

Main Idea: In Ruth 1 we learn three hope-giving truths about the Lord and how He works when mothers mourn.

- I. The Lord does not exempt mothers from mourning (1-5).
  - A. Naomi lost her home (1-2).
  - B. Naomi lost her spouse (3-4a).
  - C. Naomi lost her children (4b-5).
- II. The Lord sustains mothers in their mourning (6-18).
  - A. Naomi decided to return home (6-7).
  - B. Naomi tried to send her daughters-in-law back to their mothers (8-9).
  - C. Naomi insisted her daughters-in-law go home (10-14).
  - D. Naomi could not shake Ruth’s resolve (15-18).
- III. The Lord makes Himself known through mothers in mourning (19-22).
  - A. Naomi affirmed that God was in control of her losses (20-21).
  - B. Naomi would eventually learn that God is filling the void left by her losses (22).
    1. He provided her with a devoted daughter-in-law.
    2. He provided His people with a link to the Messiah.

Response: Resolve to affirm the goodness and wisdom of God in every situation.

Last week we began a series in Jesus’ sermon on the mount, looking at his first beatitude, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Next week, the Lord willing, we’ll consider the second beatitude, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” This morning, for Mothers Day, we’re going to see an example of such a person, a mother who was poor in spirit and mourned, and whom the Lord blessed.

*Scripture Reading: Psalm 128*

“Give everyone what you owe him,” says Romans 13:7, “if honor, then honor.” That’s what Mothers Day is all about. On this day we give honor to those to whom honor is due, and rightfully so, to the glory of God.

However, there’s a reality we need to talk about. While Mothers Day is a special day, it’s also a hard day for many. Here are some examples. It can be a hard day for...

For those who don’t have children and families.<sup>2</sup>

For those who did have children and families but are now alone.

For those trying to figure out their purpose in life now that the nest has emptied.

When families blend and you find yourself raising kids you didn’t bring into the world.

When you’re a grandmother but find yourself in the mother role again, perhaps with more wisdom this time but a lot less energy.

When poor past decisions now plague your family dynamics in the present.

When you hear all the Proverbs 31 talk about “Who can find a virtuous woman?” and find yourself thinking, “Not in this house. I’ve fallen short of God’s standard.” Which in reality is the honest admission of any truly virtuous woman.

So yes, it’s a special day, but for many it’s hard. But here’s what I love about the Bible. The Bible addresses this reality in a wonderful, hope-giving way, for moms, and dads, and children, and singles, and everyone else.

I’ve entitled today’s message, “*When Mothers Mourn.*” Today’s text is Ruth 1. It’s the story of a woman by the name of Naomi who got married, had two sons, lost her husband and sons, and entered into a season of mourning. That’s life in the real world.

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\*\* 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.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous message on this passage, see the Ruth series message delivered at WBC on 1/14/2007.

<sup>2</sup> I counted the mothers in our WBC directory. Of the 171 people in the directory, there are 59 mothers.

Does the Bible have anything to say when mothers mourn? The book of Ruth says *yes*. It's the story of the One who gives hope when His people suffer great loss.

The book of Ruth is only four chapters long. You can easily read it in a setting, and if you do you'll notice something by its absence. Nobody's raised from the dead, no sick child is healed, and no bread falls from the sky. To the contrary, in this book people die and *are not* raised from the dead. Sick children are not made well. When people get hungry, they go out to the fields, harvest grain, and make their own bread.<sup>3</sup>

As we read the book of Ruth, we discover something vital, something you and I need to know as we live this world. It's that the Lord is working even when it doesn't seem like the Lord is working.

There's a good word for this, a word we need to use more often. It's called *providence*. By definition, providence means "divine guidance or care."<sup>4</sup> But sometimes a definition just doesn't cut it. Sometimes if you want to understand the real meaning of a word only a story will do. And I can't think of a better story to illustrate what God's providence means any better than Ruth.

