

Sermon at a Glance
Ruth: A Woman of Distinction
December 17, 2017

Acres of Diamonds: The story has been told and retold for generations of the man who owned a plot of ground in Africa. Yet, his whole life he heard stories of those who became wealthy by the discovery of diamonds. Finally, he sold his land and set out to become rich by finding those diamonds. One day the man who bought the property was crossing a stream on the land and saw a sparkle in the water. He picked the rock up, took it home and put it on his mantle. Some time later a visitor stopped by and when he saw the rock immediately exclaimed it was the biggest diamond he had ever seen. That piece of land ultimately became one of the largest producers of diamonds in the entire continent of Africa. The man who sold the land died penniless and destitute never realizing the fortune he sought lay beneath his feet all the while.

If you can imagine, the Word of God is that field of diamonds just waiting to be discovered. Gems to be mined and wealth untold to be acquired in wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Now, imagine that gems of unbelievable value are found in the genealogies found in Matthew 1, and Luke 3.

Luke's genealogy is a legal description, more so than Matthew's. Luke begins with Jesus and goes back to Adam being the son of GOD. If one had to prove his family is not only a Jew of Israel, a Hebrew, and his tribe, this genealogy would be the one. Remember Paul's argument in Phil. 3:5? It is the legal claim of Jesus.

Matthew's genealogy is one that reaches back to the promise, the covenant of GOD with Abraham and proves the one who was promised through him. Matthew is a Jew and thus presents the eternal plan of GOD beginning, with Abraham, an idolater, serving other gods, while living beyond the Euphrates (Joshua 24:2).

In the most unlikely and improbable ways GOD shows his providence and promise through these chosen few.

This list is made even more amazing by the women who are given:

- **Tamar:** Her two husbands died and in desperation becomes pregnant by her father-in-law Judah in order to keep the seed line alive. (1:3)
- **Rahab:** A harlot who by faith hid the spies sent to Jericho and becomes part of the lineage by marrying Salmon. (1:5)
- **Bathsheba:** Her husband was murdered by King David after an adulterous affair and later bore Solomon. (1:6)
- **Mary:** A young virgin chosen by GOD to bear the CHRIST-Child. (1:16)

In the midst of these is the story of Ruth the Moabite. The Moabite race came as a result of the incestuous child born between Lot and his oldest daughter after the destruction of Sodom. The virtue of Ruth was such that a book is named after her in the Old Testament.

The first 5 verses of Ruth tell of the unbelievable hardships that Naomi and the family bore, from the famine in Judea which forced them to go to Moab, to the death of her husband and then her two sons. The Moabite women who married her sons, Orpah and Ruth are urged by Naomi to go on with their lives while she returns to Judea, seeing that she has no other sons to give them. Orpah returns to her people, however In a speech that has been repeated countless times in the centuries to follow, Ruth tells of her devotion to Naomi, to follow her, even to death.

Now, rather than recount the Book of Ruth in its entirety, I would urge you to read it on your own. I would at this point like to focus on recognizing the providence of GOD in the entire account. This is where the lesson comes home to the reader. Who can recognize this providence in day to day living? Time alone reveals such things. Even then we are not assured of knowing the outcome of such catastrophes, calamities, and casualties. In afflictions, adversities, and anguish it is difficult, if not impossible to see a ray of hope. We must be assured that there is hope beyond the moment. This is what we find in the genealogy of Matthew's account. Against all odds. Against all hope. Against every reason, GOD was protecting his chosen seed. Revelation 12:1ff tells us the providence of GOD in this genealogy, but it also is the assurance that GOD watches over His own, even today.

Revelation 12:1-6 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. 5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

And further, keep in mind what Paul wrote to us in Romans 8.

Romans 8:28-29 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Did Naomi realize that her great-grandson would be king of Israel? Did she realize that she was indeed part of that genealogy of the Messiah? Most certainly not. Neither can you and I understand our part in the Kingdom as it pertains to the future, no matter how short or long this world may continue. Yet, we are assured that before the foundations of the world were laid, our providence, protection, and promise were appointed for as many who will lay hold of this promise by faith and obedience. From the manger to the cross, we were never out of sight of the Savior. We shall never be out of sight of the watchful eye of a loving GOD.