

Finding Hope in Bethlehem



#1 – An Empty Homecoming (Ruth 1)



Ruth 1:1 Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. **2** The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there. **3** Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.



4 They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. 5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband. 6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD had visited His people in giving them food. 7 So she departed from the place where she was,



and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. 8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 "May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. 10 And they said to her, "No, but we will surely return with you to your people."



11 But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? **12** "Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons, **13** would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me."

***Naomi was made
bitter by life.***

Tragedy can do that.



***We can be made
bitter by life.***

Tragedy can do that.



14 And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. **15** Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law."
16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.



17 "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me." 18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her. 19 So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" 20 She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi;



call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 21 "I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?" 22 So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

A silhouette of a person standing in a field of tall grass, looking out over a hazy landscape. The person is positioned in the center of the frame, with their arms slightly out to the sides. The background is a soft, golden-brown color, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall mood is contemplative and hopeful.

***Even in tragedy,
there is hope.***

God can do that.

**We can find hope
in Bethlehem.**