Here's what we're going to see today. There are three scenes in the first chapter of Ruth. The first scene occurs in Moab (1-5), the second involves Naomi's decision to return to the promised land (6-18), and the third scene occurs in Bethlehem (19-22). In these three scenes we learn three hope-giving truths about the Lord and how He works when mothers mourn.

#### I. The Lord does not exempt mothers from mourning (1-5).

Notice the setting of our story in verse 1, "In the days when the judges ruled." To appreciate the story we must appreciate the setting. Who were the judges? In your Bible you'll find a book called *Judges*. The story of Ruth took place toward the end of the period of the Judges, in the thirteenth century BC.<sup>5</sup> Just who were these judges?

Around the year 2000 BC the Creator God revealed Himself to and entered into a relationship with a man. That man was Abraham. In Genesis 12:1-4, as well as in subsequent passages in Genesis, God promised to bless Abraham, to give him a son and through that son a great family of sons and daughters. He also promised to give His descendants a special land. What's more, God said that through Abraham He was going to bring blessing and hope to the world.

And that's what we see when we read the first six books of the Bible. The first five books tell the story of how God through Abraham formed a nation called Israel and how He entered into a covenantal relationship with Israel. In the sixth book of the Bible, Joshua, we read how God kept His promise and gave Israel the promised land.

Then we come to the seventh book, *Judges*. In *Judges* we discover that the Lord's people did not keep their promise to the Lord, but time and time again turned away from the Lord to serve false gods. Time and time again the Lord chastened His wayward people until they cried out to Him, and in His covenant mercy time and time again He raised up *judges* to deliver them.

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<sup>3</sup> Ruth is a book about ordinary people facing ordinary challenges in ordinary life. In some ways it's like the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50, and the story of Esther, and so many other stories in the Bible, stories about real people who confronted real problems, overwhelming problems, and never saw a single miracle.

<sup>4</sup> Miriam Webster online dictionary.

<sup>5</sup> David's birth can be dated around 1040 B.C. at the earliest. Obed must have been born near the end of the twelfth century. Since 4:17 says that Obed was the grandfather of David

Our story took place during that roller-coaster phase in Israel's history. In the book of Ruth, the author (and we don't know who he is; some feel Samuel) puts the spotlight on what happened to one particular family in that dismal time period.

We're introduced to the family members in verses 1-2. "In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah [to distinguish from another Bethlehem in Zebulun], together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there."

Our story begins in Judah, in southern Israel. There was a famine, we're told. Was that coincidental? No. There are no coincidences in God's universe. There is no room for a coincidence when there's providence.

Providence is different from a miracle. A miracle is a non-repeatable contradiction of an otherwise demonstrable law of nature, such as giving instant sight to a blind man. When God works through providence, He doesn't change the laws of nature. Providence points to God's behind the scenes activity. In providence God works *through* the laws of nature (laws He Himself established in the first place). Someone has said, "Providence is God's activity in guiding or steering of nature, man, or history."<sup>6</sup>

In verse 1 it stops raining. Is that a miracle? No. Is God behind that cessation of rain? Yes. Does He have a reason for causing the rain to stop? Yes, a providential reason, in this case a reason He spelled out ahead of time.

Turn to Deuteronomy 28:15 and see the warning God gave Israel before they entered the promised land: "If you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you."

Included in the list of curses we find this specific curse in verses 23-24, "The sky over your head will be bronze, the ground beneath you iron. The LORD will turn the rain of your country into dust and powder; it will come down from the skies until you are destroyed."

God said He would make life miserable for His people if they disobeyed Him. Why? Because He is mean? No! It's because He knows that it's in the best interest of His people if they seek and obey Him. Indeed, the curses He would send were intended to shake them so they would turn back to Him.

How did Elimelech respond to the famine? He took his family to Moab<sup>7</sup>. Let that sink in. He *left the promised land and went to the country of Moab*. Elimelech's name meant "My God is king," yet there's a conflict between the meaning of his name and his actions. We'll come back to that thought in a moment. First, let's notice what happened subsequent to his choice. A series of losses occurred that brought pain into Naomi's life.

