RCC Women's Ministry Newsletter

Connections

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Still Being Written: Not a Fairy Tale, but a Faithful One

by Carol Feil

It's the plot of every Hallmark movie and all the bedtime stories we've read. They all end with "...and they lived happily ever after."

But real life is more complicated than that. Hard things happen. Love is very real, but so is loss.

Some of you know that loss firsthand. Others walk alongside someone who does.

The book of Ruth is no fairy tale, but it is a faithful tale that's still being written, because God's faithfulness to us doesn't end.

His Promise, Provision, and Purpose

God's faithfulness shows up in every season. His **promises** range from never leaving or forsaking us to an eternity with Him: no more sorrow, no more tears. His **provision** shows up in the pages of Ruth. His greatest **purpose** is for everyone to be reconciled to Him, so we can say, "See what God can do!"

As you read, ask yourself, *How is God showing glimpses of Himself in Ruth's story?* Just as He worked in the details of her life, He is working in yours right now. You may not always see it or feel it, but don't despair, friends. God is in the business of redeeming lost and broken things; He cares about what burdens us.

Three Characters, One Faithful God

Every story has its cast of characters. The book is called Ruth, but she is not the only one we learn from.

Naomi. In five verses, Naomi experienced more loss than most people face in a lifetime. Famine, moving and her husband dying in a foreign land. Her sons married Moabite women, then both sons died. When she heard the famine in Bethlehem was over, she just wanted to go home. Simple sentences, filled with grief and tough decisions. Yet Naomi loved God so well that Ruth vowed never to leave her or her God. Naomi stood strong in her faith, persevered through loss and bitterness, and shows us God is unwavering and faithful.

Ruth. After all their loss, Ruth went to Bethlehem with Naomi, leaving all she knew, and worshipped the God of Israel. Staying with Naomi, echoing God's promise to never leave us. Ruth, in her own grief, provided for them both, pointing us to the God who sustains all things.

Boaz. A wealthy landowner, kind to his workers, respected in his community, and God honoring. His humble provision for those in need echoes the humility that brought Christ from heaven. He was also a "*go'el*," a kinsman-redeemer. Boaz's willingness to redeem Naomi and Ruth points to Jesus, who redeemed not just our circumstances but our hearts.

"It Just So Happens"

Naomi had lost all her men, who were her physical security and provision in that culture. It was a critical loss for the promised future. By God's grace, she gained Ruth, who promised to stay by her side. Ruth couldn't provide the way a man could, but provide she did.

Here we catch a glimpse of God working behind the scenes. If you've studied Ruth, you'll recognize the phrases "she happened" and "it just so happens" (Ruth 2:3). Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem with nothing, and it just so happens they arrive at the start of the barley harvest. That's not a side note. It's great news, because at harvest Ruth can glean, walking behind the reapers to pick up scraps of grain. And she isn't only able to. She is allowed to. Long before Naomi and Ruth had any need, God wrote this provision into the Law: the poor could gather what the harvesters left behind (Leviticus 19:9-10). Ruth wasn't taking what wasn't hers. She was gathering what God had already set aside for her. God, providentially providing.

How has God provided for you long before you needed it?

These "it just so happens" moments are part of the upper story, the bigger plan our promise-keeping God is weaving above our circumstances. Look for them in your own life. They're easy to overlook in hardship, and easy to write off as coincidence. But God...

He Has Always Provided

God has provided for us all, eternally. He made a way to restore the relationship broken by sin back in the garden. God "shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Jesus is the better Redeemer.

He isn't a God who set things in motion and stepped back. He engages in the details of our lives, even in loss and pain. We can't always understand, but we can trust, because we have His word about how He provided for others. He gave Abraham a ram, and Abraham named the place "The Lord will provide" (Genesis 22:14). He gave Israel a leader, manna, and water from a rock through forty years of wandering.

None of Ruth's cast saw the whole picture. Naomi couldn't see how good could come from Moab and she asked to be called Mara, "bitter," because she felt God had dealt bitterly with her. Would we think any differently in the middle of such pain? Ruth couldn't imagine anything beyond gleaning for their next meal. Boaz couldn't have known the destitute woman in his field would become his wife and join him in the lineage of Christ. And yet, God.

