

June 4, 2017

TO GIVE UP THAT DOG CHEW

Ruth 1:6-22

Last weekend Laurie and I watched some of the Memorial Day concert from Washington D. C. Near the end they told the story of army Captain Luis Avila and his wife, Claudia. In 2011 Captain Avila was in Afghanistan on his 5th overseas deployment. As they were traveling one day a massive IED exploded directly under the vehicle he and his team were riding in. Three were instantly killed, the others, including the captain, were severely wounded. Captain Avila sustained wounds to his left leg that resulted in it being amputated as well as traumatic brain injury. The overall damage to his body was so bad he was paralyzed, suffered two heart attacks and two strokes and was in a coma for 40 days. The doctors believed there was no hope for him. But his wife insisted they not remove him from life support. Miraculously, after those 40 days he regained consciousness. But he had serious brain damage and was paralyzed. His wife, Claudia, has stuck with him and nursed him through a terribly difficult process of therapy and rehabilitation. He will never be the same. He cannot speak very well and cannot care for himself. But she heroically supports and stands with him. She daily lives out remarkable loyalty, love and faithfulness.

I recently watched on TV the closing moments of the movie Black Hawk Down. It tells the horrifying story of the fierce fire fight of the battle of Mogadishu in 1993 that lasted a day and a half, resulting in the deaths of 18 Americans and 1000 or more Somalis. Near the end of the movie there is a scene that is based in an event that actually occurred. After escaping the hellacious battle one Ranger is talking to a Delta soldier. He is amazed to see that the Delta operator is gathering ammo and preparing to go back into the city by himself. He was going because there was an American soldier still out there at risk. The Delta guy says, "Back home people ask me why do you do it? Why do you go fight someone else's war? I don't say anything to them because they won't understand. It's about the man next to you." In other words, it's all about brotherhood and loyalty.

There is something deep within us that is touched and inspired by loyalty, by one person sacrificing his or her own good for another, sticking with that person through whatever may come. Perhaps it is because we long for someone to have that kind of loyalty to us. We long to know that there is someone who will never give up on us, who will stand with us no matter what may come and will always be there for us. We want to know that we are not alone in this world, especially when things get hard. One of the greatest stories of loyalty ever is the story of Ruth.

Ruth 1:1 says, “In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land.” Ruth lived during the time Israel did not have a king and it was ruled by a series of judges. Judges 17:6 says, “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.” That literally says “each one did what was right in his own eyes.” That sounds ideal to many, maybe most, people in our culture. One of the most pervasive influences in our society is the idea that there is no absolute truth. All is relative. There is no absolute, objective standard of right and wrong. Thus each person decides for himself or herself what is right and wrong, and that will be different for each individual. This idea is much celebrated for it is claimed it is the thing that sets people free.

That "No one tells me what to do" spirit is pervasive in our society. There was a recent commercial for a car that featured people singing the old song "You Don't Own Me." The words are "You don't own me. Don't try to change me in any way. Don't tell me what to do, don't tell me what to say, just let me be myself." I don't get what that has to do with buying a car, but it expresses the spirit of our society. I do whatever I want, nobody tells me what is right or wrong. No one controls me.

In the days of the judges in Israel they did not have the written Bible to give them a theological and moral code, and since they didn't have a king they did not have anyone in authority telling them what they could and couldn't do. That sounds cool to people in our culture. The results of that mindset in Ruth's days unfortunately were something less than stellar. Judges 3:7 says, “The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord.” That refrain is repeated in verse 17, 4:1, and 6:1. What seemed right in their eyes more often than not was downright evil. That should serve as a cautionary tale for us. There is a big complex of buildings in Vista at the county court facility where literally thousands of people can be found every day involved in activities that are happening because when people do whatever is right in their own minds the result is they do a lot of evil. That had some serious implications for women in Ruth's day. That reality comes into play when we consider some of the choices made by this noble woman. Let's look at Ruth 1:6-22.

NAOMI'S SWEET LIFE TURNED BITTER

Naomi was a Jewish woman married to a man named Elimelech. The couple had two sons. But then a terrible recession hit the nation of Israel. Back then it was called a famine, but the bottom line is that things were really bad. The recession of 2008 was the worst that our country has gone through in my life, but there was one that hit around 1989 that was memorable for Laurie and me. I figured out that in one year at the worst of that recession a quarter of the people in our church had to

move away because they could not financially survive in our area. Many of our good friends, people who had their children when we did and who went through some of the most difficult times of our life, scattered to all parts of the United States.

