

“Your God, My God”  
Ruth 1:6-22  
(Preached at Trinity, January 31, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last time, as we began the Book of Ruth, we were introduced to the family of Elimelech: his wife Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Immediately we are told of a difficult situation. The land was in the midst of a famine. Knowing the times, it was most likely one of God's judgments upon sinful Israel during the times of the Judges. Elimelech was facing a decision.
2. Humanly speaking it would appear that relocating to Moab was the wise decision. After all, there was food in Moab. The pastures were green. But things are not always so clear for the people of God.
  - a. Actually, they are much clearer than we often pretend. Too often we make our decisions without really seeking the face of God. The road to compromise begins when we begin to consider our path based upon worldly wisdom rather than the wisdom of God.

**Romans 12:2 NAU** - "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
  - b. Elimelech and his family were God's covenant people. God had placed them in Judah for a purpose. They were to remain separated from the surrounding nations. The Moabites were idolatrous pagans. They had often proven to be Israel's enemy and had often led Israel into sin.

**Numbers 25:1-2 NAU** - "While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. <sup>2</sup> For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods."
  - c. The right decision for Elimelech was to remain with God's people. King David years later would speak words that should have been the words in the heart of Elimelech.

**Psalms 27:4-5 KJV** - "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. <sup>5</sup> For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."
3. Relocating to Moab was nothing less than a huge compromise. The pleasant green pastures of Moab were just too tempting to resist. How often this is true for us. The green pastures of compromise come in countless shades and are often hard to resist.

4. The compromise of the Elimelech family lasted over ten years, long after the famine had ended. Naomi could have returned with her sons after the death of Elimelech but she chose to stay and make her home among the Moabites. God's hand had been hard upon her while in Moab. God had humbled her in order to restore her to a right relationship with God and His people.
  5. The second half of **Chapter 1** deals with her road home.  
**Ruth 1:6 NAU** - "Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab"  
**Ruth 1:7 NAU** - "So she departed from the place where she was"
  6. Now our attention will be shifted from the compromising actions of this Hebrew family, to the unreserved commitment of the young Moabite woman named Ruth. This will dominate our attention for the remainder of this book that bears her name.
  7. As Naomi began her journey home she started thinking of her daughter-in-laws. What would they do? There was little prospect for them to get married. They would arrive in Bethlehem in poverty. They would be among a foreign people. Wouldn't it be better for them to remain with their own people in Moab? The answer of course is no, but Naomi is still working with carnal reasoning.
  8. Orpah considers the situation and was easily persuaded to remain in Moab. She saw no particular blessing in living in the Promised Land—neither had Naomi demonstrated the covenant blessings of God. After all, they had forsaken the Promised Land and God's covenant people years before. And apparently, Orpah's husband Chilion had done little to display the glory of God to his pagan wife.
  9. Ruth, on the other hand, demonstrated an amazing commitment to remain with her mother-in-law. Her words in **Verses 16-17** are beautiful words. We use them at weddings. They speak of commitment; of steadfast faithfulness.
  10. In this pagan land of Moab God came to one of His elect children, a Moabite named Ruth. In fact, Providentially, one of God's designs in this whole saga was to gather this lost daughter into His fold.
  11. I want to use Ruth's words tonight to describe the nature of Christian conversion. Coming to Christ is a radical change of heart; a radical change of life as we commit ourselves to Christ and join His covenant community. This change of life is always evident, whether you're a young Moabite widow or a person raised in a Christian family, or a person who has heard of Christ for the first time.
- I. First of all, Christian conversion is an unreserved commitment to follow Christ  
**Verse 16** - "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go . . . "your God, my God."
- A. Ruth had an opposite heart from her sister-in-law
    1. Orpah returned to her gods. She had lived among followers of Jehovah but her heart was not turned to Him. She found it easy to remain in the idolatrous nation of Moab.
    2. Such is the case with all those corrupted by the fall. They love the world and the things in it. They may dabble in the Christian religion and spend time with God's people, but their heart is not in it. Their heart is in Moab. They speak the language of Moab, worship the gods of Moab, and frolic in the pleasures of Moab.
    3. Ruth, on the other hand, was willing to forever forsake the gods of Moab

- B. This is the essence of Christian conversion
1. It demands that we leave all other gods behind and follow Christ. We must forsake all of our idols.
  2. This is illustrated vividly with the Rich Young Ruler  
He could not continue to maintain his love affair with his riches and follow Christ.  
**Matthew 19:21-22 NAU** - "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." <sup>22</sup> But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property."
  3. The person who will have Christ must be willing to forsake all else  
**Matthew 16:24-26 NAU** - "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. <sup>25</sup> "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. <sup>26</sup> "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"
  4. This is at the heart of the New Covenant – God becomes OUR God, our only God.  
**Jeremiah 31:33 NAU** - "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."  
**Jeremiah 32:38-39 NAU** - "They shall be My people, and I will be their God; <sup>39</sup> and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them."
- C. Notice, Ruth could not be dissuaded
1. Naomi paints a dark picture: perpetual widowhood, the promise of hardship. But Ruth would not turn back.  
**Ruth 1:15-16 NAU** - "Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law." <sup>16</sup> But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you"
    - a. Ruth was prepared for a life of perpetual widowhood, of childlessness, of hardship
    - b. She was prepared to leave her homeland—permanently.  
**Ruth 1:17** - "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried."
  2. Christianity never promises a life free from difficulty. In fact, it promises the opposite.
    - a. The Psalmist writes: Psalm **34:19 NAU** - " Many are the afflictions of the righteous"