**A. Naomi lost her home (1-2).** The choice to move to Moab meant that Naomi, her husband, and their two sons were parting from the inheritance the Lord had given their ancestors. They left Bethlehem, which in Hebrew means "house of bread," to go to Moab, a land of a people under curse.

**B. Naomi lost her spouse (3-4a).** Verse 3—"Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons." Put yourself in Naomi's shoes.

1. *She experienced the challenge of being a single parent.* She's in a strange place and now her husband is gone. She alone is left to raise two sons, two teenage sons

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Langford.

<sup>7</sup> Moab was some 50 miles to the southeast, across the Dead Sea.

it would appear based on time indicators we'll see shortly. We're told Naomi experienced something else in the next verse.

2. *She watched her children make painful decisions.* Notice what her sons did in verse 4—"They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth." According to 4:10 we're told that Mahlon married Ruth which means Orpah was Kilion's wife. There's no mention that Naomi had anything to do with these marriages, perhaps indicating her sons acted without her input.

Her boys married non-Israelite women, *Moabite* women. Although this wasn't forbidden in the letter of the law, it certainly violated the spirit of the law. The Moabites were a people that began in incest, as the result of Lot's daughter getting him drunk and having sex with him (Gen. 19). The Moabites were the ones that refused to help the Israelites on their journey to the promised land and even hired Balaam to curse them. What's more, the people of Moab worshiped the pagan god, Chemosh, to whom human sacrifices were offered.

Naomi's suffering continued, for after losing her home and her spouse...

**C. Naomi lost her children (4b-5).** "After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband." How the young men died we're not told. The writer emphasizes the effect of their deaths, that they left behind two widows and a widowed, broken-hearted mother.

This raises a sensitive question. What was this family doing in Moab in the first place? You say, "Well, there was a famine. They had to leave to find food." Did they? Apparently, others didn't leave as we'll see at the end of the chapter.

You say, "But real estate is real estate. Where you live doesn't matter, does it?"

It did for this family. Why? Because they were Israelites and God had given the Israelites the promised land, as well as promises that He would provide for them if they would seek and obey Him.<sup>8</sup>

This family found food alright, but at what expense? There is something worse than going hungry, and even starving to death. And that is choosing a course that takes us outside the will of God.

Matthew Henry commented, "It is evidence of a discontented, distrustful, unstable spirit to be weary of the place in which God has set us, and to be leaving it immediately, whenever we meet with any uneasiness or inconvenience in it."

It's never right to disobey God's will. Never. Specifically, it's never right to go against God's revealed will in His Word. Never. No matter how viable an option may seem to our human eyes, if that option violates God's Word, it is not an option.

The sobering reality is that we too have our Moabs. We too have gone our own way. How many times have we made decisions without consulting the Lord?

The good news is that even after we've blown it by making foolish decisions, there is hope. God is gracious and even works providentially through the consequences of the sinful choices we make to bring about glory to Himself and good to those who will seek Him. That's something this mourning mother is about to see, and so are we.

So ends scene one, with truth #1. The Lord does not exempt mothers from mourning. Perhaps you know that firsthand. This will encourage you...

## II. The Lord sustains mothers in their mourning (6-18).

The narrative progresses with four episodes involving Naomi.

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<sup>8</sup> So was it right for Elimelech to leave Israel and to live in Moab? I'm not sure we can say definitely that Elimelech was *wrong* for leaving Israel—since others did (even Joseph and Mary took baby Jesus and went to Egypt)—but was it a *wise* thing to do?

**A. Naomi decided to return home (6-7).** “When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. 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.” Notice that...

1. *The Lord had provided food.* Verse 6 is very clear that *the LORD* did it. The LORD had shut off the rain that caused the famine, and now He “gives bread,” as the KJV puts it.

