

Pastor Tom Mortenson

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On the Long Side of History

Ruth 4

Prayer: *Father, we just again praise you and thank you for yet another day, another time when we can virtually come together as a church. And again Lord, we acknowledge the weirdness of it all and again we just thank you that in the midst of it you have provided and you are continuing to provide. And so we pray this morning once again we are going to be opening up your word, opening up your book, I pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit not just in this room but in all of the different households that are here watching and participating. And so we pray that you would just give each of us the ability to hear, hear your Spirit and to again make it of permanent value. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, it has been a while but we are now actually back into the book of Ruth. So let me just give you a little bit of a quick review. Ruth is the Moabite daughter-in-law of Naomi. Naomi and her husband Elimelech had left Israel some ten years prior and moved to Moab in order to escape a famine that had ravaged Israel. Moab is the city that was founded by the incestuous son of Lot's

daughter. It was known as being the arch enemy of Israel politically, militarily and most importantly theologically. From the very start, this was a city that was opposed to and was known as an enemy of the kingdom of God. I mean Israel was ruled by Jehovah. Moab was ruled by Chemosh, a monstrous god who demanded human sacrifice. So Naomi and Elimelech settle into Moab and their two sons settle with them and they wind up marrying Moabite women. And we looked at the decision to move to Moab as probably something that was unwise but the decision by Naomi's two sons to marry Moabites was clearly a sinful decision. God had made it crystal clear that the children of Israel were only to marry fellow Jews. And not only had Naomi's two sons married outside of the covenant community, they had chosen to marry women who were part of Israel's most bitter enemies.

Well, after ten years in Moab, Naomi's life turns tragic. She loses her husband and her two sons and she hears through the grapevine that the famine in Israel had ended and she decides that her only hope is really to return to Bethlehem. Now the only two people that she has left from her original family are her two Moabite daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. And before she leaves she entreats them both to go back to their people, to their land, and to their gods. Orpah and Ruth both tearfully react to Naomi's plea and Orpah decides to return to her country, her roots and her

people, but Ruth insists that nothing but death will ever separate her from Naomi and her God.

And last time out a few weeks ago, we were looking at Ruth and we were looking at what genuine faith actually was. We saw that Ruth's response to Naomi's plea actually met the criterion for that kind of faith. We said that faith, genuine faith consists of three parts: Number one, it's a God-given attitude; number two, it's characterized by a certainty of conviction that; number three, produces appropriate action. We saw that Ruth's response to Naomi was first the result of a God-given faith. We asked why is it that Orpah went in one direction and Ruth went in the other? And we could come up with no other reason but that Ruth had received the gift of faith and Orpah had not. And secondly we saw that Ruth's conviction was not to follow after Naomi but rather to follow after Naomi's God. I mean when Ruth says to Naomi, "Your God will be my God," she no longer refers to Moab's god Chemosh, she uses the term "Elohim." She's referring to the God of Israel. And when she exclaims to Naomi that she will die where Naomi dies, she's also forsaking something that in the ancient world meant that you were connected to the afterlife and that was dying amongst your people, dying where you were raised. And all that she's prepared to give up by saying that she's going to die in what to her is a foreign land. Furthermore she says: *"The LORD do so to me and more also,*

if anything but death parts you and me." Here she's using the term "Jehovah" to describe her Lord, making her completely and absolutely dependent not on Naomi but on Naomi's God, the Lord Jehovah.

And thirdly, Ruth's action was the concrete and appropriate decision to leave Moab for Bethlehem. I mean her action really paints the picture of the difference between faith and mere belief. And we in the 21st century, we really have very little understanding of how costly an action it was that Ruth took.

Dean Ulrich quotes Adele Berlin in his book *From Famine to Fullness: The Gospel According to Ruth*, and he makes that point about what Ruth actually did. He says: "The ancient world had no mechanism for religious conversion or change of citizenship; the very notion was unthinkable. Religion and peoplehood defined one's ethnic identity, and this could no more be changed than the color of one's skin. A Moabite was always a Moabite, wherever he or she lived. And, indeed, Ruth is referred to throughout the story as 'the Moabite.' But from Ruth's point of view, she is becoming an Israelite. She is joining herself to Naomi not only on the private family level, but also on the national peoplehood level."

