

Ruth Comes to Alabama

A Skit for Presbyterian Women's Bible Study 2008

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Narrator: In the early 21st century, there was a terrible drought in the southeastern part of the United States. In south Alabama there was a cotton farmer, named Elimelech, whose crops failed year after year. After the fourth year, his savings were so exhausted that he had no money for seeds. Then he and his wife Naomi decided they should take their two boys and go to California to look for work. The sons' names were Mahlon and Kilion.

In California Elimelech and Naomi found work harvesting crops. When Elimelech died of a heart attack, Naomi and the boys stayed on, and after a while the sons married local girls. Naomi looked forward to having grandchildren, but before they arrived, a tragedy struck. One day when the boys went to a ball game, they were both killed in a terrible automobile accident.

Scene 1:

Naomi and daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpha, seated at a table having lunch

Naomi: I want to thank you both for taking time on your one day off to spend it with me.

Ruth: You know we always love to be with you, Naomi, even more now that we are all the family you have.

Naomi: That is good to hear. ---- Lately, I have been praying and thinking a lot. I wanted to share my decision with you before I told anyone else. (pauses)

Orpha: What is it, Naomi?

Naomi: I think it is time for me to return to Alabama to live. In all the years since we came to California, we did not go back for a visit even once. Even though we lost our farm, I still have cousins there, and I would like to spend my remaining years in my home state.

Orpha: You mean you'll stay, not just visit? California is your home now. You know we will take care of you. We promise not put you in a nursing home.

Naomi: You know I love you like my own children, but you are both young enough to marry again and have children of your own. I pray that the Lord will be as good to you as you have been to me.

Ruth and Orpha (beginning to weep): Then we will just go with you.

Narrator: So Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to leave California and move to Alabama. On the day they were to begin the long journey in their old truck, Naomi tried one more time.

Naomi: You girls really should remain here. Why would you come with me? I am too old to have more sons to be husbands for you. And even if I did, would you want to wait 20 years for them to grow up – By then you would be too old to have babies of your own. No, my daughters, I must go alone, bitter though it is to be returning home alone.

Orpha (weeping): If that is really what you want, Naomi. I will stay, but you must promise to send us e-mails often. You can return here anytime you want to, or maybe we could even visit you in Alabama.

Ruth (firmly): I don't care what you say, Naomi. I will not let you go alone. Don't try to talk me out of it. Before Mahlon died, we talked about his wanting to see his mother's home. He said jobs were plentiful in Alabama now and he might get a job making Hondas. Another thing -- I have been thinking about becoming a Presbyterian. We could go to the little church where you and Elimilech were married. Your family there would be my family, too. I will stay with you the rest of my life. Please, Naomi, let me go. I promise that nothing will ever separate us.

Naomi: Well, I can see that you are determined. --- Do you believe that God is leading you to do this?

Ruth: Yes, I truly do, although we can't really know what God has in store for us.

Scene 2

Narrator: After a long journey across the United States, Ruth and Naomi arrived in the little town of Goshen, Alabama on a Saturday evening. On Sunday, they went to the First Presbyterian Church (there was no Second Presbyterian anywhere near there.)

First Woman in church: Welcome to our little church. We don't have many visitors.

Second Woman (speaking to Naomi): You look awfully familiar to me. Have you ever been here before?

Naomi: Yes, many years ago. I was married in this church. I am Naomi, I was married to Elimelech and this is my daughter-in-law Ruth.

First Woman: Can this really be Naomi who went to California years and years ago?

Naomi: Yes, but don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara because my life was made bitter. I left here with a husband and sons. They were taken from me and now I have only my daughter-in-law. No children, no grandchildren.

Second Woman: We are so sorry for your losses, but we are glad to have you home. We will do whatever we can to help you get settled and hope you will stay this time.

Ruth breaks in: Do you know where I could find a job?

First woman: Let me think about it. We can talk more after church.

Narrator: After the church services, the women talk again.

First Woman: Naomi, do you remember Elimelech's cousin Boaz?

Naomi: Yes, he would be a second cousin, the son of Elimelech cousin Joab.