- b. Jesus always warned that the life of a disciple did not promise a life of ease.  
**Matthew 8:19-20 NAU** - "Then a scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." <sup>20</sup> Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

II. It is a commitment to the covenant people of God  
 "Your people shall be my people"

- A. Ruth was prepared to leave her people behind
  - 1. She would leave forever her family, never to see them again—her parents, her siblings, her friends she grew up with.
  - 2. Her family in Moab promised her physical provision  
**Ruth 1:8 NAU** - " And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house."  
 a. Ruth's husband was dead. She could return home to the comfort of her birth family. Here there was financial support. She would have food and clothing provided for her. She would have a place to live. She would have the love of family. She would have the prospect of a husband and children.  
**Ruth 1:9 NAU** - "May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband."  
 b. By leaving with Naomi all of this was left behind
  - 3. Ruth was prepared to embrace a new family  
 "Your people shall be my people"
- B. This is a beautiful picture of the family of God – when we come to Christ we become a part of the family of God  
**Jeremiah 31:33 NAU** - "I will be their God, and they shall be My people."  
 1. Jesus taught that His true family was not flesh and blood  
**Mark 3:32-35 NAU** - "A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You." <sup>33</sup> Answering them, He said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" <sup>34</sup> Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! <sup>35</sup> "For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother."  
 2. As Christians we become a part of the Body of Christ. We are adopted as God's dear children.
  - a. There is sweet communion in the Lord's Prayer when we pray "OUR Father, which art in heaven"  
 There is a corporate solidarity. It is a family prayer.
  - b. As the body of Christ we share a wonderful communion with one another. It is a wonderful union of love.  
**Romans 12:5 NAU** - "we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."
- 3. We are one with brothers and sisters in Christ across the globe. Our Lord's church is comprised of people from every kindred and every tongue. The church destroys racism. It destroys division and schism.

4. When we come to Christ we find a new family that transcends all others. This doesn't mean we forsake responsibility for earthly family.
  - a. Paul spoke strongly regarding those who would not care for their earthly family.  
**1 Timothy 5:8 NAU** - "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."
  - b. The 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment demands that we honor our parents
  - c. As we look at the qualifications for pastor we must look on how he manages his own home – his earthly family.
5. Our Kingdom family is unique  
 Our earthly family displays union of a husband and wife  
 But our spiritual family displays our union with Christ.
- C. This finds glorious expression in the local church
  1. The early church was described as having an inseparable bond  
**Acts 2:44-46 NAU** - "And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup> and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. <sup>46</sup> Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,"
  2. It was in this context that the early church sold goods to provide for the poor. It is in the context of our local church that the world sees us growing together, working together, and loving together.
- D. There are several weaknesses that plague the church today. They expose our lack of understanding regarding our covenant community. Let me give you two.
  1. One is a terrible ignorance as to the nature of the church and its importance. Few understand the significance of the church and most people do not put it as a priority in their lives
    - a. Nancy Wilson gives this excellent advice to young single women:  
 "You need to be in a healthy church, a church that faithfully proclaims the Word, and feeds and shepherds the people. Sometimes people view going to a solid church as just a lucky happenstance rather than the result of a deliberate search. If for some reason you are not in such a church, then you must make every effort to find one, even if it means relocating. In our culture today, Christians relocate for jobs, but seldom for a church. Actually, the church you are in is far more important than the job you have."
    - b. Earl Blackburn writes, "Every aspect of the Christian life is vitally attached to a church. Sadly, many professing Christians neglect membership in and assembling with a church of Jesus Christ. When they do so, they founder spiritually and soon make shipwreck of their souls. Trouble and sorrow are their constant companions. Those who bypass the church, or merely interact with it on a casual basis, struggle all their lives. Satan and the affairs of the world constantly buffet them, and they wonder why nothing ever goes right for them."

2. The second weakness in the church today is a hyper-emphasis some put upon children and the nuclear family to the great diminishing of the importance of the local church.
  - a. We have to be careful here. We have a high responsibility to care for our families. Moms and Dads must be willing to make great sacrifices for their children. As a church we must emphasize the importance of strong families, and teach parents how to properly train up their children.
  - b. But for some today there is an over-reaction to the decline of the family. The result is a diminished view of the body of Christ and of the importance of the local church. For some there is little room for Kingdom involvement outside the home.
  - c. Kent Hughes – “In a valiant effort to stem the tide (*of the decline of the family*), many Christians and non-Christians alike have made the family everything. Every moment of every day, every involvement, every commitment, every engagement is measured and judged by the question, “How will this benefit my family?” While this is generally commendable, it can degenerate into a familial narcissism. The four walls of the home become a temple and only for those within those walls are any sacrifices made. Thus we commit domestic idolatry. This is an immense tragedy. Every earthly loyalty, if it is made central, becomes idolatry.”
3. The cure for these woes is to have a proper understanding of the family of God, the Christian family.  
 We must have a healthy, robust, Biblical understanding of the body of Christ, the covenant family of God, the household of faith. Coming to Christ demands becoming a part of this community of faith.  
 We worship together, pray together, labor together, rejoice and cry together.  
**1 Corinthians 12:26 NAU** - " And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."

#### Conclusion:

1. Coming to Christ puts Him as the highest priority and we must be willing to forsake all to follow Him.
  - a. Ruth was prepared to embrace Naomi’s God as her God.
  - b. Ruth was prepared to embrace her new family – God’s covenant people  
**Ruth 1:16** - "Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God."
2. Christianity demands the same from us