That happened to Elimelech and Naomi. They essentially lost everything and could not survive in Israel. They feared if they stayed there they would die of starvation. So they moved to a neighboring country called Moab. Clearly this was an act of desperation because Moab and Israel were often not on friendly terms. In fact, they pretty much hated each other. Deuteronomy 23:3 says, "No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, not even in the tenth generation."

It is interesting that they went to Moab since it is just east of Israel and more arid. This suggests to me that the famine was not weather driven. Judges 6:3-4 says, "Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel. My suspicion is that the famine was caused by this kind of destruction. Moab was a better option because at that time they were not being subjected to that kind of devastation.

This was a tough move for the family. They lost their home and had to leave their land, which was the source of income in that day. They left their friends, their extended family, and moved to a place where they knew no one and were not especially welcome, a place that had a very different culture and where they were not particularly fond of Israelis. In that foreign place they had to start over from scratch. Sadly after some time in Moab things got worse, much worse, for poor Naomi. 10 years after they moved to Moab Naomi's husband became ill and died. Then both of her now married sons got sick and they also died. Neither of them had children with their wives before their deaths. I don't know what was going on in Moab, but it sure proved to be fatal for the men in Naomi's family.

Naomi's situation at that point was about as desperate as it could have been. In that day women were totally dependent on men to support them. They couldn't just go out and get a job. They live in an agrarian society, which meant the source of all wealth was land. But women were not allowed to own land. So they survived by being supported by their father when they were young, then after marrying, by their husband. Having a son was absolutely crucial because if a woman's husband died she would lose the family land unless there was a son to inherit it. With her father, husband and her sons dead Naomi had zero means of support. She was too

old to marry again. She wasn't going to be given help by anyone in the area because she was an outsider. She was in trouble big time.

Verse 6 tells us that Naomi heard that the Lord "had come to the aid of his people by providing for them." In other words, the economy in Israel had rebounded and things were better there. She decided to return to her home. She likely figured she had some relatives that might take pity on her, plus Israel had some laws that were intended to provide a safety net for the poorest people, for widows like her. Israel did not consistently live by those laws, especially at that time, but at least there was some hope she could find some shelter and scramble to get enough to eat so she wouldn't starve.

Can you imagine that woman's grief? This poor lady suffered the death of a husband and then both of her sons, her only children. That incomprehensible pain was compounded by terrifying financial woes. Verse 20 tells us how she felt about what had happened to her. When she got back to her home town of Bethlehem she told people who knew her, "Don't call me Naomi, call me Mara." Naomi's name means sweet. Mara means bitter. Her life was once sweet, at least in comparison to where she was then. That once sweet life had become so bitter as to be unpalatable. She said, "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." Uh, yeah, bitter seems like a good name for her. Those are the words of a broken, heartsick, hopeless woman.

Naomi had a thoroughly theological worldview. She had no question about whether God exists. She knew he does. She also believed that God is sovereign, that he allowed the terrible misfortune she had experienced. However, her theology was a bit faulty. She had lost sight of the goodness and wisdom of God. She decided that her story was over and the ending was black and hopeless. It didn't occur to her that even in her bleak situation God could actually be at work, that he could in fact redeem even a situation as terrible as hers.

There is an important reminder there. When we decide that God has abandoned us and is not to be trusted, we tend to exaggerate the hopelessness of our situation. As we will see, God was actually at work in Naomi's life, but she couldn't see it yet.

RUTH CHOSE LOYALTY AND SACRIFICE

Enter Ruth, one of Naomi's daughters-in-law. She too knew the heartache of pain, for her husband had died as well. She, too, was in a less than enviable situation. It wasn't as bleak as Naomi's, but it was one no woman would ever willingly choose.

When Naomi announced she was returning to Bethlehem in Israel, Ruth and her sister-in-law Orpah announced they would go with her. When Naomi insisted they turn back Orpah finally relented. But Ruth was not to be denied. She was sticking with her mother in law no matter what.

