

THIS IS AS FAR AS I'M GOING

Text: Ruth 1:1-16

Here in the text, we read about a family from Bethlehem who during a famine went to sojourn in the land of Moab. These people were not leaving Israel because they wanted to leave God or they didn't like the culture there anymore, they left because they thought that's what they had to do to survive. They spent ten years in Moab and their sons married to Moabite sisters. Naomi's husband died and so did her two sons leaving the three women widowed. Naomi hears that the Lord has visited his people in the land where she came from in giving them bread and is going back. Her two daughters-in-law at first are of a mind to go with her but after much urging, Orpah kisses her mother-in-law goodbye and turns back to Moab. Ruth on the hand, turns her back on her heritage, her people, and her gods to be with Naomi and accept her God as her own. But for Orpah, that place on the road where they embraced for the last time and said goodbye was as far as she was willing to go.

Orpah – When she married Naomi and Elimelech's son she entered a family that was not anything like what she was used to. Moab was a dirty and depraved place, a place of great spiritual darkness. Elimelech's family honored the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and probably to the best of their ability kept the law. God instituted the law not only to turn the light on sin, but so that when Israel abided by it, it would be light to the Gentile nations around them. Light in the Bible also means understanding, when Orpah married into their family she had ten years of light. She had a decade of exposure to the worship of the one true God and saw a completely different lifestyle then the one she was brought up in. Ruth saw enough from the same family to cause her to forsake all and follow Naomi but for Orpah, that is as far as she was willing to go. According to rabbinical tradition, Orpah became extremely promiscuous and was believed by some to be the mother of Goliath and his brothers. There are many that are lost that God brings them to the light of their sin and need for salvation but that is as far as they go. Like Orpah they turn around and go back only to be in greater darkness.

The rich young ruler – He came running and kneeling to Jesus, calling him good master, and asking what he might do to inherit eternal life. Jesus faced him with the law and reminded him of the commandments between him and his fellow man. The rich young ruler replied that he had observed all this from his youth. Jesus said that he only lacked one thing...to sell what he had, give it to the poor, and come follow him. When he heard that he

was very sorrowful because he had great riches. This revealed that he had broken the first commandment which is to have no other gods before Jehovah. This man's wealth and possessions was his god. Whatever you give the most affection to, spend the most time on, and give your goods to is your god! When he heard the conditions to inherit eternal life, he didn't like them and that is as far as he was going. Most people want to go to heaven, many people want to be saved from hell, but not their sin. There are many like the rich young ruler that have one sin that they love above everything else, and they don't like the command to repent. Repentance is turning in your heart away from sin and self to the Savior.

The crowd in John 6 – We're all familiar with Jesus feeding the five thousand, but John chapter 6 reveals that the next day, many of that crowd made great effort to find him again. Not because they believed on him as the Son of God, but because they wanted more food and freedom from Rome. They saw him as a “pipeline” to the things they wanted. They weren't interested in coming under his lordship and leadership. This is the same thing as the modern-day prosperity gospel. The message that if you come to Jesus with enough faith and give enough money, you will be healthy and wealthy for the rest of your life. These people don't care about the Lord; they just want to satisfy their lust. People worship idols for one reason, so that the idol will do for them whatever they desire. The prosperity gospel is idolatry! Preachers who preach a message of health and wealth in exchange for faith aren't preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ at all. The gospel message is that we are a fallen and sinful race of rebels headed for the judgment of Almighty God, but God sent his Son into the world to live a perfect life, die in our place under our wrath, shed his blood for the forgiveness of sins, was buried and raised from the dead so that all who will repent and believe on Jesus Christ shall receive forgiveness of their sins and inherit eternal life. Jesus Christ is everything! He's the bread of life, the Light of the world, the good shepherd, the door of the sheep, the way, the truth, and the life. When he said to the crowd that day that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood to have everlasting life, they choked on that saying and were offended. **John 6:66** From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

Israel in the wilderness – Never forget that these people were delivered from Egypt by the blood of the lamb and the power of God. They were led into the wilderness as a means to develop their faith and trust in God before going into Canaan and claiming their inheritance. The wilderness was full of obstacles that God would get them over or through but all they did was complain and murmur and not believe God. This culminated in their refusal to enter into Canaan, fight the giants and possess the land. So, most of them died in the wilderness because that's as far as they would go. The reason? Because they refused to believe God and to trust in him. We might say “Well they were afraid and that's understandable” but when we don't obey clear instructions from God, he doesn't call that

weakness...he calls it unbelief. **Hebrews 3:7-8** Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: **Hebrews 3:12-13** Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Disobedience is unbelief, and unbelief is sin, and sin hardens the heart. Many people are saved just enough not to go to hell, but they never get past just an elementary experience of God because they let fear keep them in unbelief.

Even after wandering in the wilderness for forty years there were still two and a half tribes that didn't want to go over the Jordan and settle in Canaan. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh chose to settle east of the Jordan river because the land was ideal for their livestock promising immediate benefits over whatever lie in Canaan. These people stopped short of the best that God would give them for two reasons: they were satisfied and comfortable. Three things are the enemy to any Christian's relationship with the Lord:

- **Unbelief** - **Hebrews 12:1** Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
- **Satisfied** – Losing the hunger to know God in a more intimate way and settling for something less than what he wants us to have. The Laodicean church had natural wealth but was spiritually bankrupt, and the sad thing was they were ok with that.
- **Comfortable** – The problem with being in your comfort zone for too long is you eventually become a prisoner inside of the stronghold you've made to shield you from all the things you are afraid of.

Hebrews 3:19, 4:1 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.