Now our focus for the first few weeks of this study was entirely on

Naomi, how mistaken she was in the midst of her Naomi moments thinking that God had abandoned and was punishing her, and she starts out as the main character of the story but she really isn't. It's Naomi who introduces us to Ruth. And it is the two of them who set out on their return to Bethlehem. And we already looked at Naomi's return to Bethlehem and all the fuss that was made over her as she returns, but now we want to look just for a moment at the same incident from Ruth's perspective. This is *Ruth 1:19-22*. It says: *So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, "Is this Naomi?" She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?" So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.*

Now Naomi is clearly a person of great influence, great status. I mean she's been gone for ten years and her return to Bethlehem makes such an impact that the scripture says *"the whole town was stirred because of them."* Well, given that as a backdrop, notice the greeting that these two women get as they arrive in town.

Notice it's only directed at one person: *"Is this Naomi?"* Whether it's intended as an insult or not, it's clearly designed to let Ruth know that she's not even worth noticing. You know, have you ever been at a party or at a social event where you knew next to nobody and the person that you came with neglected to remember that? Have you ever felt like you've been out on some kind of a social island surrounded by alligators and nobody's even noticing, no introductions, no "how do you do's," no statements from Naomi about who this woman that she's entering Bethlehem with. I mean not so much of a question as, "Hey, who's your little friend?" Not so much as an inkling of who this person with Naomi is. I mean the women of Bethlehem are clearly telling Ruth that she is a nobody, she's a person not even worth acknowledging. Naomi is so caught up in her own bitterness that she doesn't mind leaving Ruth hanging there. And the reason why the women are treating Ruth as a non entity probably lies in the fact that they really do know who she is and they really do know where she's from. I mean she's far, far less than a simple stranger. She's a Moabitess. She's a person in their view probably not worth even a simple acknowledgment.

Now there are two things to observe here. First of all Ruth's faith is now meeting its very first test. I mean she's literally now in no-man's land. She has thrown herself on the mercy of God and God's people and she's cut herself off from her people fully

aligning herself with the God of Israel. One commentator observed that in some ways Ruth's faith was greater than Abraham's because at least Abraham had heard from God in a dream. I mean Ruth's faith is based on what she's able to glean from Naomi and Elimelech along with her Jewish husband and the traditions that they brought to Moab from Israel. And no doubt she's heard of all kinds of amazing victories that Israel had over her enemies and the times when the God of Israel did the impossible. But all of her information came from folks whose very presence in Moab had hinted that they had lost the ability to fully trust in God's provision. And the fact that her husband had joined with a Moabite in marriage meant that the primary source of her understanding of the God of Israel came from somebody who was in serious disobedience with that God. I mean Israelites were not to marry Moabites.

So the first thing we see is that Ruth has undertaken this truly amazing step of faith. And as is often the case, she finds that A plus B does not equal C. And if you remember way, way back weeks ago when we were starting this series we talked about Naomi moments and the bitterness that happens when folks wrongly conclude that A, if I believe right, plus B, if I do right, then C, things are going to go right. We also saw that there seemed to be scripture that backs that up specifically. *Psalm 5 says: For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield.* Well

it's not even arguable that Ruth had done the most righteous thing a person could do when you consider that God's idea of righteousness, it's based on faith. I mean that concept goes all the way back to the book of Genesis where God is explaining to Abraham that he's going to make a great nation of him. This is *Genesis 15:5*. It says: *And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*

Now this idea, this idea that we can be made righteous not by deeds but by faith is something the Bible insists on over and over again. I mean it's a truth first stated in the Old Testament but stated over and over again in the New. *Romans 4:3* says: *For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."* *Romans 4:9* says: *Is this blessing then only from the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. Galatians 3:6* says: *Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness,"* and *James 2:23* says: *And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" -- and he was called a friend of God.*

So what is the belief, what is the faith that counts as

righteousness before God? Well, it's the gospel. It's the idea that God himself became a man, that he entered into this world, lived his life among us and lived it perfectly and then he brought that life perfectly to the cross to offer it up as a ransom payment for your sin and my sin and that *by faith*, we then appropriate his perfect righteousness for ourselves so we stand before God not on the basis of our righteousness, we have none before him, but by faith we have his righteousness now and so we stand perfect before a holy God. That's what faith is. And faith is the only currency that has value between us and God.

