friend, when life is perplexing we need to learn to *trust God*. It starts by trusting Him to save your sinful soul. Have you? Don't stop there. Entrust your whole life to Him, your problems and challenges and dreams and aspirations. Trust Him.

3. *Learn to magnify God in all the events of life.* We do this by what we say, and also by what we do, and especially what we say and do when life is hard, as it often is in the real world. So let's be looking for ways this week to magnify the One who's at work in our lives to accomplish something eternally good.