It’s so easy to miss God’s hand in the little things. We attribute good crops to weather patterns and fertilizer, and miss the hand of God. We need the reminder from Maltie Babcock’s poem:

*Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,  
And back of the flour the mill,  
And back of the mill is the wheat, and the shower,  
And the sun, and the Father’s will.<sup>9</sup>*

Beloved, God is at work. Even when we don’t understand His ways, He is still at work. And here is why...

2. *The Lord is faithful to His covenant promises.* He does what He promised to do. The famine was no accident, no glitch of global warming, for God said He would send famines if His people turned away from Him, and He did. And now in His mercy He sends relief in the form of good crops.

We’re told that Naomi heard the report and decided to head back home. Surprisingly, her two daughters-in-law decided to leave their own blood relatives and go with her. In response...

**B. Naomi tried to send her daughters-in-law back to their mothers (8-9).** “Then 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. 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...”

Apparently, once the three widows started down the road, reality set in for Naomi. She told Orpah and Ruth to go back to their mothers—perhaps she was thinking that the challenge of caring for herself would be overwhelming, let alone feeding two more mouths. But she doesn’t mention that. More likely, she thought life would be better *for them* if they stayed in Moab. Notice her two prayer requests.

1. *She asked the Lord to show them kindness (8).* And...

2. *She asked the Lord to give them husbands (9).* Does it surprise you to hear Naomi using the name of the LORD? For starters, many who endured the tragedy of losing a home, a mate, and two adult sons wouldn’t even mention the name of the Lord, let alone ask for Him to show kindness to another. “How can I believe in the Lord after all that’s happened in my life?” Yet Naomi believes in Him. She may not understand His ways, but she affirms His presence in her life.

Something else strikes me about Naomi’s use of the name of the LORD. We might expect her to use the more general name “God” since Orpah and Ruth are Moabites, and Moabites believed in a different god. But for Naomi there is only one true God and it’s not Chemosh, even if she is in Moab. She specifically asks *the LORD* (Yahweh) to show kindness and give husbands to her daughters-in-law.

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<sup>9</sup> Taken from G. Gardiner, *The Romance of Ruth*, p. 23.

But the young ladies objected, not to her use of the LORD's name, but to her command that they go back to their mothers. Note the last words of verse 9 and the first words of verse 10—"They wept aloud and said to her, 'We will go back with you to your people.'" Note the words, *your people*. They admit that they will be outsiders in Israel, yet such is their love for Naomi that they insist they go with her.

**C. Naomi insisted her daughters-in-law go home (10-14).** Verses 10-11—"But 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?'" She's talking about the law concerning levirate marriage, a law in Israel (Deut 25:5-6) that was given to protect widows and insure the continuance of the family line.

Verses 12-13—"Return 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— would 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!"

Don't miss Naomi's view of God. He is the one who helps His people (verse 6). He's also in charge of the things that hurt His people (verse 13)—"the LORD's hand has gone out against me!" she says.

Note the effect her words had on her daughters-in-law. Verse 14—"At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her."

1. *So Orpah went back.* She said goodbye and headed down the road. But Ruth was a different story...

2. *Ruth clung to her mother-in-law.* The verb "clung" is a powerful word. In Genesis 2:24 it refers to a man cleaving to his wife in the bond of marriage. In Deuteronomy 10:20 it depicts the committed faithfulness that God desires from His covenant people in response to His gracious salvation. Ruth *clung* to Naomi.

Some might see that word and suppose Ruth to be an insecure and frightened little girl that just can't let mama go, but that's certainly not the case, as will soon be evident.

**D. Naomi could not shake Ruth's resolve (15-18).** Verse 15—"Look," said Naomi, 'your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.'" Don't miss those words, *and her gods*.

1. *Orpah went back to her gods.* What does that tell us about Orpah? She was a nice person, kind to her mother-in-law, loyal and even willing to leave her own country to show her care. But she doesn't believe in the LORD. Because of common grace, even people who don't know the LORD can love, show compassion, and make great sacrifices. But they're still lost. They're still enslaved to their false gods.

