

**THE
BON AIR
PULPIT**

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Scripture Reading: Ruth 1:1-5,9

Message: *Can You Really Trust God?*

There are two books in the Bible that are named for women. One of them is Esther, who was a queen. She was the person who was used of God to save the Jewish people. The Jewish people still recognize her and have one of their high holy days because of what she did. The second one is called Ruth. The book is about her, and it is the only book in the Bible that really is a total book about just the person. Here is a lady who came from a different country, came to Israel, and made such an impact upon the country that there is a whole book in the Bible about her. So I want to read for you some of the first parts of the book today. What you are going to see as we read the story that really there is a contrast. There is a contrast between a man by the name of Elimelech and a woman by the name of Ruth. Let me begin reading at verse 1. It tells you when the book was written.

In the days when the judges ruled (that would be right after they entered into the Promised Land), there was a famine in the land, and man from Bethlehem in Judah, 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 was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. They went to Moab and lived there.

Now, Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one name Orpah and the other Ruth. 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.

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.

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."

And then the passage of scripture that is so often read at weddings. It is amazing that this is not a commitment that a woman is making to her husband but a commitment that she so loved her mother-in-law that she made the commitment to her. Listen to 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."

In the first of the Bible the whole emphasis is upon getting the children of Israel to their Promised Land. You will recall the promise was made to Abraham. It was kept alive by Joseph. It was fulfilled through Moses. You recall that God did all kinds of miracles to get those people to that land. You remember He opened the Red Sea. He fed a million and half people for forty years with manna from Heaven. He kicked down the walls of Jericho so they could walk in. God's plan was that those people would live in that land. There seems to be a pattern that God works in our life. It seems that many times after we have received his greatest blessings that at times we will then face great difficulty. It seems that maybe God is saying now you have said you believed or here is this blessing, how sincere are you and how committed are you to me? So it was not long until they were in the land that a great famine came in the land of milk and honey. All of a sudden they didn't have enough bread to eat.

A man by the name of Elimelech said I can't stay here and starve to death. So he determined that what he would do is that he would leave Israel, and he would go to the land of the Moabites. Here the people were idolatries. They were people who practiced child sacrifices to their gods. They were the arch enemies of his people. Yet he said in this kind of circumstance, there has to be an exception to the rule. So I am going to leave, and I am going to go down to the place where the Moabites live. Now the Bible says that he didn't plan to stay long, but something happened. That was he died. It wasn't long until his two sons died. Naomi was left with no man to take care of her. She determined that she would go back to the land of Israel. The question was what to do with the two daughters-in-law. She did everything she could to try to determine that they would stay there. It must understand that there is no insurance; there is no governmental program; there is no family. You

need to stay here. Find another man. Let family take care of you.

Out of this tragic story emerges as someone has said almost a lily in the swamp. The young girl who had such a faith that she said to her mother-in-law, no, I am going to go back. I will trust God to meet my needs. I will go even if I have to die.

What you have is too contrasts: one man who said if God won't seemingly provide and meet my needs I will take care of myself; one a young girl by the name of Ruth who said I will trust God to provide for my needs. What I want to ask you this morning is this. Have you come to the place in your life where you are totally trusting in God to meet the needs of your life? Are you the Elimelech to feel that you have to manipulate life because obviously God isn't going to take care of you, or do you come with that kinds of obedience and faith like a Ruth who says I will trust in You regardless of the consequences. I believe I can trust in you.

One of the most beautiful women I have ever met is an English doctor who served as a missionary in the Congo. Her name was Dr. Helen Rosenmere. She has written two beautiful books. One is entitled Give Me a Mountain. The other is entitled Give Me A Valley. She was a missionary doctor in the land of the Congo when it was undergoing its war of independence. They were turbulent times. Many times she was left without medical needs to take care of the people who came to her. One day a lady came in and she gave birth to a premature child. Dr. Rosenmere said she didn't have the resources to provide. She said the only thing she knew to do was to get a hot water bottle and put it next to the little baby. She said, "I want into my client. I was filling the little rubber

