

BREAKING BOUNDARIES

THE STORY OF RUTH

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Ruth 1:18-2:9 | September 22, 2019
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I. Introduction to this Study

This week the story of Ruth and Naomi continues with their journey back to Naomi's hometown of Bethlehem. After they arrive in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest (provision for food has returned by God's grace), Naomi shares (v.21), "I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty." These are stunning, yet honest words from a faithful follower of Yahweh. God's story for His people, Naomi, Ruth, - and for you is being written amidst the joys and concerns of life – even when everything appears to be lost or left behind forever. The Lord's grace and provision flows from His heart into our lives, even during difficult times. How is God continuing to write His love story into your life...even today?!

II. Connecting with One Another

Go on a "scavenger hunt" and track down the lyrics to a song, "*Blessed be the Name of the Lord.*" How do the lyrics speak to you?

When is the last time you have been back to your hometown?

Do you know the meaning of your first name?

III. Study the Text

a. **Read Ruth 1:18-22**

How does Naomi's response (or lack of response) set the scene for her return to Bethlehem with Ruth? What might Ruth be feeling at this point?

What do you think about Ruth's presence with Naomi at this point in the story – will Ruth primarily be a reminder of the past or will she become a source of hope for the future?

Explore v. 21 and Naomi's claim that she left Bethlehem full and now the Lord has brought her back to Bethlehem ("house of bread") empty...

b. **Read Ruth 2:1-9**

How did Ruth demonstrate her faith in God as she arrived in Bethlehem?

Does Ruth's resolve and initiative to glean food for Naomi and herself surprise you? How about Naomi's response?

How is God's sovereign plan continuing to unfold based on the field Ruth discovers?

What signs of hope do you see as this chapter begins?

How have Boaz's words to Ruth in verses 8 & 9 come "full circle" to Ruth, after her declaration to Naomi in Chapter 1:16b?



IV. Pray

- a. Take time to lift up in prayer the “Naomi(s)” that you know...
- b. Pray for those who need the Lord’s provision in their lives – physically, spiritually, and emotionally.
- c. Give thanks for the "Ruth(s)" in your life...
- d. Pray for Good Shepherd and that we will welcome all people who are on journeys of faith and life, and that we will invite them into a Christ centered relationship in God’s family.

V. Digging Deeper

- a. Read Isaiah 43:1-7. How can (or does) this scripture relate to your life and faith story?
- b. Read Deuteronomy 24:19-22...what type of insight does this give you into the person of Boaz and how he is managing his fields?
- c. Explore Jesus’ powerful teaching with His disciples while they are on the Mount of Olives - right before the Last Supper in Matthew 25:31-40...How can this teaching help us be more aware of those in our region, our nation, and the world, that are "Beyond the Boundaries?"
- d. The Ruth story reminds people that this religious concern mustn't become an ethnic prejudice. Wrestle with this statement...
- e. Do you ever wonder why Christians go through the things they experience when there seems to be no reason why they should suffer the way they do?
- f. How does Ruth's example encourage you in the challenges you face?
- g. Do you see God’s autograph written into your own life?

