

Sermon Series – The book of Ruth

#5 God's care in our redemption

Ruth 4:13-22 Matthew 1:1-17

Intro

It's important to know where you come from!

There is a song that sums up genealogies and how confusing they can be.

- It tells about a widow who remarried.
- Her grown daughter later married her new husband's father.
- Each couple had a child.

The song says:

*This made my dad my son-in law,
my daughter was my 'mother,'
cause she was my father's wife.
Father's wife then had a son,
he became my grandchild, for he was my daughter's son.
My wife is now my mother's mother,
now if my wife is my grandmother,
then I'm her grandchild...
As husband of my grandmother,
I'm my own grandpa. (from Holmans New Testament Commentary, "Matthew")*

Got all that? Families can be confusing, can't they? Yet, we humans seem intent on wanting to know our history and ancestry; to know where we are from.

Learning from the Book of Ruth

Our ancestry of faith is important too, but perhaps confusing to many of us. We've been studying the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament. We discovered that one of the purposes of this short story is show us an **unexpected source of worthiness and faithfulness** to God in the ancestry of King David is in Israel's history. The last verses of chapter 4 tell us:

¹⁸ Now these are the descendants of Perez: Perez became the father of Hezron,
¹⁹ Hezron of Ram, Ram of Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab of Nahshon, Nahshon of Salmon, ²¹ Salmon of Boaz, Boaz of Obed, ²² Obed of Jesse, and Jesse of David (Ruth 4 NIV)

As we learned in this sermon series, Perez and Obed seem like extraordinary inclusions in the ancestry of such a great Israelite as David.

- Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah gave birth to twins out of a situation of violence, weakness and deceit.

- Ruth produced Obed, the grandfather of King David, from her union with Boaz, and yet she was a Moabite, a foreigner from among the enemy of God's people.

I'm sure many of you have done some searching into your **family tree** and found a few skeletons in the closet! The Hebrews of old were very careful about verifying their pedigrees; especially where royalty was concerned. They would have been horrified to think that they were not linked to the people of the Promise.

It would make sense then, that if writing a Gospel about Jesus to show that he was the Son of God and rightful heir to the throne of Israel that you might want to hide the dodgy ancestors from the family tree!

Not so in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 1. **Ruth and Tamar both appear in the list!** Furthermore, on closer inspection of the genealogy of Jesus presented in Matthew Chapter 1 there are many unscrupulous forebears listed:

- Abraham lied and deceived
- Jacob was a flat out cheat and swindler
- Judah sold his own brother into slavery
- Rahab was a prostitute
- David committed adultery and then had the husband of the woman killed
- Solomon allowed his many wives to worship false gods, and so it goes...

In fact, with what we learned about Ruth in this series, she stands as one of the few 'true Israelites' having showed faith and fidelity though she was not from the tribes of the promise.

The importance of Jesus' ancestry

The honesty of these genealogies is a great comfort to us. Here is a true cross-section of humanity in all its glory and shame. Some did great, faithful and heroic things, many did despicable things; some were worthy, many were not.

What matters for us is that Old and New Testament agree that our hope can **never be based on our own righteousness**. It's to our great benefit that foreigners and enemies of God's people are listed in Jesus' family tree. By God's grace, we too can be included in God's family with all its benefits and promises.

1 Peter 1:18-21 tells us...

¹⁸ You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. ²⁰ He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. ²¹ **Through him** you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

A Hindu man was once converted to Christianity simply from reading the genealogy of Jesus. He said that he was amazed to see a savior that did not come from some perfect mythology, but instead from history and humanity; a savior with a past and a promise to keep. A believable savior sent by an unbelievable God.

- What amazing lengths God goes to so to keep a promise made so long ago to Abraham.
- What extraordinary circumstances out of which God gives us a savior from sin and death.
- How comforting that people just like you and me, and much worse, are included in God's family by grace, through faith, in Jesus Christ whom God raised up for our sake.

It's important to know where you come from! Paul writes in Ephesians 2:

¹²...remember that you were... without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ... ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.