Introduction:
In “The Story” today we experience a sweet Hebrew love story, the kind that would easily find a home on the Hallmark Channel today. It is a short but beautiful story that takes place during the time of the Judges. You’ll find it in Chapter 9 in “The Story” or the book of Ruth in your Old Testament. It opens in Bethlehem with a small Israelite family—a man Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their sons Mahlon and Kilion. There is a crisis: there is drought and famine in the land, which send the family of Elimelech packing for Moab.

I. Ruth, from Moab, Returns to Bethlehem with Naomi. Ruth 1, page 121 TS
   a. The famine in Judah drives Elimelech and his family to Moab
      i. It is the territory east of the Dead Sea, a fertile plain
      ii. The Moabites are the long-lost cousins of the Hebrews; they descended from Lot, Abraham’s nephew.
   b. Elimelech dies, leaving Naomi in the care of Mahlon and Kilion
   c. Mahlon and Kilion marry local Moabite women named Orpah and Ruth.
   d. Within ten years, both sons die, too, leaving the three women as widows.
      i. Without protectors.
      ii. Without providers.
      iii. Without property. If a man died, his property passed to sons. If he had no sons, then to his daughters. If he had no children, then it passed to his brothers. If no brothers, then to a near relative. Numbers 27:8-11.
   e. Naomi returns to Bethlehem but urges her daughters-in-law to stay in their own country of Moab. Lots of tears are shed by the three women.
      i. Ruth 1:8. “Go back, each of you, to your mother’s home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.”
      ii. Orpah listens to Naomi and remains in Moab. Ruth, the foreigner, will not stay. Ruth 1:16-17, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me,” p. 122 TS.
      iii. Naomi wants to be called Mara (“bitter”) because of life’s hardships. “I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty.” Naomi hurts.

II. Ruth Meets Boaz and Boaz Favors Ruth. Ruth 2-4
   a. As a poor widow, Ruth, the pagan foreigner, gleans in the fields of Boaz
      i. God cares for the poor and the foreigner and gave specific gleaning rules. “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges
of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your
vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them
for the poor and the foreigner.” Leviticus 19:9-10, 23:22

ii. Boaz is a wealthy relative of Elimelech.

b. Boaz respects Ruth’s character, courage and faith and favors her. Ruth 2:10-12, p. 123 TS

i. Ruth risked being rejected as a Moabite (the nation that oppressed God’s people for 18 years). She asked him, “Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?”

ii. Ruth hears “You’re accepted” from Boaz. Look at what Boaz says to Ruth:

1. “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. 12 May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”

c. Because of a provision in God’s law, Boaz, as a kinsman-redeemer or guardian-redeemer, marries Ruth to carry on the family name of Elimelech. Ruth 4, p. 126

i. Deuteronomy 25 (levirate marriage) and Leviticus 25 give guidelines for Boaz’s responsibilities.


iii. Boaz and Ruth have a son and call him Obed (“worker”)

iv. Obed is the father of Jesse who is the father of David, the king.

d. Ruth is the grandmother of King David. Her name, along with another foreign woman’s name, Rahab, is in the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 1.

Application:

There is a central idea in Chapter 9 that is important for us to make a part of our own lives. In Hebrew, it is called chesed, in English, loving-kindness. Mercy, kindness, goodness. “Both Ruth and Boaz demonstrate chesed to their family members throughout the story. These are not acts of kindness with an expectation of measure for measure. Rather, they are acts of chesed that go beyond measure and demonstrate that a person can go beyond the minimum expectations of the law and choose the unexpected.” We see it in both Ruth and Boaz.

Ruth’s affection for her mother-in-law Naomi is documented and appreciated by the rest of Bethlehem. Everyone has seen how she cares for Naomi. Can anyone see how you care for others—especially those who are like Naomi? Down-and-out? Depressed? Bitter?

Boaz is a really good man who cares for those who are down and out. He provides for those in need. How can you be a modern day Boaz? How can you care for the lonely, the outcast, the overlooked and the hopeless?