To Moab and Back

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[0:00] Well, if you would take out your Bibles, open with me to the book of Ruth. We'll begin a journey through the book of Ruth that will take us about five weeks.

! Ruth's a little tricky to find. Joshua judges Ruth. Small book right there nestled in between those. So if you've ever read Ruth, it's a beautiful story. We'll see some beautiful literature. It's a great story. Ultimately, this is a love story starring Ruth as the main character. It's Cinderella-like in its plot. Not only is it a beautiful story, though, it's beautifully told. Whoever wrote this story is a genius, and we don't actually know exactly who wrote it. Most likely, I guess, would be Solomon for reasons we'll maybe get into later. But we don't know exactly who wrote it, but whoever wrote it was a genius and a brilliant writer, as I hope you'll see tonight in chapter one.
In this book, there are only two references to God's direct activity. So God is spoken about by name a lot, as we'll see in chapter one. But there are only two places in this book where the author directly says that the Lord did something. Those are chapter one, verse six, and chapter four, verse 13. So kind of beginning and end of this book. In the book of Ruth, there are no eye-popping miracles. There's nothing extraordinary that takes place. There's no Red Sea crossing like in the book of Exodus. Also, like in the book of Exodus, there's no event where God speaks in a thunderous voice from the top of a mountain and gives commandments, gives his word directly. This book is very normal. This book is very just normal life. And yet what we see is that the author just leads us by the hand. And as we look back across the details of this story, we can see God acting constantly. We see him in every single detail, acting providentially in a behind the scenes kind of way. We see apparently random characters meet each other. We see these same characters make decisions that seem to be by chance that lead to fortuitous outcomes. And God is orchestrating all of it. There's no newsworthy miracles in this book, but God is incredibly active throughout it. And so I emphasize that because we can relate to this book. You can relate to this book. This book is just very normal in what it communicates to us. And that's how our lives are lived most of the time. We can't see exactly what God is doing in the details of our lives. We don't know why he brings suffering into our lives. We don't know exactly why he brings good into our lives in the moment. But we can look back five years, 10 years. Some of you are barely 10 years old. That's okay.
But we can look back and see God orchestrating these events when we look back across them, even though in the moment we may not be able to see what God is doing. We know he's always working.
He brings people into our lives. He takes people out of our lives. He controls who belongs in our families. He brings times of great sweetness and times of great bitterness. He's active in events that seem life-altering, like getting married. That's like a huge life-altering event. And he's also actively working even in chance encounters between friends. God is active in these monumental moves that take people in this book to other countries. He's also active as they carry out their mundane chores, like the harvest. All of these details are being woven together into this story of the book of Ruth.
[4:38] And all of the details in your life are being woven together by God into the story of your life. Every single detail God is in control of. And after a brief introduction in the first five verses of the book of Ruth, the story is largely carried by conversations between main characters.

And so this story has a lot of action, has a lot of drama. Most of it is played out through the conversations that people have with each other. And so our title tonight for Ruth chapter one is To Moab and Back. To Moab and Back. And we'll cover this text in two points. Number one is a brief trip to Moab. A brief trip to Moab. And the first words of this book, Ruth one, verse one, in the days when the judges ruled. And if you've ever read the book of Judges, I would encourage you to, this is a very ominous start to the book. A lot of wicked stuff happens in the book of Judges.

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Even the good guys are bad guys in the book of Judges. No one is good. And the major statement of the book of Judges is there was no king in Israel. And so everyone did what was right in his own eyes.
There was no supreme authority over the land. And so everyone just did whatever they wanted. And there's a lot of wickedness recorded even in the book of Judges. But it's not only during the time of the judges, but it's a time when there was a famine in the land.
And a famine is just an extreme shortage of food. It can be caused by weather or caused by war or caused by poor planning or poor farming. But there's an extreme shortage of food. So do you guys remember 2020? Yes. Yeah. Who doesn't? We went through a toilet paper famine. There was no toilet paper anywhere for a minute. And so that's what a famine is like, except in food, not toilet paper.
[6:45] And so, because Ruth didn't use toilet paper, but so there was no food. And so what, where do you go if there's no food? For us, that's like going to Walmart and there's just no food anywhere.

