

SERMON SUMMARY FOR COMMUNITY GROUP LEADERS, 05/11/14

Ruth 1-2 — “God Moves in Mysterious Ways,” Ryan Kelly

In a sentence: The providence and kindness of God stand behind the story of Ruth and her marvelous change of circumstances.

SUNDAY’S OUTLINE

1. Dark Days, Desperate Circumstances (1:1-5)
2. A Fork in the Road (1:6-16a)
3. Not Just Allegiance but Conversion (1:16b-18)
4. Interpreting Providence (1:19 – 2:7)
5. Undeserved Kindness (2:8-20a)
6. The Best is Still to Come (2:20b-23)

HELP FOR UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING THE SERMON TEXT

1. The first five verses give us the setting for the story of the Book of Ruth. What insights do we gain into the times in these verses? When does this story happen in relationship to our series through 1 Samuel? The mention of the “judges” indicates more than a chronological situation, but a spiritual situation. What is the spiritual significance of these circumstances?
2. There’s an important contrast in this story between Orpah and Ruth, particularly seen in v 14-18. What is this contrast, and what is the significance of this given Ruth’s Moabite background.
3. From 1:19-2:7 we see a contrast between two interpretations of God’s providential work in the circumstances of life. How is Naomi’s response revealed? How is Ruth’s response revealed?
4. Now, to consider our own lives. Ryan used the illustration of a set of camera lenses. Some lenses see things very close up, while a wide-angle lens can capture an entire landscape. There are several lenses being used in the course of this story. Close up, these are the bitterest of circumstances. But it is also true that God is at work, we see a story here of salvation and the inclusion of the nations, and there’s even a look forward to another who will come from Bethlehem. What lens do you tend to look through the most? What is an example of a story where in the course of life you were only looking through the first narrow lens? How can you see now that God was at work in and through those circumstances for your good and his glory?

QUOTES, ILLUSTRATIONS, AND OTHER MATERIAL FROM THE SERMON

Verses indicating God’s global purposes in salvation: Genesis 18:18; Psalm 67.

William Cowper, “God Moves In A Mysterious Way.”

God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea, And rides upon the storm.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take, The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast, Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err, And scan his work in vain;
God is His own interpreter, And He will make it plain.