This was quite remarkable. These women were insisting on emigrating to a foreign land in order to stay with their mother-in-law. Wow, their mother in law! Do you know what the punishment for bigamy is? Two mothers-in-law. One year a woman bought her mother-in-law a cemetery plot for her birthday. The next year the mother-in-law was hurt when the daughter in law didn't get her a present on her birthday. She finally asked, "Why didn't you get me anything?" The daughter in law answered, "Because you haven't ever used the gift I gave you last year."

Obviously those two Moabite women had a very different relationship with their mother-in-law than the stereotypical fodder for humor that is a woman's relationship with her mother-in-law. Laurie is a little sensitive to mother in law jokes because she is one now. But she is not stereotypical. She shared something in common with Naomi. In the events of this story you can see that Naomi really loved the young wives of her now deceased sons. Instead of welcoming their company she insisted that they stay in Moab and not come with her. She did that because it would be to their advantage to stay. It wasn't that she didn't want them with her, it was that she was concerned for them and wanted them to have a better life than they could with her.

Naomi was in Moab 10 years. It is likely that the sons did not get married during the first 2 or 3 years of their sojourn there. It would have taken some time for their family to get established, become acquainted with others well enough to arrange a match, then plan and execute a wedding. My best guess is that it was likely at least 4 years. Remember that in those days women got married young, usually in their early teens. So let's assume Ruth was 14 when she married, and she has been married 6 years or less. That means at most she's 20, maybe even less. She and Orpah would have definitely still been in the marriage market.

Naomi insisted that Ruth and Orpah stay in Moab where they had a good chance to get remarried. Going to Israel meant leaving their existing support system and it would have made finding another husband far more difficult because Israeli men were not generally anxious to find a used, I'm sorry, I mean "pre-owned" Moabite wife. They likely would not have been the ticket most in demand on the marriage market.

Ruth didn't care. She would be loyal to Naomi no matter what. In verses 16-17 she spoke her famous words, "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." In other words, Ruth insisted she was sticking with Naomi for good. She was never coming back to her home and family in Moab. She would die in Israel near her mother-in-law.

Ruth was committed to sticking with Naomi even though it would cost her. Naomi painted a hopeless, black picture of the future for her and for Ruth if she went with her. Ruth didn't dispute what she said. She didn't say, "Come on now, it's not that bad. Yes, it's tough, but it's not hopeless." Instead she took Naomi's hand and said, "Let's go." She was saying it would be tough, but they'd do it together.

This meant that Ruth would never see her home and family again. It meant giving up the religion and the culture she had lived in all her life. It meant going to a place where in addition to the hardship of being a widow she was going to face some pretty stiff prejudice. And there was another element that is easy to miss. Ruth would eventually encounter a wealthy man named Boaz. Ruth was trying to glean in his fields, meaning go pick up the leftovers after a field had been harvested. In 2:8-9 Boaz said to her, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you."

Boaz told Ruth not to go in other fields, but to stay with the women of Boaz's house. He also told her that he had instructed his employees not to touch her. Why do you think he had to do that? Remember that everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes. Ruth was an outsider, a foreigner. Apparently this made her fair game in the minds of some men in that day. Boaz warned her not to go to other fields because she would not have been safe there. Had she gone to other fields there was a strong likelihood that she would be assaulted there. In Ruth 2:22 Naomi encouraged Ruth to stay in the fields of Boaz when she said, "It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him, because in someone else's field you might be harmed." Boaz also had to command his own people not to touch her, because if he had not done so he knew it was certain that she would be sexually assaulted.

This is the problem when everyone just does what seems right to them and there is no divine truth restraining people. Those who are weaker or who are vulnerable

become prey. What was to stop some men from doing whatever they please to Ruth? Any temptation for men to take advantage of an Israeli woman would have been restrained by the threat of retaliation by her family or clan. There was no other restraint because people respected no divine moral truth ruling their lives. Ruth had no clan protecting her, thus she was in a precarious situation. No one was going to take revenge if anyone tried to take advantage of her. This makes even more astounding the choice she made to go with Naomi, given the vulnerable position it put her in. She knew that was a risk she was taking.

