

Reference: RUTH 1
Church: GRACE Date: 23/05/99

Counting the Cost of Coming to Christ

Purpose: To use Ruth and Orpah to illustrate possible reactions to the Gospel message and show there is a cost to following Christ. To urge people to follow Ruth's example

1. Introduction

For everyone who hears the Gospel, a moment of decision comes
Have heard about Jesus dying on the cross
Have heard that He rose again
He alone can save from sin
Have seen the changed lives of those who know Him
Have felt the warmth of their love
Then comes the moment of truth
But what to do? How to react?
Bible shows us people in exactly this situation
Let's look at Orpah and Ruth - they can help us
Perhaps today is the day when you must decide
Will you serve God or not?

2. You have heard the Gospel

Ruth & Orpah were from Moab (vs 4)
Neither knew nor wanted to know the God of Israel
Yet had married Israelite men - sons of Elimelech and Naomi
Doubtless came to know a lot about Israel's God
Saw the lives of these, His people
Heard about their God
They were away from their country for a while
Would certainly have talked of it –
A glorious land – chosen and prepared for them by God Himself
A land flowing with milk and honey – though now in famine
Heard of all the works of God to save His people
Of His gracious love and how He had shown it again and again
How He had provided a way to atone for sin

Of the Savior He had promised
Through Him all nations would be blessed
Sin dealt with once for all
Were taught about the Law of God
Were struck by the fact that no other nation had such laws
How deep! How profound! How good!
How good to be under the kind government of such a God!
Compared the God of Israel with their God, Chemosh
Saw that theirs was detestable - child sacrifice
Unreliable, fickle – let them down
But Israel's God noble, Majestic, glorious, faithful, true
Came to know and love Naomi very much
Then tragedy struck - their husbands died
Naomi decides to go home –
What would they do? How would they react?
They could go with her to this glorious **promised land**
Or return to Chemosh & all those who despised Israel & their God

Maybe it's like this for you
You are not a Christian, but you know true believers
They are different, and you know it
Peace and joy in their lives you have never known
They have told you how they were changed (if not, ask them!)
They will tell you:
They had believed in all sorts of false gods (maybe Satan himself)
But their sin began to trouble them - weighed them down
Realized they had angered and offended God
All they deserved was Hell from such a Holy and just God
Could never save themselves
But then they heard of Jesus!
How He entered this world as a man, although He is God
Laid down His life on the cross out of love for sinners
Taking their punishment in their place
Then they turned their backs on sin,
They trusted in Jesus to save them

From that moment they knew that they were forgiven
The weight was lifted - perhaps you even saw the change in them
Perhaps you have seen them deal with tragedy - still trusting God
Perhaps you've seen God answering their prayers in amazing ways.
You see how they live – admire strong principles that guide them
You know these are from God and they are good
You have heard them tell of Heaven – where they are going
The glory and majesty of that place
A place which God has prepared especially for them
Then they invite you to become a Christian too
Journey to Heaven with them; know the same joy and peace
Can you see how similar this is to Ruth and Orpah?
What will you do? How will you respond?
Ruth & Orpah were about to discover critical information
You need to know what they were to discover -

3. There is a cost to following Christ

They reached a certain point on the road - very emotional moment
The point of decision – of no return
Naomi suggests they should go back (vs 8)
But they loved her very much
They had seen and heard much of the glory of God
It sounded great to follow Him - exciting adventure
But Naomi spells it out to them (vs 11-13)
To follow her means hardship and difficulty in this life
Continuing widowhood and poverty were likely
Living among a people they had been taught to suspect
Leaving everything behind in Moab - gods, families, friends
They would take nothing with them into their new land
That's different - brought down to earth with a bump
It's the same when we are told of Christ
There can be a point of no return
A point after which God will no longer strive with you
Can be very emotional – some play on this
But Christ was clear that there is a cost to following Him
Of course, there is a wonderful reward also

But in this life, true Christians are called upon to be prepared to pay

Luke 14:25-33 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. 27 And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. 28 "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? 29 For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. 33 In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

What **might** being a true believer mean?

