

Long Story Short: God's Unexpected Grace

Reflect

1. Who are the people you've learned to distrust, maybe even hate?
2. What if God worked His purpose and plan through one of them?
3. When have you experienced God working through the most unlikely of people?

Read Your Bible

Ruth Chapters 1-4

Matthew 15:21-28

Apply God's Word to Your Life

1. Get out a map of the Holy Land. Find Israel and Moab. The Israelites were commanded to hate and stay away from the Moabites. So where does Elimelek take his family, and what nationality are his daughters-in-law?
2. When the men of the family have all died, what is Naomi's plan, and how do Orpah and Ruth respond to the plan?
3. How does Ruth's response inspire you or teach you about community, family, and friendship?
4. How is Boaz introduced to us? And what is the responsibility of the next-of-kin for the widow? Read Deuteronomy 24:19-22; 25:5-6.
5. Pay close attention to Ruth 4:16. David was considered the greatest king of Israel, and the man after God's own heart. How might this verse change you if you were an Israelite who hated foreigners?
6. The story of Jesus and the Canaanite woman uses many of the same themes we find in Ruth. Canaanites were despised by the Jews. Jesus responds to the woman with two different tones. (This is often difficult for us to understand.) What changes Jesus' tone?
7. How do you suppose this changed the disciples' attitudes?
8. How does Jesus change your attitude?

God has a preferred way. We are to live our lives according to His preferred way, His Law. We do this because we know that God will help us to accomplish His Kingdom's goals. And yet, God has a sense of humor. God likes to work outside the box. God likes to show up in unpredictable ways and work through the unlikeliest of heroes. That's the story of Ruth. By all accounts and measures she was to be shunned and hated. But God uses her faithfulness and love for her mother-in-law to be the great-grandmother of king David. Clearly, Jesus continued this out-of-the-box thinking, when He applauded the faith of a Canaanite woman. In doing so He pointed out that no longer is blood-line or nationality what the kingdom of God is about, rather it's about faith in Him. This is good news, because the kingdom of God is open to all who have faith in Christ, and it expands the demographic of who we reach out to...we encourage all people to know the love of Christ."

Pray

Father in heaven, thank You for showing me the faithfulness of Ruth. Help me to love You and the people around me with that same loyalty and friendship. Use me Lord. And God, give me eyes to see

You working in unusual and unlikely places and people. Give me Jesus' eyes and ears to see and hear such powerful declarations of faith. And Lord, by Your Spirit, empower me to do the faithful thing today, tomorrow and all days. In Jesus' name. Amen.