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**The Book of Ruth: Hope in Hard Times**

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| **Sunday November 1st** | **When Our World Falls Apart Ruth 1:1-25**  The book of Ruth opens with difficulty: there is famine in Israel, causing Elimelek and his wife Naomi to leave the promised land with their two sons in search of food in Moab. They settle. Their sons marry. Then tragedy strikes: Elimelek and their two sons both die. The turning point in the story is the news that “the Lord had come to the aid of his people” (1:6-7), prompting a return to Israel.  What do we do when our world falls apart? What can we learn from Naomi & Ruth’s story about who God is in times of difficulty and tragedy? When the troubles of life have driven us far from God, how can we make our way back? | **David Knowles** |
| **Sunday November 8th** | **Finding Favour in Unfavourable Times Ruth 2:1-23**  Arriving in Bethlehem just as the barley harvest was beginning (1:22), Ruth goes out in search of food – to “pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favour” (2:2). By the end of the day, she has returned home overloaded with grain, a guarantee of work for the season and of protection from those who might harm her. The person in whose eyes she has “found favour” is Boaz, who – unbeknown to Ruth – is a close relative of Naomi. And it is in Boaz’s field “as it turned out” (2:3) that Ruth ended up working in. Boaz ascribes to God the blessings that come to Ruth that day, and in the days to come: “May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge” (2:12).  Where is God in our times of trouble – is he absent or is he working in the details? As we long for change in our circumstances, where – ultimately- do “favour”, “blessing” and “refuge” come from? | **Alex Warren** |
| **Sunday November 15th** | **Finding Rest in Restless Seasons Ruth 3:1-18**  Naomi waits until the end of the harvest. Her quest, that she might “find rest” (Hebrew of 3:1) for Ruth. But despite a careful plan, and Boaz’s consent to the proposal, there is a risk: another kinsman-redeemer with a stronger claim. Naomi, Ruth and Boaz have to wait.  Naomi, as we all do, is looking for rest: for security amidst a risky and uncertain world. How do we balance the need to make plans and act with waiting and trusting God? | **Christiaan Hofstra** |
| **Sunday November 22nd** | **Finding Redemption Amidst Loss Ruth 4:1-22**  Everything finally resolves in the story: Boaz marries Ruth, Ruth and Naomi are secure, and into lives so marked by death, there comes new life in the birth of a child. And then the final, astonishing detail, which when revealed, has us asking “What if?” to all the turning points of the story that has just been told: the child that is born is the grandfather of great king David, and for all of us reading as Christians we add, the ancestor of Jesus Christ.  The story of Naomi, Ruth, Boaz and Obed “turns out” to be part of a much bigger story, over which God is in complete control. A story of one family being redeemed sets the stage for redemption on a global, eternal scale.  It’s easy to believe that God is sovereign when we read a Bible story like this, just as it’s easier to believe God’s sovereignty when we look back at our own stories.  But how should reading Ruth transform our approach to the uncertainties and unresolved challenges we face today? | **Jim Gladstone** |