How do you live? And so there's a famine in the land. And so this is not only a dark period of time, but these are dark days within that dark period of time. It's when the judges ruled and when there was a famine in the land. And this is a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab.
So he leaves Bethlehem to go to a distant country by the name of Moab. Now it's ironic because the name Bethlehem means house of bread. And so there's no bread in the house of bread. And so they're leaving the house of bread to go to a foreign country. And so they leave the promised land. These Israelites leave the land that God gave them to go to a foreign country. And this foreign country isn't just any foreign country. These are avowed enemies of Israel. And so they leave the promised land and go into enemy territory to survive during this famine. It says they go there to sojourn in the country of Moab. So they were just staying briefly as foreigners there, likely just until the famine was over.
Now this journey wasn't super far to be in a different country, but it was about 50 miles. And so this trip would have taken roughly a week for them to travel to. And so 50 miles, that would be like walking from the youth center to the airport and back and doing it again.
That's about 45 miles. And so you think about that takes some time to walk and you've got to stop and sleep and stop and eat and stuff. And so they're traveling to this foreign country that is not friendly to Israelites in order to survive this famine. And we have to stop and ask a question.
[8:51] Was this right? Should they have left Israel? Was it right to not just leave Israel, but to go to Moab of all places? And the author of Ruth is completely silent on the moral nature of this decision. But based on what other things in the Bible say, based on other experiences people have when they leave the land of Israel, I don't think this was a good thing to do. Now, I've never been in a situation where there was a famine by God's grace.

So I don't know how I would behave under those circumstances, but any time in the Bible when main characters in a story leave the land of Israel, it usually isn't bad or usually isn't good. I'm sorry. It's usually bad. And especially when they travel east out of the land that God has given them. And so this detail of the story of them, because of a famine, leaving their home country connects this man. He's not been named yet, but it connects this man with people like Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, people who were uprooted from their home because of famine, seeking refuge elsewhere, which that's a significant detail for later on in this story, connecting in with stories like those.
And this man goes with him, his wife, and his two sons. Verse two, we're introduced to him by name. The name of the man was Elimelech. Elimelech means my God is king. And the name of his wife, Naomi.
Naomi in Hebrew means pleasant or sweet. And the names of his two sons were Malan and Killian. And their names mean sickly and wasting. Or we can call them sicky and icky.
[10:47] Thank you. So Elimelech, my God is king. Naomi means sweet with their two sons, sicky and icky. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there.

And now this is an interesting detail because remains there seems maybe slightly more permanent than sojourning, right? Sojourning is just incredibly temporary. They're just going for a period of time, but now it's describing them as remaining there. And then tragedy strikes. Verse three, but Elimelech, the husband of Naomi died and she was left with her two sons. And so she loses her

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husband, but on the bright side, she does still have her two sons. Verse four, these took Moabite's wives.
The name of the one was Orpah, the name of the other Ruth. We don't know what Orpah means exactly. The word Ruth usually means friend or kindness. And again, we have to ask the question, was this right? They're in the land of Moab. That was probably questionable at best. And they marry Moabite women and Moabite women in Israel's past have caused great trouble in Israel. And so they marry these women. And again, the author doesn't comment on it. He doesn't say much about it at all.
He doesn't say whether Orpah married Siki or Ikki. He doesn't say anything about the details of this marriage, simply that it happened. And whatever the moral nature of these relationships were, certainly this would have been a time of celebration. This would have been something they celebrated in Moab. This would have brought joy to Naomi because with marriage comes the prospect of kids, which would have been her grandkids. That brings hope to her future. That brings joy to her difficult circumstances that she's facing there in Moab.
Moab. They lived there about 10 years. And so they're becoming more and more firmly planted in the land of Moab. They went there just to sojourn briefly and they remained there. And now it's been 10 years.
[13:20] It seems like they've got no intention of going back to the promised land at this point. They are comfortable in the land of Moab. And so here's a quote I want you guys to think about referring to sin. It says, sin will take you further than you want to go.

It will keep you longer than you want to stay. And it will cost you more than you want to pay. And so I would encourage you guys, do not play with your sin. Do not tolerate compromise in your life because it's so easy to get comfortable there. It's so easy to feel at home there.
Like Elimelech's family did in the land of Moab. So they're there 10 years. This brief sojourn turned into a decade of life in the land. But at least they're married. And after 10 years, you start to expect what comes next is, and they had kids. But there's no mention of that. And it says, and both Malan and Killian died so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.
And so they didn't just die, they died without children. And now Naomi is left to fend for herself in a hostile country. It describes her as being left without her two sons and her husband.
This was in a time and in a place where without a male in the family, without a male leader of the family, these women were at great risk of men with bad intentions, of men wanting to overpower them or steal from them or whatever. They were at incredible risk just in terms of safety. And in addition to that, they wouldn't have had a lot of ways to work to support themselves and sustain their own life there in the land. This country was not safe without male protection, male leadership, and Naomi is all by herself. Safety was tied up in having a male family member and she had none. And so this brief trip to Moab has turned into 10 years and has brought the loss of husbands and sons.
[15:56] And it seems like Naomi's even lost her identity. The text doesn't even call her by name. It just says the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. And so it begins with a man of Bethlehem and Judah and ends with this woman being left all alone with no male relatives left to help her survive.

