

Yes

Part 3, Ruth 1:1-5 & 4:13-17

Naomi's Story

A whole book is written about her, called Ruth.

Steve said last week, 'Yes is a part of the deep nature of God. The Bible is the story of a people discovering the Yes of God, a Yes that changes everything.'

One of the best ways for damaged souls to be healed is to allow the "yes" of God to shine in that place where our "no" lives. This is about taking to the places of our fear and our guilt and our rejection, the promises of God contained in his word. Speaking those promises again and again, speaking God's "yes" into the places in our life where "no" has taken root. Which little by little will heal and change us."

Movie Yes Man! Invite yes into your life. It will change everything.

Shared this story in many places - special one was Roxby Downs / Andamooka. Average age 7. People who have left home and family to make a secure future. Isolation a real issue. Wives saying, I want to go home, husbands saying look at the money we are earning.

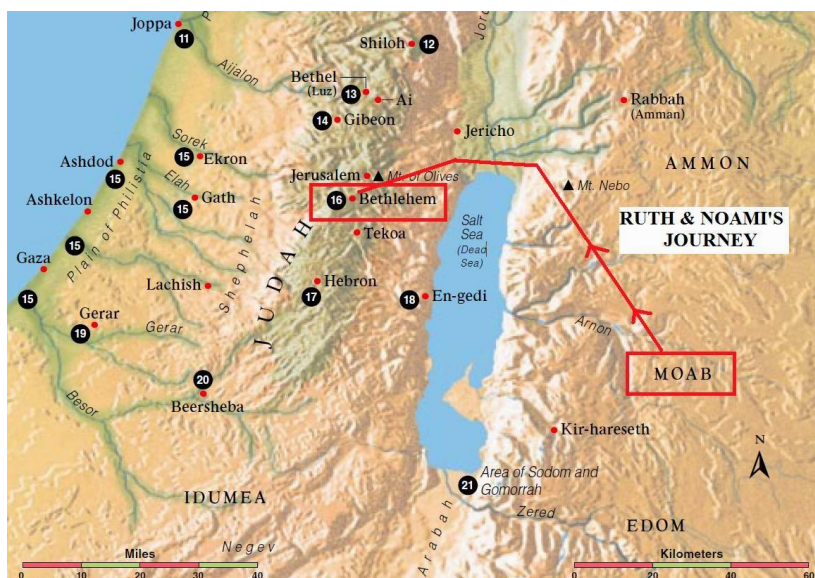
The story of God saying yes and wanting us to say Yes to Him, even if the world around implies and says no! The providence of God, means God at work behind the scene, even when we cannot see it.

Naomi got into the story by complaining. She experienced loss, complained bitterly about it, and had her unhappiness taken seriously by a storyteller who formed it into a complaint against God.

This period of spiritual, social, and political unrest. The period of the Judges, where people did what they thought was best. This includes Naomi's husband.

On the map, see how far they travelled. She is a refugee in a foreign country, culture and religion Separated from family support. A family desperate for a new life.

Is one of the few stories in the Bible told from a woman's point of view. It is the story of a woman's world, the issues she has to deal with. It reveals feminine values and feelings.



Ruth 1

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

When Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead and to me. May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.'

Then she kissed them good-bye and they wept aloud and said to her, 'We will go back with you to your people.'

But Naomi said, 'Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has turned against me!'

At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her.

'Look,' said Naomi, 'your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.'

But Ruth replied, 'Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.' When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, 'Can this be Naomi?'

'Don't call me Naomi,' she told them. 'Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.'

So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

Chapter 4:13-17

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi: 'Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a family guardian. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.'

Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The women living there said, 'Naomi has a son!' And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

God usually works in the ordinary events of everyday life. Miracles do happen, but God regularly accomplishes his purposes and blesses his people through routine occurrences. If we learn faithfulness in the everyday, we are equipped to be faithful when crises come.

It is an undeniable fact that many of the life problems we grapple with in the present are the result of what has happened to us in the past, whether as a result of our own deliberate choices or because of circumstances which were quite beyond our control.

More important than the circumstance of the past are the ways in which we have decided to react to them.

Many of us people will identify only too readily with Naomi's experience. Some will have gone through similar traumatic times of bereavement. Others will have made life decisions they now feel very bitter about—the job move that led to being laid off, the marriage that broke up almost from the beginning, the disappointment of children who have overthrown their parents' faith and are sowing wild oats.

"Where did I go wrong?" is very often followed by "why did God let this happen to me?"

Perhaps the key statement to note in chapter 1 is Naomi's open recognition of God's hand in her circumstances, as she expresses it - "It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has turned against me!"

"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara. The Mighty One has made my life very bitter. I was full when I went away. But the Lord has brought me back empty. So why are you calling me Naomi? The Lord has made me suffer. The Mighty One has brought trouble on me." He has marred me!

It demonstrates how she met her bitter experience with acceptance and trust. There is pain and anger in this verse, but there is also honesty and faith, for Naomi knows that her life is in God's hands.

Things in life do not happen by chance. God rules. How else can we comfort one another when we are facing life's tragedies? If we deny God's sovereignty, we have to say, in effect, that God's back was turned, which means that either He didn't know, or didn't care. What sort of a God is that? No, we have to admit that we cannot know why a particular tragedy has happened.

She consciously places all her pain, bitter experiences and hopelessness within the structure of God's sovereignty, and she leaves the explanation and responsibility with Him.

Whether that is escapism or realism entirely depends on the character of God. This book is designed to vindicate that character of steadfast love and dependability and to generate a similar faith in the Lord. He provides in His person the only context in which faith can learn to cope with the uncertainties, pain and bitterness of life. For He is also Yahweh—the God of covenant—love and faithfulness.

Application

- Saying yes to God begins with a relationship with Him
- Saying yes is possible even if we have made poor decisions
- Saying yes sometimes involves going back to where we left before
- Saying yes means we can still be honest in how we feel
- Saying yes still means we have to step out in faith
- Saying yes will involve action on our part
- Saying yes affects other people
- Saying yes has eternal consequences

Prayer

Lord, help me to see your gracious hand in the good times and to trust your gracious hand in the hard times. And today, be with me in my words and thoughts, relationships and actions, that you might be honoured in them all.'