There's a strange, inconsistent thing going on in our culture. Our society today wants to say that there is no truth, there is no divine revelation of what is right and wrong. Each person must do what is right in our own eyes, just like Israel did in Ruth's day. No one has the right to tell us what is right or wrong. But notice that right now in our society there is strident and continuous outcry against any hint of sexual harassment or assault against women. Notice the cases of Bill Cosby, Roger Ailes, Bill O'Reilly and a steady stream of high profile athletes. Here's the problem: how can we say sexual harassment or assault is wrong if there is no such thing as right or wrong? Don't you think the person who does the harassing must not consider it to be wrong for him? If it is right in their eyes, who are we to tell them otherwise? Oh, but something like that is wrong because it hurts another person. So? Where is it written that hurting others is wrong? What authoritative moral code did that principle come from?

Our culture is running into a problem predicted long ago by C. S. Lewis in his book, *The Abolition of Man*. In that book he depicted the chest of a person as the seat of a heart governed by divine moral truth. He said it is the chest, the heart ruled by God's truth, that is the only safeguard against us becoming animals. He wrote that what our culture has done is "in a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue... We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst." At some point it is possible that women in our culture will figure out they've made a terrible bargain by buying into the relativism of our culture. In an environment where there is no moral truth there is a vacuum, and that vacuum will be filled by power. People will do whatever they have the power to do. Because men are physically stronger and more powerful than women this does not end well for women. Have you noticed the huge emphasis on "girl power" in our society today? Why does that exist? Because if there is no right or wrong, all that is left is power. And if all that exists is power, women lose, because despite the insistence of our culture, women are just not as physically powerful as men. Uh oh. Because they weren't ruled by God's truth in ancient Israel, they had men without chests who

would take advantage of a vulnerable woman without another thought. Should we be surprised if the same thing is happening in our society?

The "girl power" crusade in our nation is doomed. It can't solve the problem. If our culture wants to believe there is no right or wrong then it should be prepared to accept the horrifying consequences of that position. One of them will be that women will be subjected to all manner of harm because they will be living in a society of men without chests who are stronger than they are. I think it makes much more sense to accept the obvious, and that is that there is a moral code. There is absolute right and wrong and we all know it. God has made it known to us, and we jettison that knowledge at our own peril.

Back to Ruth's story, it is crucial that we see what it could potentially have cost Ruth to stay with Naomi. There was much more than convenience and comfort at stake. Her very safety was on the line. She put it at risk in order to care for Naomi.

GOD GAVE A HAPPY ENDING

What a terrible story it would have been had Ruth and Naomi gone to Israel and starved to death there or even managed to scrape out a meager existence until they both died as worn out, grieving widows. But that didn't happen. In fact, this story has a Hollywood ending.

Ruth just happened to go to the fields of a wealthy man named Boaz to pick up scraps after the harvesters had done their work. That day Boaz came back to his fields after being away. He immediately noticed Ruth. This is a classic Hollywood scene. As soon as he saw her Boaz asked one of his managers, "Who does that young woman belong to?" (2:5). I'll translate that for you. That means, "Wow, who is that chick? And is she married?"

You know how in good romantic comedies you know that in the end the romantic leading man and woman will be together. The test of a good rom-com is how much chemistry there is between the two leads. You've got to sense right off the bat no matter what conflict or obstacles there may be that these two just have to get together. There will be conflicts and obstacles to overcome, but they will somehow get through it. You know from the moment that Buttercup encounters Wesley in *The Princess Bride*, that she may call him farm boy, she may treat him poorly, she may fall into the clutches of the evil prince, he may be captured by the Dread Pirate Roberts, but somehow they're going to get together. And you know as soon as Boaz says, "who does that young woman belong to?" that he and Ruth are destined for each other.

Sure enough, though there are obstacles that must be overcome, in the end Boaz and Ruth are together. Ruth 4:13 says, "So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son." Naomi had some dark days, but the sun shined again in her life. Verse 14 says, "The women said to Naomi, 'Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel.'"

Verse 17 ends with these words about Ruth's son, "and they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David." Not only were Ruth and Naomi saved from a life of destitution and loneliness, but Ruth turned out to be the great grandmother of David, Israel's greatest king.

IMPLICATIONS

I love happy endings. But if this was simply a cool love story with a happy ending it wouldn't have all that much to say to us. But it is more than that. This story speaks to our lives today. What does it say to us?

WE SHOULD BE AS LOYAL AS RUTH

Had Ruth done what Naomi urged her to do this story would have ended as just one more sad story buried among the millions of sad stories found in human history. Ruth might possibly have found another husband in Moab and never be known to history. Naomi would have likely struggled mightily to survive through her lonely and sad remaining years until she finally died as a lonely, bitter, impoverished old woman.