She has her two daughters-in-law, but she has no hope for the future. Elimelech's family is basically extinct at this point, basically non-existent. And normally a widow would have some options. If her husband dies, she would have some options to help protect herself, protect her kids. She could go back to her parents' house, but Naomi is old at this point and her parents likely aren't alive anymore.
She could get remarried, but later in this text she talks about she's really too old even to get remarried. There's no point in it. Who would take her in? Or she could move in with her sons or her grandkids, but she has none. She left Bethlehem with a full family and is now in Moab all by herself. It takes five verses for her life to come crumbling down around her. And she's left standing in the rubble all alone. And the author almost just coldly tells us what happens. He died. Her two sons died.
No details, no information about how they died or how old they were, just that they were taken from her. Her grief is unimaginable at this point. She's been emptied of everything. Her past, her present, and even her future has been taken from her. And this emptiness, this brokenness, provides the primary conflict in the plot of this story. And we as readers are now firmly in the grip of the author.

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What's going to become of this family? What's going to happen to them? Are they going to survive and how? And so we see secondly, a bitter trip home. A bitter trip home.
[18:30] Verse six, then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab. Why? For she had heard in the fields of Moab that Yahweh had visited his people and given them food.

We're not sure how she heard this detail, but she hears the news that Yahweh has returned in kindness to his people. The famine is over. And so Yahweh's kindness drives the action of this story. Here's one of the two direct statements about what he does in this story. He has visited his people and given them bread. And she arises to return. And that word return is used about 10 or 12 times in this chapter.
And so that's the theme of this chapter. She is rising up to go back to her homeland. Naomi has been through a lot. She has suffered a lot. She has cried a lot. She has lost a lot of sleep, but she's headed home. She's headed back to safety. Verse seven, so she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. And so they're on their way. They've left Moab. Verse eight, but Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, go, return each of you to her mother's house. May Yahweh deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.
Yahweh grant that you may find rest, each of you, in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them and they lifted up their voices and wept. They seem to be pretty well on their way from Moab back to Bethlehem. And Naomi kind of pulls them over and says, you guys get out of here. Go back to Moab.
May you find rest. May you find fulfillment with a different husband. Go back to your homeland and remarry there. Go back to your parents and find another husband. You have no hope with me. And now we need to ask the question, why does Naomi wait until they're like on the road to have this conversation?
[20:52] Like, why didn't she just have this conversation in Moab and say, hey, you guys just stay here. I'm going to leave you here. Well, it's likely that Naomi knew she wanted to go back by herself, but if she had told them this news in their home in Moab, it would have been incredibly easy to talk Naomi into staying. Those girls would have just said, this is your home. Look at your house. This is where we've had memories together. And so Naomi wants to get away from where all her memories are to have this conversation with her daughters-in-law. And she tells them to go back. And it would be easier for her to continue on her way alone. And she says, may Yahweh deal kindly with you. She's basically saying, may the Lord bless you. May the Lord give you a good life. And this is her attempt at a final goodbye to these women she has lived with for at least 10 years. And she tells them to go find rest each in the house of your husband. That's another theme throughout this book is finding rest through marriage. But Naomi's telling them to go find other husbands in the land of Moab. They don't have any realistic hope of finding a husband in Israel. There are Moabite widows who are living with another widow in Israel. Who is going to take them in? Who is going to willing, is going to be willing to take a chance on marrying them? And so Naomi is saying, this would be better for me to travel alone and I don't have to worry about providing for you. This will be better for you. You'll have a better chance of a future in Moab than you would in Israel. And so Naomi is formally saying to them goodbye and good life. And she kisses them goodbye and they weep. This goodbye would have been incredibly painful for Naomi to say, painful for these girls to hear. These were the daughters that she did not have. These were her only family relationships in the world. And she's trying to send them away back to their home country.