You know folks can easily mistake money and other things as being of great value to God but they're not. In fact they're not even close. I mean God owns the cattle on a thousand hills, so even Bill Gates can't impress God with his giving, I mean at least monetarily. What does impress God is exactly the opposite. It is exercising that God-given gift of faith that so convicts you that he is there and that he will be your God in all things and that you take action appropriate to that conviction. I mean, when it comes to money, instead of Bill Gates it's the widow that Jesus is impressed with. It's the widow who gave her last two cents according to *Luke 21*. It says this: *Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, "Truly, I tell*

you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." You see it was the lack of money that triggered the faith that so impressed Jesus in a widow who gave out of her poverty. And then there's the account of the centurion's faith. It was the absolute confidence that the centurion had in Jesus that astounded him. I mean mind you, centurions were soldiers in the hated occupying army of Rome. This is one extraordinary occupying soldier whose action Jesus commends. This is *Matthew 8:5*. It says: *When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, "Go," and he goes, and to another, "Come," and he comes, and to my servant, "Do this," and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith."*

There's only one thing that Jesus marveled at while he was here on earth, and whether it was the widow and her two cents or someone outside of the covenant community of Israel like this soldier, it

was the exercise of faith that truly moved Jesus. And that's exactly what Ruth had done. You see, if you understand that the only thing that we have to offer God is our willingness to trust him when life itself and circumstance begins to dictate otherwise, then you might understand why God would allow us to be put in circumstances where our faith has to become real. And those circumstances are almost a hundred percent of the time, they're not fun. They're not pleasant. And more often than not they're times when we question God's goodness, sincerity, power or presence. And I've had many conversations with people who don't know whether they should pray or curse God because life for them at that time was so difficult and God seemed to be absent or indifferent. I tell them there's been numerous times in my life when I felt exactly the same way and there in the back of my mind was this notion that we all have these two options in front of us during these times. And one of them is the option of Job's wife. If you remember Job's wife looked at the awful state that her husband Job had fallen to and she said, "*Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.*" That's one option. The other option is to push through the feelings that God has abandoned me, that he's punishing me or he simply doesn't care and recognize that this was a moment in which my clinging to him and his goodness in spite of circumstance would have real value in terms of faith that I could offer to him. I mean I genuinely saw it as a peculiar moment in time when I had

something that was genuinely of value to God. I mean like the widow's mite, the centurion's confidence had value and it's the ability to trust him when circumstance details otherwise. I mean I thought of that scripture where Jesus is confronting many of his disciples and they're all leaving him. And they're leaving him because they can no longer abide with who he was and what he claimed to be. And this was at the peak of his popularity. At the peak of his popularity Jesus began telling people things they just didn't want to hear, things that would only make sense if you were one of his sheep, if you're able to hear his voice and receive the Holy Spirit who alone could make these words make sense when Jesus said things like this in *John 6:54*: *"Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."* You know, the disciples were simple men. I mean they were fishermen, they were tax collectors. They couldn't begin to grasp what Jesus was getting at. It says: *When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples*

were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." Now I always think that you crossed a bridge and you fully entered into the kingdom of God when you think like Peter thought when Christ confronted him at this moment of crisis and Peter said, "Lord, I've got no place else to go." I know exactly how Peter felt because I've been there and done that on more than one occasion. And it's important to realize that when we are feeling like that that we are in very good company.

I recently heard Tim Keller responding to someone who was going through dark times by saying something that at first seemed awfully insensitive. He said, "I know someone who's a much, much better

person than you are who also went through dark times." Well, he was referring to Jesus Christ who's a lot better person than any human who's ever been born. And there's a parallel here between Ruth and Jesus. You see Ruth was looking to leave her home and identify with aliens and strangers to the extent that she was willing to die with them. Her first response to her act of faith was to feel like, God, you never even noticed. But God always notices. And there was someone else who was also a lot better than Ruth who was willing to leave his home, was willing to also identify with aliens and strangers to the extent that he was willing to die for them. It was the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's Jesus who took great pains to say that those who belonged to him can expect to be treated the way he was often treated. This is what he said to his disciples in *John 15*. He said, "*If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you have as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.'* If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours." We're all servants of Jesus and Jesus is flat out telling us that if we are truly his servants, we should expect to be treated exactly the way that he was treated. And that's not exactly like having the red carpet rolled out or your

