



Coffeeville First Baptist Church
By **Craig Baker, Pastor**

The impact of the ice storm was in some ways not as bad as some had feared and in other ways far worse than some had expected. We are now more than a week beyond the storm, and many are still without power and some even without water. If you have a need or know someone in need, please call the Coffeeville First Baptist church office at 662-675-2906. If there is no answer, leave a message or you can find us on Facebook at Coffeeville First Baptist Church and contact us through Facebook Messenger. The office is not back to regular office hours, but the answering machine and Messenger are being checked regularly.

For our Winter Bible Study, we have been studying the Book of Ruth. Some have called the Book of Ruth, God's Love Story, and love certainly took Ruth on an incredible journey. In chapter 1, we learn of a man named Elimelech, his wife, Naomi, and their two sons who had moved from Bethlehem across the Jordan River to Moab. Given the fact that a severe drought had struck their hometown of Bethlehem, moving to Moab seems like a reasonable thing to do. The problem was God had forbidden the Israelites from having anything to do with the Moabites, so Elimelech moving his family to Moab to avoid the famine was in direct disobedience to God. Whether it was punish-

ment for his sin or not is debated, but not long after arriving in Moab Elimelech died. After his death, his wife Naomi and two sons remained in Moab. His sons married two Moabite women named Ruth and Orpah, and they lived in Moab for ten years. The Bible says then both sons died. We are not told how long after her son's deaths Naomi stayed in Moab, but as some point she received word that the famine in Bethlehem had passed. Hearing that news, Naomi left Moab to return to Bethlehem with her two daughters-in-law with her. The journey would have been about 15 miles over some rugged terrain. Perhaps as they approached the most difficult part of the journey, Naomi told Ruth and Orpah there would be a difficult life ahead of them in Bethlehem, and they had her permission to go back to their home in Moab. We are told Orpah returned not only to her people in Moab, but also to her gods. Ruth on the other hand reaffirmed her commitment to Naomi and to the Lord with those well-known words found in Ruth 1:16-17. Ruth chose to remain with Naomi and seek the one true God.

In chapter two, we find Naomi and Ruth had completed their journey to Bethlehem, but without a man to reclaim their family land and conduct business for the family, they are forced into a life of poverty. Out of desperation, Ruth went into the fields to glean; to pick up the grain leftover after

the harvest. She managed to collect enough to keep them alive, but it was no way to live. While gleaning in the fields, Ruth met Boaz and later learned he was their relative and could redeem them. Ruth found herself struggling in a land where she did not really belong, but by God's grace Ruth found herself in the right field.

Ruth told Naomi that she had been collecting grain in Boaz's field, and Naomi expressed a glimmer of hope because of the possibility that Boaz was an eligible redeemer for her family. However, Boaz either did not realize the position he was in or for some other reason he did not take any initiative to fulfill his role as a kinsman-redeemer. As chapter 2 closes, we are told the season of barley and wheat harvest was ending. This meant Naomi and Ruth would soon no longer be able to rely on gleaning the fields to find food to live. Naomi and Ruth had to prepare to survive the coming warm season when the temperatures would soar and the fields would be dry and barren, so in chapter 3, we are told Naomi came up with a plan.

Reaching back into her understanding of the Law of Moses, Naomi came up with a plan to invoke a particular social clause God had put in place to protect widows. God told His people that if a woman is widowed, her husband's closest relative should take her in marriage to care for her. Naomi knew there may only be a short window of opportunity for this to happen while Boaz and Ruth were interacting during the harvest time, and that window of opportunity was closing. Naomi instructed Ruth on how she should make their intentions and desires for a redeemer known to Boaz, but

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