They will never see each other again if they listen to her. And there's a lot of pain and sorrow in finality. That's why funerals can be so sad because you just know this is final. For the rest of this life, this is our new reality as a family. And as you think about finality, finality is almost always sorrowful. The only reason it's not sad is if you don't recognize when something's the final time that it happens. So not to make you guys too sad, but if you played with friends growing up, there was a time you went out and played with your friends and came inside and never played with them again. There was a last time you played with your friends. There was a last time that your parents picked you up and set you down and never picked you up again. And that's really sad when you think about it like that, right? But like in the moment, you don't think about it like that. There's not that finality attached to that moment. And so it doesn't register in your mind when it happens. But if they listen to her, this is it. They will never see each other again. This is why they're sad. This is why

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they're crying. But Naomi thinks they'll all be better off. And they actually protest in verse 10. They said to her, no, we will return with you to your people. But Naomi doesn't budge. And she starts to give reason. She starts to argue with them about why they should go back. Verse 11, Naomi said, turn back my daughters. Why will you go with me? Why would you do this? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? She's saying, I gave birth to your first husbands. That's not happening again. There's not going to be any more sons provided to you by me. And she says, verse 12, turn back my daughters. Repeats that again. Go your way. For I am too old to have a husband. And she's saying, I can't even, I'm too old even to get married. No one's going to take me in.

And so even if you want to attach yourselves to me, going back to my homeland, no one's going to take me in. No one's going to take us in. We won't have safety there either. You're better off going back to your home country. And she says, if I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? And so she says, even if I got married tonight and got pregnant, I would have to have multiple sons for you guys to marry. And even if I got married tonight and had multiple sons, would you wait for them to grow up? Would you be willing to wait that long? Would you refrain from marrying that long? And even by that time, if they did wait, they likely would be outside of their childbearing years themselves. And so Naomi says, no, my daughters. [26:25] For it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of Yahweh has gone out against me. Naomi has no sons and she has no hope of having sons. And the author wants to keep this emptiness right before our eyes. He wants to keep the need for marriage right before our eyes.

Naomi's too old to get married. And so she's empty. Ruth and Orpah don't have hope of getting married in the land and they don't currently have husbands. And so they are empty in that sense. Their best chance of marriage was in Moab, not in Bethlehem. Verse 14, then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. And so Orpah says, you're right, goodbye. And she turns and walks back to Moab. But Ruth clings to her. And this word is a powerful word. This is the same word that's used in Genesis 2.24 when it says, for this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife or cling to his wife. This is covenantal language. This is almost marital in strength. Ruth is saying, I am with you.

She clings to her despite the uncertain future that they will face. Ruth is willing to sacrifice her future in order to serve her mother-in-law, Naomi. And Naomi continues to resist. See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Return after your sister-in-law. She says, look, catch up with her. Go back with her. Walk with her back to your country. And Naomi seems to be saying, Yahweh has dealt bitterly with me. His hand has gone out against me. If you stay with me, this might just be the beginning of what God's going to do to me. With me, you're not safe because Yahweh is against me. Get away from me. Leave me. Naomi is pretty hardened in her grief and sadness here. She's saying, go worship other gods. Yahweh is dealing bitterly with me. But now Ruth has a command of her own. Verse 16. Ruth said, do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you.

Naomi's first words in this book were telling her daughters-in-law to go back. Ruth's first words in this book are incredibly iconic. They're so poetic. They're so beautiful. They're so faithful. [29:23] They're so sacrificial. She says, for where you go, I will go. Where you lodge, I will lodge.

Your people shall be my people and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die. And there I will be buried. May Yahweh do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you. It's incredibly punchy. And in Hebrew, it just reads like she says, you go, I go. You lodge, I lodge. Your people, my people. Your God, my God. Ruth is emphasizing we are going together. I will not leave you for better or for worse. I will stick with you. And Ruth doesn't just say, as long as you live, Naomi, I'll be faithful to you. Ruth says to Naomi, as long as I live, I will be faithful to you.

After you die, I'm going to stay right where you were and be buried next to you. And she says, may Yahweh do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.