What makes this a beautiful story is the loyalty and faithfulness of Ruth. Her determination to seek the good of her mother-in-law is both touching and inspiring. But it is also the factor that changed everything. Because of her loyalty Ruth and Naomi both ended up with great joy and with a great story to tell. They also had a huge impact on the human race, as you will see.

Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." A real friend is loyal. All of us long for that. The movies recognize this. Frodo had Sam in *The Lord of the Rings*, Sherlock Holmes has Watson, Butch Cassidy had the Sundance Kid, Batman has Robin, in movies like *21 Jump Street* and *Lethal Weapon* there are always two together, even the Lone Ranger wasn't alone because he had Tonto.

If we are going to be game changers it's going to require not that we have friends who are loyal to us, but that we be friends who are loyal to others. Proverbs 20:6 says, "Many claim to have unfailing love, but a faithful person who can find?" In other words, truly loyal people are rare because human nature is to have as priority number one taking care of myself.

We are called to be imitators of our God. Listen to what Deuteronomy 7:9 says he is like. "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments." God is faithful and loyal. Were that not true there would be no hope for us, but it is true. And it is to be true of us as well. Romans 8:38-39 tell us nothing in all that exists can ever separate us from God.

All around us are people longing for someone to be in their corner. They have a sense that maybe they are not worthy, that people don't really love them or seek them out, that if they knew the truth about them they would reject them. What they are desperate for is to find someone in whom the love of God is alive, so alive that it has transformed that person to be like God. They are so transformed that they say "nothing can separate you from God's love or mine" then they live it out. That is one of the most powerful things we can do on this earth.

The movie *Passengers* depicts a futuristic story of the space ship Avalon, which carries 5000 colonists from earth to a new planet that would be their new home. The journey takes 120 years, so the passengers and crew were placed in hibernation pods that would enable them to be in suspended animation so they would not age until the last 4 months of the trip. The ship is totally automated and runs by itself. But a collision with a dense belt of asteroids causes damage to the ship with the result that one of the pods malfunctions and opens prematurely. Passenger Jim Parsons wakes up only 30 years into the journey, but he is the only one who wakes up. He finds himself stranded on a robotic ship, all alone, staring at living out the rest of his life in that state. He tries everything to remedy the problem, to no avail. After more than a year alone he can no longer stand it. He succumbs to the temptation to manually open the pod of a woman named Aurora, causing her to awaken. She is unaware that he has wakened her. She thinks both of them were accidentally awakened. She, too, tries to find a remedy to their situation, also with no result. The two of them develop a love relationship until she learns that her being awake was no accident. She discovers that Jim caused her to awaken, putting her into the same terrible situation as him. She is furious and despises him for what he has done to her. To make a long story short, the initial damage to the ship that triggered the malfunction of Jim's pod over the course of a

couple of years caused increasing degradation in the ship's systems until it is on the verge of blowing up. Jim and Aurora work together to save the ship and its 5000 souls. Some time after that crisis Jim figures out a way for one of them to go into the special medical pod in the sick bay and go back into suspended animation for the rest of the trip. He tells Aurora that she can get her life and her dream back. Instead she elects to stay awake and live out the rest of her life with Jim, the two of them alone on that ship. It would have been to her advantage to accept Jim's offer, but she chose loyalty and love to him over her personal advantage. The message is that love and loyalty are really what life is all about.

This movie has a message that is the exact opposite of *La La Land*, which said relationships are expendable and what matters most is my dream and my glory. The message of *Passengers* is the opposite. It is the truth, and that it is loving people by being faithful to them is one of the most important things we can ever do. It is the dream!

To whom are you loyal? Who in this world knows they can count on you to be there for them no matter what happens, no matter how flawed you may be, no matter how tough things get?

WE SHOULD HAVE THE FAITH OF RUTH

Loyalty often does not make sense without God being the focal point of the picture. Our natural human bent is to pursue self-interest. Had Ruth done that she would have jettisoned Naomi. What Naomi said was right. It would have been much more advantageous for Ruth to stay in her homeland than to accompany her mother-in-law to a place where she would be the subject of suspicion, prejudice, and likely abuse, a place where there was seemingly little to no chance of someone rescuing her from her plight.