Orpah was a polytheist. She worshipped many false gods. By the way, that means that Kilion, a man who professed to believe in the One true God, married a woman who did not believe in the one true God but who indeed believed in many gods.

Young people, please take note. Make sure that the person you marry loves the Lord that you know. God is very clear when he says in 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"

Ruth, too, had been a polytheist. But somewhere along the way, God in His mercy opened her eyes to her folly and granted her saving faith in Himself. How do I know that? By her answer to Naomi.

Verse 16—"But 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.'" These words are often used in wedding services, but realize

this originally was a promise a woman made to her mother-in-law. Now we see why Ruth won't remain in Moab. It's not just about her love for Naomi—Orpah had that.

2. *Ruth made a choice for Naomi's people and Naomi's God.* What would cause a person to turn from the traditions of her people, including those of her own parents and including the very gods they had worshipped for centuries? And what would cause that same woman to give up the security of her homeland, her friends, and everything she has ever known? What would cause her to do this knowing her father and mother would never approve and indeed, would probably never speak to her again?

There's only one answer. It's a one word answer. *Grace.* Ephesians 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

For Ruth, this decision wasn't just about Naomi. This was about Naomi's God.

Lest there be any doubt, listen to Ruth's next words, in verse 17, "Where 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." Did you catch that? Ruth uses the name of Naomi's God. Her devotion is no longer to Chemosh, but to *the LORD, the God of Israel.*

Verse 18—"When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her." End of discussion. The matter is settled.

Now go back to verse 16. I want you to notice again something Ruth said. *Your people will be my people and your God my God.* The order is significant. Ruth mentions Naomi's people first, then her God. Why? Because she understands that she cannot enter a relationship with God apart from His people, the Jews. All gods are not the same. All religions do not lead to the same place. God chose one people, the Jews, to whom He gave His Word and through whom He said He would eventually send the Messiah.

Which He did. Jesus would later say, "Salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22)."

Ruth affirms that. Ruth is turning her back on everything she has known since childhood. She has been a worshipper of Chemosh all her life, but now she is breaking religious ties. And family ties, too. According to 2:11, her father and mother are still living, but Ruth willingly makes a costly choice. She is saying that something is more important to her than family affection, honor, and tradition. She is choosing to turn away from what she's always known to something else, to Someone else.

Yes, Ruth and Orpah both made a decision on that road in Moab. Each of us today is faced with the same decision, and the consequences of that decision last for eternity. Are we going to go back to what we've always known, or are we going to move forward? Will we remain the same, or will we trust and obey the One who alone is the way, the truth, and the life?

What happened to Orpah? We never hear about her again. All we know is that she went back, back to Moab, back to her mother, and back to her idolatry. On the other hand, Ruth went forward, and as Ruth heads to Bethlehem she's heading into the pages of redemptive history, as we'll see.

Illustration:

But there's more. We're learning three things about the Lord in Ruth 1, and we've seen two thus far. One, the Lord does not exempt mothers from mourning (1-5). Two, the Lord sustains mothers in their mourning (6-18). Here's the third...

III. The Lord makes Himself known through mothers in mourning (19-22).

Verse 19—“So 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<sup>10</sup> exclaimed, ‘Can this be Naomi?’”

It’s been ten years since Naomi’s peers have seen her. Her losses have taken a toll on her. They hardly recognize her.

Naomi responds in verses 20-21, “‘Don’t call me Naomi,’ she told them. ‘Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I 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.’”

She requested a name change. The Hebrew word *Mara*’ means “bitter.” There’s a word play here. Sort of like, “Call me *Mara*, for God Almighty has *marred* me.”

“The LORD brought me back *empty*,” she says. That’s how she felt. *Empty*. That’s how she estimated her God-given possessions as she returned home. Empty. But was she empty? C. J. Goslinga observes, “Naomi’s bitter words underestimated the treasure that God had given to her in the love of her daughter-in-law Ruth.”<sup>11</sup>

Isn’t Naomi’s perspective typical of us? We get so easily preoccupied with what the Lord *hasn’t* given us that we miss the treasure of what He *has* given us.