This is how Israelites would speak when they were taking an oath or when they were offering a sacrifice and they would cut the animal's throat and they would say, may the Lord do this to me and more if I don't keep this promise. And so it's kind of like cross my heart, hope to die. I will do what I say to you. I will be faithful to the promises I'm making to you. And notice that Ruth expects to die with her. She does not expect a bright future. She says, wherever you die, I'm going to be right there with you and I will die next to you. Ruth would rather die at the hands of Yahweh than live with

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her false gods. And so with this statement, Ruth declares herself in Israelite. She abandons her family, her old religion, her homeland, so that she can be with Naomi and worship her God. And in this sense,
Ruth seems to have more faith even than Abraham. Abraham also left his family. Abraham also left his country. But Abraham had a direct word from the Lord. Abraham had a direct promise from God. And Ruth is just going based on what she's heard about Yahweh through Naomi. And so she is putting herself in line with these people who have had massive amounts of faith in the Old Testament. She, without a direct promise from the Lord, she gave up marriage in Moab to live with this old lady in Bethlehem, with no hope of a future, so to speak. Verse 18, and when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said, no more. And now the next verse will tell us that they're arriving in Bethlehem.
[32:39] And so it's like they don't talk to each other the rest of the way, almost. Naomi says, fine, be that way. And they just walk the road in silence. And so as the distance from Moab to Bethlehem is getting shorter and shorter, as they get closer and closer, there's this growing distance between the two women. There's this tension between the two of them as they don't, Naomi doesn't seem to be pleased with Ruth sticking with her. Doesn't seem to be happy that Ruth has decided to do this.

And so this introduces us to a question about Naomi. Is she, like her name says, a sweet mother-in-law?
Or is she a bitter widow? Who is she? And when she speaks back in Bethlehem, it reveals a lot about where her heart is. Verse 19, so the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, is this Naomi?
She's been gone for at least 10 years. They haven't seen her face in 10 years. She's aged. And that grief and that sorrow may have also further changed her appearance. And so the whole town is buzzing with the news. Like, is this actually Naomi? Is this, could this actually be her? And Lacey and I had our 10-year reunion last summer. So not 2025, but 2024, because I'm getting old. And we had a chicken and pickle. It was a great location. And I played pickleball. It was the weekend before I tore my Achilles. So never again, pickleball. But that 10 years hasn't been kind to some people that we graduated with. And the question we asked is like, is that so-and-so? Is that them? That's the kind of question they're asking about Naomi as she comes back. Is this her? Is this really the one who left us?
Is this our old friend? And you'd expect Naomi to be like, oh my gosh, guys, good to see you, or something. Here's her first words to her old friends. Do not call me Naomi. Stop calling me sweet.
[34:59] Call me Mara, bitter. For the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. Stop calling me sweet.

Call me bitter. And names were symbolic of character back in Israel. And so you'd give your son or daughter a name hoping they lived up to it, hoping their character reflected that name. And Naomi is saying, I'm done. I'm done. The Lord has dealt bitterly with me. Call me bitter. If this is what the Lord is going to do to me, call me by that name. Because he's dealt bitterly with me. She says, verse 21, I went away full, and Yahweh has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi when Yahweh has testified against me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me? I went out full. I came back empty. This is a riches to rags story for her so far. She had a full family, and now she's come back with no one. And she says, he's brought me back empty. But Ruth was standing right next to her. She's like, I'm right here. I came with you, Naomi. She says, I came back with no one. She's talking in the presence of Ruth as if Ruth doesn't even exist. She's no one to her in light of what she has lost. This return should have been joyful, but she can only think about what has been taken from her. And now, how do we think about this statement that Naomi makes? Is this a righteous thing to say about God? Is this a righteous way to view God? What do we think about Naomi? What do we think about her theology? What do we think about what she says about God?
Of all the things we can say about her, I think we can compliment her because she is wrestling with a sovereign God. She's wrestling with a God who is in control of this world and a God who is in control of her life. She doesn't think the world is out of control. She doesn't think her life is out of control. She just thinks that God is treating her as an enemy. And she's wrong for thinking that. She's mistaken in her way she views God, but she's at least wrestling with a sovereign
God who's in control of her life. She's wrestling with a sovereign God who's usually good, but just hasn't been good to her lately. She doesn't say he's evil. She doesn't stop believing in him.

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She just doesn't think he's going to be good to her anymore. He's usually good, but he's done being good to me. He's dealt bitterly with me. And she can't see it now because she's just living her life a day at a time. But she is so wrong about that. I don't want to take away from her suffering. She has suffered immensely. And whatever the Lord does that's good in her life, we can't just say like, okay, see, so we're square now because she has lost a lot. But she is wrong about the hand of the Lord being against her. And sometimes our lives feel like that. Sometimes the details in our world feel like that.
But Naomi's wrong about that. And most of God's providences in our life can't be seen in the moment. They can only be seen when we look back across our life. And we can say, I was so hurt by these circumstances, but I see what God was doing now as I look back. I can see how he was working even then.
[38:56] And years later, when Naomi would look back, I think she would think about her life and say she was wrong for thinking about God this way. But what's funny about this book is she says, call me Mara.