3.1. giving up your home

Matthew 8:19-20 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." 20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

3.2. losing your family

Luke 9:61-62 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

They may be hostile to your faith and cut you off

Old friends, too, you may need to lose for the sake of Christ

3.3. giving up your possessions

Luke 14:33 So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

Jesus buys us with His blood - all that we have is His

Not that we ever really owned anything - stewardship

3.4. Hardships and persecutions

John 15:18 "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

Conflict with sin like never before, persecution

So you need to know this - It is not easy to be a Christian

Those who say you won't give up anything as a Christian are lying

Much harder in some ways than staying in the world

But once you have Christ, won't care about cost in this world

All you can lose here is worth nothing anyway
You have gained eternal life!
This is reality – the world is a fake, a lie
It begins in your heart now with that joy and peace
It grows until you enter the glory of heaven then grows forever
Paul reckoned all he suffered was “light and momentary afflictions”
But you need to recognize there is a cost
Have you counted the cost? Have you thought it through?

4. Will you be like Orpah or Ruth?

The women react to this news in two different ways
Orpah realizes that this is not a journey for her
Much as she loves Naomi, respects the God of Israel
She is not willing to suffer hardship for Him
Not willing to sacrifice family, friends, possessions - all for Him
Tragically, she turns back to her godless family (vs 14)
Back to her godless friends
Back to Chemosh and all that that means.
How close she had come! But she threw it all away
We never hear of Orpah again – she is lost from view

But not Ruth
The more Naomi spells out the problems,
The more determined she is to follow
Just look at this wonderful speech – vs 16-18
She wanted the same destination
She was happy to share the same dwelling place
She wanted to be one of God’s people
She wanted to take God as her God whatever the cost in this life
She would never return to Moab - would live with Naomi
Would live after Naomi had died until her own death
Would be buried in Israel
Confirmed it with an oath (vs 17) - what determination!
Nothing would dissuade her - life-long, total commitment
That is saving faith in action!
Ruth never regretted her decision – begin to see this evening

An ancestress of the great King David
Even became an ancestress of Christ Himself – the King of Kings
The truth is that God is no man’s debtor!
You will not lose out, no matter what you give up for Him here

Matthew 19:27-30 Then Peter said to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?” 28 And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.

Will you follow Ruth’s example?

Will you leave the world to follow Him?

Which of the women are you like? Orpah or Ruth?

You have heard of the only Savior
Seen the change He makes in people’s lives
Heard of the glory in Heaven for all His followers
But you know now there is a cost in this life
Will you return to the world & all that it loves?
Will you follow Orpah on the easy path - destruction?
Or will you commit yourself to Christ, whatever the cost
Like Ruth, walk in the narrow path that leads to the Promised Land
Turn your back on the old life and all its sin
Take Jesus as your God and Savior, His people as your people
For as long as you live and then for eternity
Which will you be?

5. Conclusions

Count the cost!
Then realize you can’t give up enough for such a loving Savior
Look what He gave up to save sinners like you!
Come to Him - He will receive you
Trust Him with all your heart
Take Him as your Lord, your God and your Savior
Do it now - make this your point of no return

Reading of the Law

Strange passage for a reading of the Law?

Not really

Do you want to know how seriously God takes the Law?

Look to the cross

See God crushing His only Son because He was the sin-bearer

He bore all the Law-breaking of His people

God crushed Him there

Would God have done this if there was another way?

Then realise the righteous demands of the law

Realise the horror of your sin

Do you want to know the magnitude of your sins?

Look to the cross!

See the Prince of Life taking punishment you deserved

Cut off from His friends & earthly family

Mocked and despised by His own creatures

See Him cut off from God

See Him bear the fierce anger of His Father for your sin

The Cross is bitter sweet for the believer

Sweet because through it we are redeemed and delivered

Bitter because it was our sins that nailed Him there

Our sins that made the cross necessary.

Such thoughts should cause us to mourn over sin

To admire the Holiness of God

To be amazed at His grace to us

To strive after holiness.

Prayer:

Thanks and Praise:

The Gospel

Molly Joy Hoeksema

Confession:

Our shortcomings – coldness, lack of joy and zeal, true spirituality

Intercession:

This nation, its leaders

Revival

Missionaries sent out

Kosovo

Indonesia

China

Petition:

The Keatings

Mary and Mark Horn

Clyde Dunlap

Pearl

Praise:

Power and Glory are His

Nothing too hard for Him