Grafted In

God's ultimate purpose is to bring the good news of redemption to everyone. What good news had Ruth heard from Nao-

mi? That the Messiah would come through the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When you claim faith in Christ and His saving work on the cross for you, you are adopted and grafted into the family of God. No matter the circumstances you walk through, you are His. No matter how far from home you've traveled, you are His. No matter how hard the smallest task feels, you are His.

Ruth lived an adopted and grafted life. She didn't know she would be in the lineage of the true Redeemer. She only knew she loved the God of her mother-in-law. Naomi's wisdom took them back to Israel. Ruth's faithfulness fed them in Bethlehem. Boaz's kindness to two poor widows put them in the lineage of Christ. Their actions reflect the character of their God and ours.

What God Showed Me in Ruth
As I dug in, I kept seeing God's upper story over every detail. A famine drove Naomi's family out of Bethlehem, the "house of bread," into Moab. Yet God had already placed Ruth in Moab, and the kinsman-redeemer who would become King David's great-grandfather was back in Bethlehem. Then they returned to the very place where the true Bread from heaven would one day come to us. Add several "it just so happens" moments, and I saw with fresh eyes that God is at work in all of it.

I realized that in my own seasons of waiting, the ones I'd called painful and purposeless, God was working in and through my story. How could He not? It's what He does. I'm learning to read Scripture with the filter *"what is God saying about Himself?"* because that's better than *"what's God got for me today?"* Ruth followed instructions in precarious circumstances without knowing the end of her story.

Our Stories Are Still Being Written
We all have a part to play in God's family story. He uses all of us characters for His honor and glory alone. One day we'll see as He sees how all that had been lost has already been redeemed. That is the real happy ending: no more sorrow, no more tears. Because of Christ we have hope, because our Redeemer is real and our story is still being written.

Don't assume God is done with you. Ruth and Naomi had no idea they had landed in the lineage of Jesus. Trust that the Lord continues what He began. "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

It's not a fairy tale, but it is a faithful tale. He is our trustworthy, eternal hope, faithful in all seasons, greater than our circumstances.

For further study: Read the book of Ruth this week. Ask yourself, *Where do I see God's promise, provision, and purpose?* If loss feels loud, sit with Romans 8:38-39.

Women's Christmas Brunch



Saturday, December 5, 2024 | 9:00 – 11:30am | RiverLakes Church | Cost: $30/ticket
Speaker: Sheryl Giesbrecht Turner | Worship Leader: Sarah Eicher

Take a break from the hectic pace to enjoy a delicious Christmas breakfast with your girlfriends. While you may know the true meaning of Christmas, do your family or friends? We have a great opportunity for you to open a door for the gospel to come to your co-workers, neighbors, family and friends. Take a few minutes to pray now and ask the Lord who He would love to introduce himself to on this special date. Who is in your circle of acquaintances that does not know Christ? Let's see what God will do as we all join together to declare His love to a lost world. *Tickets can be purchased **online** or at RCC during the month of November. No tickets will be sold at the door. Minors (12 and older) must be accompanied by an adult.*

Embrace Grace

Embrace Grace exists to love and encourage single and pregnant young women and their families. Women experiencing unexpected pregnancies receive practical, spiritual, and emotional support through this 13-week pro-life support group.

Contact Carol Edwards at (661) 619-0261 to sign up.
When you join an Embrace Grace group, you make friends in a judgement-free community of women who want to encourage and support you. We've also got your baby needs covered! Get a free baby shower thrown for you! Say goodbye to fear and hello to joy! We help you find hope when life doesn't make sense.

Embrace Life

RiverLakes Church is launching a new ministry/small group called Embrace Life. The Embrace Life curriculum and program equips single, new moms to flourish in their relationships with God and not only survive in life but THRIVE! These brave moms will learn spiritual and practical ways to help navigate their way through life while using the Holy Spirit as their compass.

We need your help! Would you prayerfully consider coming alongside us as we launch this ministry? For more information on Embrace Grace ministries, please visit www.embracegrace.com. If you would like to learn more about how you can get involved, please contact our church office at (661)589-9733 ext. 230.