

Ruth 4:18-22

Introduction

- I. Independence Day: a reminder of men and women who found themselves at a key moment in history and had the courage to step into the challenge.
- II. Lord of the Rings: Sam and Frodo: hobbits who found themselves part of this much larger story, and had the courage to step into it. Sam to Frodo: "We shouldn't be here at all, if we'd known more about it before we started. But I suppose it's often that way in the old tales and songs, Mr. Frodo: adventures, as I used to call them. I used to think that they were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, because they wanted them, because they were exciting and life was a bit dull, a kind of sport, as you might say. But that's not the way of it with the tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them, usually -- their paths were laid that way. And I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't. And if they had, we shouldn't know because they'd have been forgotten. We only hear about those who went on."

The Passage

- I. The Purpose of the Genealogy
 - A. = to zoom out and show us the larger picture
After 4 chapters talking about the dailyness of three seemingly insignificant people's lives, we step back and see that they were part of God's larger story/plan to rescue his people by saving the line of King David
 - B. The faithful actions of Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi were part of God's larger plans even though they had no idea at the time
Carolyn James: "They could never realize that their local rescue effort was actually crucial to God's global rescue operation to save the lost planet that he loves. Bigger things were happening than they realized . . ."
- II. We are part of God's larger story
 - A. God's story
 1. A story has characters, conflict, and resolution
 2. Bible is a story of creation, fall, and redemption
God is rescuing/redeeming/reconciling his lost creatures to himself through Jesus Christ
 - B. God is weaving our individual stories into his larger story
- III. God uses the most unlikely events and unlikely people to accomplish his plan
 - A. Ruth
 1. Unlikely events
a famine, and the death of three men (God specializes in tragedy)
 2. Unlikely people
Ruth: a foreigner, and a woman
(God also uses likely people: Boaz)
 - B. Matthew's genealogy in Matthew 1

Matthew intentionally includes four women in his genealogy (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba—not to mention Mary). Each woman's story has in it the "abundance of both surprise and scandal."

"The sovereign plan and purposes of God are often worked out in and through the most unlikely turn of events, and even through women who, though Gentiles or harlots, are receptive to God's will. . . [They are] reminders that God often works in the most unusual ways and that to be open to his sovereign activity is to be prepared for the surprising."

C. Why does God work this way?

So that no one may boast in themselves but only in the Lord

See 1 Corinthians 1-2 (especially 1:27)

D. Application to our lives today

1. Maybe there is some unlikely event going on right now (that's causing you stress, grief, sadness) that God will use for his larger purposes

2. Maybe God wants to use you in someone else's life even though you feel like an unlikely person for him to use. Or maybe he wants to use an unlikely person in your life.

Conclusion

I. We are part of God's larger story, so our lives are not trivial or insignificant

II. Maybe your life feels mundane and insignificant right now and you need to be encouraged that you are a part of God's larger story and plans

A. Ruth is a reminder that even mundane tasks done faithfully can take on great significance in God's plan

B. 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the lord is not in vain."

III. Maybe you're focused on trivial matters and you need to be inspired to step into God's story in more radical ways

A. John Piper: "One of the great diseases of our day is triviality. The things with which most people spend most of their time are utterly trivial. And what makes this a disease is that we who were created in the image of God were meant to live for magnificent causes. None of us is really content with the trivial pursuits of the world. Our souls will not be satisfied with trifles. Yet, we live like consumers in a Swiss village shop staring at the wooden figurines, and rarely lifting our eyes to the forests and the everlasting snows."

B. Eph 4:1: "live a life worthy of your calling"

1. Spending our time in worthy ways

2. Leading our families in worthy ways and reminding our families that we are part of God's larger kingdom plans

3. Praying prayers worthy of God's larger plans

IV. Hebrews 12:1: Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

What would that cloud of witnesses be cheering you to do at this point in your life?

Discussion Questions

1. What will you remember most from our series on Ruth?
2. Do you agree with the explanation given on Sunday as to why Matthew included the four women in his genealogy? How would you explain it?
3. Experience of being part of God's larger story even though you had no idea at the time
4. When have you seen God use an unlikely event or person in your life to bring about significant growth, healing, or transformation?
5. At this point in your life, do you think you need to be encouraged more to continue to be faithful in the mundane tasks God puts in front of you, or do you need to be inspired more to get away from trivial pursuits/interests and step into God's larger kingdom story? Explain.
6. If you consider the cloud of witnesses mentioned in Hebrews 12:1 who are cheering us on, what specifically do you imagine them cheering you on to do at this point in your life (e.g. trust God, reach out to someone specific, let go of a grudge, spend more time with God, remove yourself from a compromising situation, etc)?