

Day 19 – Feb. 22

(Can you believe we're almost 20 days into our reading? Hope you're keeping up! If not, that's ok. You can just skip ahead to the book of Ruth where we begin today.)

Ruth begins with a timeframe, "In the days when the judges ruled in Israel." We've seen the corruption of the judges and the people in the last book, but here in Ruth's story, we find some hope, some redemption. We find hope in the reality that some people still followed God's ways, and not EVERYONE did what was right in their own eyes. However, the story begins on a depressing note, not because of corrupt people, but because of a theodicy incident. Theodicy is the age old question, "why do bad things happen to good people," and here the appropriate question is, "why do 6 terrible things happen to one good person?"

Naomi suffers first a famine, then a move away from her homeland, then the death of her husband, then the death of one son, and then another, and finally the reality of life in a patriarchal society without any living male heir. Naomi, by the end, is destitute in the deepest way possible – she has no future and her line will die out with her. Naomi changes her name to Mara – Hebrew for "bitter" – because as she puts it, "the Almighty has made life very bitter for me."

But the book is not called "The Book of Mara" or even "The Book of Naomi". It is "The Book of Ruth" and we see why in the first chapter. Though her husband is dead leaving her a young widow, Ruth sticks with Naomi. Even when Naomi tells her to return to her own home and marry another so she would have a future, she gives up that potential future out of love for Naomi. She not only gives up her own life, but takes on Naomi's. "Where you go, I go. Where you live, I live. Your people will be my people, and your God, my God." Think about what that means for Ruth! She gives up everything for Naomi.

Do we love anyone that much? What are we not willing to give up for anyone else? Our hometown? Our house? Our identity? Our God? (No, I'm not recommending giving up God for someone else!) We can learn a lot from Ruth about loyalty and love. And indeed we will in the next few days!