good deed instantly rewarded. So Ruth offers this great currency, this deep faith and her initial response is to be treated like a complete nonentity. Ruth is entering into a period of time where she's just done the most marvelous thing that we can do on this earth and that is to exercise great faith. She's spending the one currency that we can offer to God that has real meaning and real value and in return she ends up being treated just like Christ was, like a nonentity.

A and B once again does not equal C. Or does it? Well it all depends on your framework of history. You see, if you are on the short side of history then A plus B very frequently is not going to equal C. You can believe all of the right things, you can do all of the right things and life itself is not going to necessarily yield the answers that you hope or expect. But the long side of history is a very different calculus. You see the standard way that everyone looks at Ruth's life from this point forward is to sense and to understand and to know that she had this incredibly wonderful legacy that was awaiting her, I mean, this is Ruth the Moabitess. We all know that she's going to become part of the line that produces the Lord Jesus Christ, but here's my point. Ruth couldn't possibly have ever known that during her lifetime. I mean there's multiple generations that are going to take place after Ruth has died before you get anywhere near the birth of Jesus. And

so the cynic in me would say it's very nice that Ruth was part of the Savior's life, but what did that mean to Ruth? And here's where you have to see that if you're a Christian, if you're a Christian and you're struggling, that you're also like Ruth as well, temporarily locked in a conflict between the short and the long side of history. I mean we always want the stories to turn out well, and make no mistake about it, Ruth's story turned out extraordinarily well. But it's only apparent for Ruth if you start looking at the long side of history. That is to say it's totally meaningful for Ruth from the part that's taken place after her death, and that's the time period that I mean when I'm speaking of the long side of history. It's the side that none of us are at yet but where all of us are heading.

There's an interesting quote that Jesus has in which he makes a reference to what's going on on that side of heaven occurs in *Mark 12:18-27*. It says: *And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman*

also died. In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife." This is what we call an elbow question. This is a snarky question delivered kind of like, you know, elbowing your buddies with a big smirk on your face, we got Jesus right where we want him. How's he going to get out of this? It's wonderful to see the blistering answer that Jesus gives. It says: *Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong."* I'd love to be a fly on the wall to see these guys kind of slinking out of the room after Jesus has dealt with them and he's explaining, he's explaining to them the long side of history and he's speaking about the dead as if they are not dead at all. He's speaking about their new relationship to marriage and he's chiding the Sadducees' ignorance by describing God speaking to Moses as if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still very much alive because they are. God says, *"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,"* not *"I was the God."* And Jesus is referring to the long side of history where life goes on in ways that we are simply

cut off from. I mean we look at folks who are dying and we basically have it all backwards. You see, we are the ones who are rooted on the short side of history living a temporary life that James describes literally as a vapor. And we mourn, rightfully so, those who die, especially those who die young. I mean we see them as cut off, but the reality is that we are the ones who are cut off. They are those who are now on the long side of history and we who are on the short side of history, we are the ones who are cut off, we are the ones who as *1 Corinthians 13* says: *Who now see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.* And as Paul says: *Now I know in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.* You see, we are the ones who are stuck on the short side where things are not at all the way they seem to be. I mean James says *you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.*

I mean this has been a difficult year for us. And we have lost both Ashley and Livia who both left this life at a young age, and we typically see them as cut off because we are so rooted into this life, but that's not how God sees it at all. God sees them as entering into the long side of history where the real world really is. Those of us still on the short side are the ones who are cut off, not them. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob according to God are very much alive and very much a part of the kingdom and so is Ruth. Her

legacy of being part of the line of the Lord Jesus Christ has genuine meaning of value to her because it's not historical to her because she's on the long side of history. And those of us who are on the short side can only marvel at the historical nature but to Ruth, this is a day-in, day-out part of her existence. She is of the line of Jesus, not she was. She is. And what she had done on earth had clearly carried over to where she is right now in heaven. And that's true for all of us. *2 Corinthians 5:10* says: *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