container with water. All of a sudden it burst. I didn't know what to do for the little child, but outside we had a little school for preschoolers. It was my time to go speak to them. So I left the little baby and went to speak to the four and five year olds. I usually don't tell the children about the needs, but I just felt led that day to tell them that there was a little child who needed some help. A little five year old raised her hand who said let's just pray then that God will send the water bottle." She said she had been teaching the children to trust in God, and that God would meet their needs. But have you ever prayed for a water bottle in the Congo? Then she said another little five year old raised her hand, and said, "I have another prayer. Let's pray that God will give her a dolly." She said she had not seen a dolly in fifteen years. But she said, let's pray. The five year olds prayed. She went back and made what help she could for the little premature child. An aide came in and said for the first time, Dr. Rosenmere, in seven months there is a package from England. Dr. Rosenmere said I had a strange feeling that God was going to answer our prayers. She said I took a leap of faith, and I took the box, and went out to the five year olds. She said, "We've got this box from England, and I went you to help me open it." The little five year old said, "And there is a water bottle in there." Dr. Rosenmere said maybe I have pushed this too far. So all the little kids began to help open the box. They opened it and on the top there was a dolly. Then they said there is a water bottle. They began to open more until sure enough at the bottom of the box somebody sent a water bottle to the Congo that is on the Equator.

Dr. Rosenmere was arrested and spent five years of the most horrible type of imprisonment for five months. She turned to us and said I learned from a dolly and a water bottle that God

would meet my needs. What sustained me in those months of imprisonment was that seven months before that little baby ever needed a water bottle, somebody thought that somebody might need it, and put it in a box and sent it to me. She said from that experience I have learned to trust in God.

Now I want to ask you. I don't know whether God has worked in your life with a water bottle or a dolly. I don't know what God has done, but has He worked enough in your life to where you understand that He will meet the basic needs of your life, that like a Ruth you can come to trust in Him. Now Elimelech didn't believe that. He lived in a land of milk and honey, but when he didn't have bread he was ready to leave. All of God's energy had been spent in getting the people to the land, and when difficulty came he was ready to leave the land. His parents obviously were believers. The term Elimelech means my God is king, a name given in faith. Yet Elimelech said I am going to turn and take matters in my own hand. He lived in Bethlehem, called the house of bread. When he got ready to leave, the only way you can leave Bethlehem and get to Moab is you must come along the Dead Sea and come to the very spot where the children of Israel went into the Promised Land. You recall on that spot God had said take 12 stones out of the bottom of the river and put them here. When your children come by, you will tell them this is where God led us in. Elimelech ready to throw it all away, take matters into his own hand, he's leaving the country. Someone has said that Elimelech suffered from generation amnesia. Someone said that what the fathers and grandfathers died for and the fathers believed, the children don't even know existed. One of the great tragedies through the years is that that which people have fought and died for and given to us, many times there are people who come along who don't even know what a heritage they have. It is true in our own country to hear many times people do not even know that not far from where they are

sitting in school there are graves of men and women who have died that they will have the freedom to sit in that place, or to sit even in a church like this and know that the history of Baptist has been freedom and the opportunity to study scripture, and to know that people have literally died for that opportunity. Many times we sit in a place like this, and never are aware of what has happened. Elimelech had this tremendous history behind him, but he is willing to chuck it all. He doesn't live in community; he lives for himself. He doesn't care what others have done for him. All he can think about is what do I have to do for myself. Elimelech is ready to leave and ready to go. The question then is all of needs to ask is when the testing times come, can you really trust in God.

One of the times I lived in North Carolina, I lived in a relatively small place. It had three supermarkets in the town. One of the young men who owned one of the supermarkets had moved there a few years ago. He was a young adult who had three small children. He and his brothers owned a string of Piggly Wiggly stores in North Carolina. He was the youngest son. They opened a new store. He was the one who was supposed to go and make it work. Harold was a fixture in our church. He and his young children would come on a regular basis. One day he called me up, and said I want to ask you a question. Do you have some time this afternoon you could come by and see me at the store? He took me back in his little office, and said you know, I have a big choice to make. You are my pastor, and I want to ask you to pray with them about something. He opened up his books. He said I want to show you what I owe. I want to show you what my payroll is. Then he turned to me and he said you know that I am the only store in town that doesn't open on Sunday. I said, "Yes, Harold, I know that." I am the only store that doesn't sell beer and other alcoholic beverages. I said, "Yes, I know that." Let me tell you something. I went to my friend who owns the

supermarket down the street, and I asked him how much did you make in the last six months on beer and alcohol. He pulled that figure and he showed it to me. He said if I would stay open on Sunday, if I would sell beer and alcohol, I would have enough money to pay my payroll and get out of debt. Then he turned to me and said I want to ask you a question if you were a young adult and you had three kids with all of the expense I am getting ready to have, and you could stay open on Sunday and you could sell beer, what would you do? I stumbled around for a while. I said, "Well, I guess, Harold, the bigger question is what are you going to do?" I remember a 35 year old man with three small kids think for a few moments, and then take both of his fists and hit them down. Then he said I know what I am going to do. I am going to do what is right. I won't do it. Several years ago I was back down in North Carolina. I just happened to run into Harold. All three kids have graduated from the University of North Carolina. Harold has done well enough to take early retirement. I spoke to them, and said you know, I remember one day sitting in your office when you were making a big decision. He turned to me and said after all of these years I did what was right.