Fist Woman: Yes, yes, he owns many acres of pecans and has a thriving business selling them. Maybe he would help you.

Narrator: The next day Ruth inquires how to find Boaz's office. When she arrives he is not available and so she speaks to the Office Manager.

Ruth: I badly need a job to take care of my elderly mother-in-law as well as myself. We have just moved back here from California.

Office Manager: I can't give you anything permanent, but we could use some temp helpers gathering the pecans that have been left on the ground after the machine pickers have gone on.

Ruth: I will do anything; just tell me where to go.

Narrator: And so Ruth began to work in the groves. She worked so hard and fast that she gathered more than any other worker and was amply paid for her efforts. Ruth was so happy that she would be able to take care of Naomi.

Scene 3:

Narrator: Toward the end of Ruth's first week gathering pecans, a tall strange, well-dressed man appeared in the grove. Ruth saw him talking to the foreman and wondered if he was their cousin, Boaz, who owned the groves.

Boaz and the Foreman a little distance from Ruth

Boaz: It looks like the harvesting is coming right along. I assume you are not having any problems with the temporary help.... But who is the young woman over there? She doesn't look like one of our local girls.

Foreman: Why, that is the young woman who moved here from California with her mother-in-law. You remember Naomi who was married to Elimelech? The young woman's name is Ruth. She came to the office looking for work, said she was taking care of her elderly mother-in-law. ---- And, what a worker she is, doesn't stop from morn 'til almost dark.

Boaz walks toward Ruth.

Boaz: Hello, my friend and welcome to Alabama. My foreman tells me what a good job you are doing. Maybe once the gathering is done we can find work for you in the plant. So, don't even think about leaving our groves. We will take care of you. I promise no one will bother you in our groves. – Also, I want you to feel free to stop and get water from our coolers when you get thirsty. It is a lot hotter here than where you came from.

Ruth (very modestly): Oh, thank you, sir. I really appreciate your kindness, especially since I am a stranger.

Boaz: Oh, you are not a stranger to us. I have heard not only how hard you are working but what good care you have taken of your mother-in-law since the death of her husband and sons; and how you left your own family and home to come with her back to Alabama. God will reward you for what you have done.

Boaz: I see it is now almost lunch time. I have ordered barbecue for the workers today. Won't you come and eat with us?

Ruth: Yes, thank you very much.

Narrator: When the bell for lunch sounded, Ruth slowly made her way to the tent where others were eating. And there, for the first time she tasted real Alabama barbecue, the kind she had heard her husband's family talk about in the California. It tasted even better than she thought it would. When she had finished eating, Boaz spoke to her again.

Boaz: And did you like our Alabama barbecue?

Ruth: Oh yes, It was wonderful. Thank you so much. I had heard my husband's family talk about barbecue that was better than any we could get in California.

Boaz: We have some left over. Why don't you take some home to your mother-in-law?

Ruth: Oh, I am sure she would like that. You are so kind.

Narrator: When Ruth returns home at the end of the day, she gives Naomi the barbecue and her wages.

Naomi: Now where did you get this? It smells like the barbecue my husband loved. I am grateful to whoever gave it to you.

Ruth: Boaz, the man who owns the pecan grove, gave it to me.

Naomi: Why God bless that man. I guess God has not walked out on us after all. He still loves us, in bad times as well as good times. – Ruth, that man, Boaz is one of our cousins.

Ruth: Well, listen to this, he also told me to stay in his groves until the harvest was finished, and that after the harvest he would find work for me in the plant that packages and sells the pecans.

Naomi: That is wonderful, my daughter. I know he will take good care of us.

Scene 4:

Narrator: And so Ruth continued to live with her mother-in-law and work for Boaz. One day Naomi spoke to Ruth.

Naomi: So, how are things going on the job, Ruth? Do you see much of our cousin Boaz?

Ruth: He is a busy man but he stops to talk to me when he comes into my section. He always asks if I like it here in Alabama.