“If I only had a wife!”

“If only I had better parents!”

“If only I had a better job!”

“My life is so empty. Why doesn’t God do something to fill this void?”

But He has. He has given us so much already, far more than we deserve. And most of all, He’s given us Christ, and in Christ everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3). A better plea would be, “Oh Lord! Give me eyes to see what You’ve given me!”

Illustration:

Sometimes the Lord gives us what we want. But sometimes the Lord gives us what we need most by *not* giving us what we want. That’s what He did in the case of this mourning mother, Naomi.

Watch how the chapter ends. We learn two things about Naomi.

**A. Naomi affirmed that God was in control of her losses (20-21).** Don’t miss her repeated references here to the LORD. “*The Almighty* has made my life very bitter. I 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.*”

This mourning mother may not understand what God is up to, but she affirms His control over her life, even over her losses. She attributes *everything* to God, the pleasant and the unpleasant.

**B. Naomi would eventually learn that God is filling the void left by her losses (22).** “So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.”

So ends chapter one. Chapter one tells what happened in ten years. Chapter two will cover the events of one day.

Chapter one ends telling us it was barley harvest time, meaning it’s towards the end of April. Why that detail? It shows that God’s timing is perfect. It shows that the famine that prompted Naomi to leave Bethlehem in the first place is indeed over. Although Naomi doesn’t know it yet, things are about to change for her. God is at work.

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<sup>10</sup> The term “women” isn’t in the original, but since the verbal form is feminine plural the sense is there. The men were out in the fields harvesting the barley, as we’ll see later in the story.

<sup>11</sup> C. J. Goslinga, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, p. 528.



We can see His providence illustrated in two ways in Ruth 1, both of which are manifest more fully in the rest of the book.

1. *He provided Naomi with a devoted daughter-in-law.* Naomi has a jewel, and she will soon discover just how precious this God-given jewel really is! What an amazing thing God did in the life of Ruth...

George Gardner writes, “Ruth was the product of a degraded race, the children of Moab. The race began with the incestuous episode between drunken Lot and his daughters in a cave outside the smoking ruins of Sodom. Moab was the child of Lot’s oldest daughter... Could any good or noble person come out of such a background? We say no. It is too much to expect. The hereditary and environmental factors are too powerful, and humanly speaking, such conclusions are possibly correct. ‘But God...’ Two little words that make a large difference.”<sup>12</sup>

Oh, what a difference God’s providence makes! The world says, “You can’t change human nature!” But God does it all the time. He took a pagan woman, an outsider, and saved her soul and blessed Naomi. But the blessing wasn’t just for Naomi...

2. *He provided His people with a link to the Messiah.* In chapter two Ruth is going to meet a man. There will be romance and a proposal in chapter three, a wedding and a son born in chapter four. This special son is Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David, and the royal ancestor to Jesus the Messiah.

Yes, God knows what He is doing, even in Naomi’s losses. He is preparing to give the world His Son, who will give His life on a cruel cross and then rise again, providing forgiveness of sin and eternal life for all who will trust in Him.

My friend, this same God knows what He is doing in your life, too. I don’t know what you are facing today, but I know the truth about Him. I know that...

1. The Lord does not exempt mothers from mourning.
2. The Lord sustains mothers in their mourning.
3. The Lord makes Himself known through mothers in mourning.

And of course, it’s not just mothers. It’s dads too. And children. And singles. It’s true of every one of us. He does not exempt us from mourning, but He does sustain us in our mourning, and makes Himself known through us in our mourning.

As Jesus says in next week’s text, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted (Matthew 5:4).”

*Response: Resolve to affirm the goodness and wisdom of God in every situation.*

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<sup>12</sup> George Gardiner, p. 30.