

How far does love go?

Ruth 1:14-18 HCSB Again they wept loudly, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. (15) Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her god. Follow your sister-in-law." (16) But Ruth replied: Do not persuade me to leave you or go back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. (17) Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD do this to me, and even more, if anything but death separates you and me. (18) When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped trying to persuade her.

How I'm going to love _____ into the kingdom.

Introduction:

This morning, we want to talk about one of the greatest love stories ever: the story of Ruth. I want us to consider the concept of love this morning and what it means for each of us here today. Seventeen years ago this coming May, I made some promises that totally changed my future forever. I made commitment to my wife, and promised to love her for the rest of our lives. But giving promises is a lot easier than keeping them. I have to remind myself every day to show love to Lynn. Not because she is hard to love: but so often I realize that I am selfish. Those of you here who have been married for many years could stand up today and share that even when you love, you don't always feel in love. Love shows itself in various ways. Sometimes I show love to Lynn by gentle kisses and holding her hand.

A couple that had been married for 50 years sat reflecting one day. The wife said "things have really changed. You used to sit so close to me." Well, I can remedy that" said the man, moving next to her on the couch. "And you used to hold her tight." "How's that" he asked as he gave her a hug "Do you remember you used to nuzzle my neck and nibble on my ear lobes" she asked. At that he jumped up and left the room. "Where are you going" she asked. "I'll be right back, he called, I've got to get my teeth!

How do you show love in your life? Let's learn from Ruth about ways to express love. We will learn by looking at the different characters in the book and how they expressed love.

I. Love shows itself in acceptance of others

I think one of the most prominent characters of the book of Ruth only has his name twice in chapter 4. That man is Salmon, the father of Boaz. Matt. 1:5 tells us that Boaz had a special mother: her name was Rahab. Think about Rahab the harlot: one who was an outcast of society, yet she was allowed to become part of the nation of Israel. Who would have wanted her? Salmon, the father of Boaz. He found in her a woman he could love.

The love Boaz learned in his home growing up would surely have taught him to be accepting of others. So later in life, as he meets Ruth, a Moabitess, he is not afraid to reach out to her in love.

How well do we do in accepting others? Are there those we shy away from because they are different than us? What about those with different color skin? Those who dress different? of different social status? of different religions?

II. Love shows itself in the worst of times

Many times we find the greatest love stories occur in the worst possible conditions. In Ruth 1 we find that this love story is set "In the days when the judges ruled". This was a time when Israel was constant fighting - both driving out enemy nations within the land as well as fighting and in bondage to enemy nations from outside the promised land. In the midst of this time, love still shines.

- Elimelech loved his family and provides for them
- Mahlon and Chilion loved Orpah and Ruth and marry them
- Naomi loved her daughter in laws
- Boaz loved Ruth

There is never a bad time to love. You can't say, "Today just isn't a good day. I'm not very loving today." Love endures no matter the circumstances. Do we love at all times?

- [Proverbs 17:17 HCSB](#) A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a difficult time.

III. Love shows itself in reaching beyond our comfort zones

Naomi was able to love two daughters-in-law who were Moabites, a nation that the Israelites were commanded not to marry.

- [Numbers 25:1-3 HCSB](#) While Israel was staying in Acacia Grove, the people began to have sexual relations with the women of Moab. (2) The women invited them to the sacrifices for their gods, and the people ate and bowed in worship to their gods. (3) So Israel aligned itself with Baal of Peor, and the LORD's anger burned against Israel.
- [Numbers 25:16-18 HCSB](#) The LORD told Moses: (17) "Attack the Midianites and strike them dead. (18) For they attacked you with the treachery that they used against you in the Peor incident. They did the same in the case involving their sister Cozbi, daughter of the Midianite leader who was killed the day the plague came at Peor."

I'm sure that Naomi and Elimelech were not happy with the choice their sons made. But they extended love to them for the sake of their sons.

If you want to get nervous, just think about all the possible people your son or daughter might marry! Yet, even when we think the choice is unwise, after the wedding do we do everything possible to make the marriage last? Let's be people who show love by trying to bring the best out of bad relationships.

IV. Love shows itself in offering encouragement

Naomi was a whiner! She complained a lot. We see her in 1:20 saying "Call me Mara, because 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."

She loved to complain. She tried to send her daughters in law away. She tried to blame God. But God offers her encouragement. God guides Ruth to the field of Boaz, a kinsman-redeemer. God provides food for their bodies, hope for their spirits, and fulfillment of their lives.

Who have you offered encouragement to recently? If you love people, don't let them whine and complain. Stop them when they speak negatively. Remind them of the graciousness and love of God. Help others have a positive attitude.

V. Love seeks true beauty: beauty of character

We see as Ruth comes to Boaz, Boaz is attracted to her. Not because she was physically a Knock-out. But because she was a woman of integrity. We have a society of air-brushed beauties. Yet true beauty is found internally. Boaz saw the sincere heart of Ruth and loved her.

Do we seek to love just those who look lovely? Do we just love those who are like us? Are we able to admire the godly character of those who aren't "socially in the IN crowd"?

VI. Love shows itself in bringing about the greatest good

God worked through the love of Ruth and Boaz to redeem a nation. They were blessed with a son, Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of King David. Ultimately the Messiah came from their line.

- Ruth became a believer - turning from idols to the true God.
- Boaz - the son of Rahab - a wealthy man - finds love in a woman of true character
- Naomi - once blaming God - now blest by God and raising a grandson in the ways of Israel

- Obed - raised to be the grandfather of the King of Israel.
It's funny sometimes to see how God works. In the life of the nation and in the lives of individuals.

Conclusion:

Who is it that God has brought into your life to show love to? Not even in a sexual or physical way. Who is it that needs to see you be a godly example of character and integrity. Our nation certainly doesn't see it in the White House. Where else but in the church will our nation find character? Who is it that you love enough to tell about the Lord? Because of the love of Naomi, Ruth was willing to leave her idols and worship God. Is there someone you can "love into the kingdom"?