Naomi:

I don't know whether you know it or not. But Boaz is a widower. His wife and baby died in childbirth. I suspect he is lonely. Since he is related to us, I think it would be nice if we invited him for supper some night.

Narrator: And so, Naomi wrote a note to Boaz thanking him for his kindness to Ruth and inviting him to supper the next Sunday night. --- A few days later, Naomi spoke of Boaz to Ruth again.

Naomi: I will need your help in preparing the meal. Do you suppose you could make a fresh apple cobbler? Men always like that. And maybe you should get a new dress. I bet he has never seen you in anything but jeans and a tee shirt.

Ruth: Oh, Naomi, I don't want to appear too forward. --- But he certainly is nice.

Naomi: Why should he not be interested in you, the prettiest girl in town.

Narrator: The supper with Boaz went off exceedingly well. Boaz ate and ate. After a while Naomi insisted that Ruth and Boaz visit while she did the dishes. When he finally left, Boaz asked Ruth if he might see her again. – Of course, she said “Yes!”

Scene 5:

Narrator: After they had been seeing each other for several months, Boaz surprised Ruth one evening.

Boaz: Ruth, I am sure you can tell how much I enjoy your company. For the first time in a long time, I am truly happy. I love you and want you to marry me.

Ruth: Oh, Boaz, I love you too. But you will have to ask Naomi. You know I could never leave her.

Boaz: I will do that and explain that she would come and live with us. After all, I am already kin to Naomi and should help take care of her

Narrator: When Boaz approaches Naomi, she does not give him the direct answer he was expecting.

Naomi: Boaz, I think it is wonderful that you and my daughter-in-law care for each other. But it really is not my place to grant permission for you all to be married. That is up to the oldest relative in the family.

Boaz: Then I shall just have to talk with whoever that is. I suppose it would be my aunt, Elimelech's oldest cousin.

Narrator: The very next day, Boaz went to the coffee house where he knew his aunt often gathered with her PW friends for coffee and pecan rolls.

Boaz approaching the table: Aunt, can I see you alone for a minute to discuss a little business?

Aunt: You mean this is not a social visit. You work too hard, Boaz.

Boaz: Well, truthfully, this isn't about the pecan business. It's personal.

Aunt: Sooo..

Boaz: You know Naomi who recently returned home after Elimelech died.

Aunt: Of course, I know Naomi. Her husband was my cousin. I was in their wedding.

Boaz: And do you know her daughter-in-law Ruth who has been taking care of her. She was married to one of Naomi's sons. He and his brother were killed in an auto accident. That's why Ruth is taking care of Naomi.

Aunt: Yes, yes, I have been hearing good things about the young lady. Among other things, I understand she is not at all bad-looking.

Boaz: Well, I want to marry Ruth.

Aunt: And then who would take care of Naomi. You know I have my hands full taking care of your uncle.

Boaz: I told Ruth and Naomi both that she would live with us.

Aunt: Then why are you consulting with me.

Boaz: Because Naomi said that we needed the approval of the eldest relative in her family.

Aunt: Oh --, so she thinks that I am older than she is. --- Never mind -- You have my blessing, my son. Just be sure and invite me to the wedding.

Narrator: Soon afterward, Boaz married Ruth and Boaz slept with her. By God's gracious gift she conceived and had a son. All Naomi's friends and relatives were quite excited for her.

Town Woman: Oh, Naomi, you have been blessed by God. He didn't leave you without family to carry on your life. This baby may even grow up to be famous. He could even be Governor of Alabama. He will take care of you in your old age.

Second Town Woman: And this daughter-in-law who has brought him into the world and loves you so much, why, she's worth more to you than seven sons.

Narrator: Naomi took the baby and held him in her own arms, cuddling him, cooing over him and waiting on him hand and foot. The town women started calling him "Naomi's baby boy." But his real name was Obed.

Narrator: When Obed grew up, he did not become Governor of Alabama. But his grandson became the President of the United States. All this happened because Ruth listened to God's call and answered faithfully, "Here am I, Lord. Use me as you will."

Some quotes are from [The Message, The Bible in Contemporary Language](#) by Eugene H. Peterson.