You see, all of us have moments like that. All of us have times in our life where we have to determine whether we are going to depend and trust in God or whether we have to manipulate and work things in our way. I works in all the areas of your life. Young people in this room today are hoping one day you will get married. The question is do you believe God will provide you the right person to marry or do you have to sacrifice your convictions to be able to get somebody to love you. All of these teenagers want friends. Well, do I have to sacrifice who I am? Do I have to give up who

I am that I can have friends? Is God going to honor me, and is God going to provide me the kind of friends that I want? You see, in every area of my life I have to ask is God going to provide if I am faithful to Him, or do I have to work in my life to work it out to where I can determine what needs to be done? Everyone of you is going to have to determine this morning whether you are going to be an Elimelech or whether you are going to be a Ruth.

Let me tell you from these two stories the lessons you and I need to learn. Lesson #1. It is never right to do wrong. Never right to do wrong. Elimelech never planned to do wrong very long. The scripture says he was going to live for a while. I am so glad that when I mess up that through the years God has given me a second chance, but the problem sometimes is when you do what is wrong, you don't get a second chance. Elimelech did what was wrong, and the door was closed. He never made it back. Here was a man who was trying to do what he thought was right, but he went about it the wrong way. In the process now I am talking about a man by the name of Elimelech. Sometimes in our life we just feel like we can just twist the circumstance, and we can do wrong, and that sometimes it is right to do wrong. This country has spent my lifetime fighting the Godless philosophy that says the end determines the means. You want a basic definition of what communism is, that's it. If you have the right end, it doesn't make any difference how you get there. God says no. He sanctifies the means as well as the end. It is never right to do wrong.

The second truth you and I need to learn is that many times our temptation is not to do the wrong thing but to do the right thing in the wrong way. Go ask Elimelech. Is it right to take care of your family? You bet. But is it

right to leave the land that God has given you? Is it right to go to this people who are diametrically opposed to what you believe? Is it right to go about it in the wrong way? No! Many times what Satan will tempt you with is now doing the wrong way. He knows that you are smarter than that. But he will get you on is trying to do the right thing in the wrong way. You must always understand that God asks us to stand against that sort of action.

The third thing that we need to learn is that the people who have made a difference in life are the people who have done what is right regardless of the circumstance. Elimelech thought the circumstance changed the rules. If your family is starving, you got to do what you got to do. How many times in life have people have turned to me and said you have got to do what you have got to do. Yet if you read through the Bible, the people who have made the difference are the people who have looked at the storms of life, and said you will not blow me away. They are the people who have said that somehow circumstances do not make it right. They are the people who have faced adversity and faced the challenges and the temptations of life, and they have said this is the direction I am going to go. I want to tell you if you want to start making big life decisions on the circumstances of life, you are going to have a ride like the Kings Dominion has never seen. The devil is going to get you up and down so many times and twist you around, you will never be able to live like you ought to live. Just say I am going to live my life according to the circumstances. What you are going to find is there will always be a circumstance that will give you the opportunity to justify what you think is right. If you have to sit down and keep on rationalizing why you are doing what you are doing, then you are pretty well sure you are butchering your conscience. God says I want to honor a person who wants to do what is right. Ruth comes and she says I am going to live for God even when I don't have any visible means of support. I

mentioned Esther. Esther was a queen. You would think a queen might make the viable. But Ruth-- Ruth was a peasant girl. She had nothing. Yet the Bible says this is what I honor. Let me tell you how much God honored her. When you turn to the New Testament, and you turn to the Book of Matthew and it talks about so and so begat so and so, and so and so begat so and so, right in the middle of this is Ruth, only one of two non-Jews in the group, only women in the group. Why is she there? Because one day in her life when she could have gone back and said I will let my family take care of me, she made a turn toward God and said I am going to let God take care of me. God said I will honor her as long as mankind lives.

You and I are then going to have to determine what kinds of people we are going to be. Are you going to take a stand for that which is right and Godly, or are you going to butcher your conscience and be blown by circumstance and do what you think is right. So I want to close by asking you the question again. Have you come to the place in your life where in all of your life you are going to say Lord, I am going to trust you. I am going to do what is right, and I am going to depend upon you to meet my needs. In the Bible there are many different names for God. One of the names is Jehovah Girard. It says my God will provide. I want to ask you if you can believe in that kind of God, the kind of God who honors right and will meet your needs if you give your life to Him