So what does Ruth's role on the long side of history have to do with the way we live our lives today? Well, it has everything to do with it. We look at Paul. Paul was someone who knew exactly how to look at the long and the short side of history and he did it by looking at both at the very same time and he wound up having a split screen view of life where part of his view was in the here and now on the short side of history, but the other part was the long side. And his ability to keep both parts in his viewfinder was what gave him the ability to cope with life and to succeed in it. It was Paul who said in *2 Corinthians 4:17*: *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen*

but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient -- that's the short side -- but the things that are unseen are eternal. See Paul said there is a way to look at the long side of history and it's been focusing not on the visible and transient things but on the unseen eternal things. And the more you focus on them, the clearer they become.

You know in some ways COVID-19 is a real blessing because it forces us to focus more on the long side of history just like Paul did. I mean it's pretty obvious that the short side of this virus is misery, but you have to understand the short side of life itself, it's not real, it's not lasting even when it appears to be working. And sometimes having our status quo turned upside down is a good thing. I mean we all know that Paul lived an incredibly difficult life consisting of imprisonment and stonings and beatings and drownings and shipwrecks. He also had a host of other psychological issues such as abandonment by those who were very close to him. So how in the world did Paul not lose heart? Well the answer is simple, Paul never took his eyes off the kingdom. He managed to live his life recklessly proclaiming the gospel because he nurtured a split screen view that combined an absolutely realistic view of the transient life that we live here on earth with the wonders of life in the kingdom that is unseen but eternal. It was his trust in the sovereign God and in *Romans 8:28* that gave

the vision that all things including COVID-19 work together for good to those who love God and who are called according to his purpose, and that gave Paul the strength to see a life that most would regard as extraordinarily brutal and difficult as one that he said consisted of light and momentary trials. Well, compared to an eternity of bliss anything in this life can seem light and momentary, and that's the point. God says focus in on what I have in store for you. Cling very lightly to this life and all of its trappings and I'll give you not just the short side of history but the long side as well. This is just what Jesus said to his disciples when they were saying what are we going to do about food? What are we going to do about clothing? What are we going to do about where we live? Listen to what he said in *Matthew 6:31*. He said, *"Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*

He says get your kingdom priorities straight. Pour your heart and your mind and your soul and your body into recklessly advancing the kingdom of God and his glory and God promises everything is going to work itself out. Now you may think, okay, that's easy enough to say about Paul. Paul is one in a million. Paul's knocked off his

horse by a lightening bolt, he's set apart by God, he's the author of much of the New Testament. Well, you may have a hard time identifying with Paul but we're not really talking about Paul here. We're really talking about a person way, way down on the social scale. We're talking about someone the women of Bethlehem didn't feel was even worthy to acknowledge. We're talking about a Moabite named Ruth who in the overall scheme of things was an absolute nobody. And we're talking about her place in the long side of history and it's because of the faith that she exercised on the short side of history. And for all time she is somebody who eternally matters. And the good news is we are all Ruth because we all have the ability to impress our God with the one thing that he really cares about, the one thing that he actually marveled about while he was here on earth, and that is faith. It's exercising the God-given gift of faith that so convicts you that he is there and that he will be your God through all things that you take action appropriate to your conviction. And here's where you have to see that if you're a Christian and you're struggling, that you are also like Ruth as well, temporarily locked in a conflict between the short side and the long side of history. But you can take heart. You see, the faith that you exercise on the short side of history is going to be the legacy that you have now and forever on the long side. *For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.* Let's pray.

Father, I thank you, I thank you for Ruth, I thank you for this Moabitess, this person who is so far down on the social scale that she doesn't count according to the women of Bethlehem. I thank you that you have proven to us that she is a person whose long side of history is glorious because she exercised the one thing that all of us can exercise and that is faith, that is trusting in you when circumstance seems to dictate otherwise. So I thank you for Ruth and I pray that all of us would recognize that all of us are Ruth, and that all of us have the exact same opportunity to give you something of value to you and that's by us trusting in you, trusting in you when circumstances seems to dictate otherwise. Father, give us the gift of faith so that we may give it back to you in ways that have meaning and in ways that are long lasting, in ways that affect the long side of history, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.