Ruth's choice only made sense when we factor in her faith in Israel's God, the true God. She went thinking that her loyalty was going to be costly for her. But she would know God, and she knew that the choice was right in his eyes. In Ruth 2:12 Boaz said to Ruth, "May you be richly rewarded for the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge." Ruth felt loyalty to Naomi made sense because she took refuge under God's wings. She believed that God would take care of her and Naomi. She trusted that what God supplied would be enough.

Because of that the choice made sense. Remove God from the picture and it didn't. Ruth was putting herself in a situation where she would deal with prejudice and

ostracism, and where there was a very real chance of physical harm being done to her. She didn't choose loyalty because it was for her good. Loyalty meant sacrificing herself. It always does.

Without God being at the center of our motives for everything we do, self sacrifice makes no sense. What is reasonable is to take care of yourself. Only when there is something greater than you that you serve do loyalty and sacrifice make sense. You should watch Toby and Anna's dogs, Doc and Banjo, some time. Please. Banjo is the bigger of the two and generally can force his will on Doc if he so chooses. Doc tries to assert his dominance, but Banjo kind of ignores him. We bought dog chew bones for both of them. But Banjo wouldn't just take one and chew it. He took whichever one Doc had away from him. He does that all the time. If Doc has it, he wants it, and he takes it. He does that because he operates out of instinct, and instinct tells him to take whatever he wants. Nothing else makes sense. He doesn't have an awareness of God telling him to love Doc and give to him rather than take from him. And if we don't have that sense of God ruling in our lives, we are going to do the same thing.

For us as well the key is knowing that with God in the picture loyalty and faithfulness make all the sense in the world. For in living out our loyalty we are obeying him and we are being like him. That is what we on this earth to do.

Envision yourself standing before the cross of Jesus Christ. There you will discover all you need to be loyal to others. Jesus was on that cross because of his loyalty first to his Father, then to us. It was not to his advantage to be there. When others let you down, when they are faithless or flawed so much they disappoint you, look at Jesus on the cross. He's there for you, despite how you have failed and disappointed him. As we look at Jesus we will gain the perspective and strength to be loyal to people who may be undeserving of it.

WE SHOULD REMEMBER THAT GOD WILL MAKE OUR LIVES MATTER
Because of her loyalty Ruth became an ancestor of David, Israel's greatest king. That's astounding. From an unknown foreign widow she became the great grandmother of one of history's greatest figures. But it didn't stop there. Matthew 1:5 is a part of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. It lists "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."

Ruth was not just an ancestor of David, she was an ancestor of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. God used her to ultimately produce the man who was the Savior of the

world, the one whose life is the dividing point of all of history. If Ruth had stayed in Moab, no matter what she did, it would never have amounted to anything that could even have compared with the shadow of what her life meant for the entire human race.

The movie *Passengers* has a title that is significant. At one point in Aurora's writing she talks about how it almost seems as though we are passenger in our own lives, being moved along to some unforeseen destination. That is a very theological point. God is at work in our lives. Jim and Aurora had something that seemed horrible happen to them, something that totally changed their lives forever and took away their plans and dreams. And yet it put them in position to save 5000 lives, and to find what they were looking for, love for each other.

Proverbs 16:9 says, "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps." Ruth never knew how monumentally significant her life would be. She likely never had even an inkling that 3000 years after she lived she would be world famous and people would be reading about her life. We have no idea what God is doing through our lives. But he is directing our steps. As we walk with him he is making something of our lives that will matter forever.

Don't you have a sense that you were meant for something great? Doesn't it seem to you that you were intended for something important, significant in this world? You were! 2 Corinthians 4:17 says that as we trust in God and follow him we are achieving an eternal glory that far outweighs all the troubles of this world. We are doing something eternal huge. We may not see the full glory of it in our lifetime, but we will see it in his kingdom for sure. Don't you want a destiny? Don't you want your life to count, not just a little, but a lot? God says as you follow him he will make your life count more than you can possibly imagine.

Esther found that through all that happened to her God was putting her in just the right position "for such a time as this." And Ruth experienced terrible pain and loss, great hardship, to get to the place where she played a role in human history so great she could never have imagined it. We are also passengers, for God is directing our steps as well.