And no one calls her Mara. The book continues to call her Naomi. That is her name. The Lord is going to be kind to her through the details of her life that she doesn't know about yet. And so I think Naomi's mistaken in her understanding of life, but I respect her. She suffered immensely.
And she's trying to wrestle with a sovereign God who's causing her to suffer. And I'm not super confident how I would handle the loss that Naomi endured. I don't know how I would respond. I would hope well, but I can't say she has suffered a lot of loss. And we don't want to put that out of our minds as we think about what Naomi is saying here. Her only hope isn't in her ability to keep herself in the faith. Her only hope is in the one she's placing her faith in. Verse 22, so Naomi returned and Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law with her. And so the book continues to call her Naomi, even though she wants to be called Mara. And pretty much from here on out, Ruth is going to be referred to as Ruth the Moabite. She is going to stand out in this culture that she's living in. People are going to say, hey, where's the Moabite woman? Ruth the Moabite. That's how she's going to be referred to pretty much from here on out. And I want you to notice that verse 22 highlights what Naomi has rather than what's been taken from her. She has Ruth, her daughter-in-law with her.
And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. And now there's just a flicker of hope here. This verse is telling us that they arrived. It's telling us what time of year they arrived, but it's doing so much more than that. It's giving us some hope. They will at least be able to find food there. And it's transitioning to act two of this story. It's beautiful storytelling.
And if you think back across chapter one, which is really act one of this story, it began with a famine and departure from the land. It ends with a return to the land and a harvest.
[41:36] Ruth is triumphant, optimistic. Naomi is bitter and empty. How will these two get along?

How will they continue to live with one another? What's going to happen to them? And we'll find out as the story continues. But just to pause and think about these two ladies. Maybe you can relate to Naomi. You're struck with grief. You're suffering. You've had a lot of loss in your life. You don't know what God is doing in your life. You can't see how he's weaving all the details together yet.
It just hurts. You have nagging questions. Why is this happening? What could possibly be good about this? And I can't answer those questions for you because we don't have answers to those kinds of questions yet.
And even if I could answer those questions, I still wouldn't take away the pain of what you're feeling. What I can tell you is that Christ understands your suffering. He himself suffered.
greatly. He was perfectly innocent, but he took our sins on himself. He understands pain and suffering. He paid for his people's sins even though he was innocent. He knows what it is to suffer. He cried out to God in pain asking questions that did not receive answers. He knows what it's like to suffer.
[43:15] And I can't tell you that by being a Christian or by becoming a Christian that your problems will go away. That's not true. I can't tell you that when problems come into your life that you always handle them well. That's not true. I can't tell you that even in your suffering, you'll always be happy because that's not true. But by being a Christian, you'll have Christ with you who knows what it is to suffer.

You can know that he will use it to make you more like Christ. He'll use it for his glory and it will be for your growth and for your good. And maybe you need to imitate Ruth more. Ruth has also

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suffered.
She's lost her husband too. She's lost her father-in-law. She's willingly giving up her homeland to embrace whatever future Naomi has with God. And you know what's fascinating about Ruth? She doesn't complain in this book once. She doesn't say anything negative once in this book. She's hardworking.
She's faithful. And she trusts God. Not only does she do those things, but she's so wise in how she lives her life. And one facet of that wisdom I think is seen in this chapter. She doesn't rebuke Naomi.
Naomi is older than her. She respects her and shows her honor. She's seen firsthand all that Naomi has suffered. And Ruth gives her some room to wrestle with the difficulties of her life. Ruth gives her some space to wrestle with a sovereign God. She allows her room to lament. Lamentation is crying out to God. And so many times throughout the Bible, it's saying, why? How long? How could you do this? Ruth is giving Naomi space to wrestle with those things. That doesn't mean Naomi was always right in what she said, but I think Ruth handles it wisely. And so this is act one of the story to Moab and back. And we'll continue with this story next week. Our Father, we thank you for this book of Ruth. I pray that as we read it and study it, we would understand what you are saying through it as you inspire the human author to tell this story well. I pray we'd pay careful attention to the details. And I pray ultimately that we would be made more like your son,
[45:54] Jesus Christ, through our study of this book. I pray for students as they go to small groups, they'd be edifying and helpful in thinking through this. And it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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