

Rock Bottom

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 May 2018

Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0 : 00] We are starting a new study in the book of Ruth tonight, and we're going to do the first! five verses as we begin it tonight. So let's go ahead and read those five verses.

It says, in the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem and Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Malon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons.

These took Moabite wives. The name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other, Ruth. They lived there about ten years, and both Malon and Kilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. It's not the most cheery passage tonight, but it is something we need to consider as we get into this study. And the first clause gives us the time period, and it says, in the days when the judges ruled. This is more than just a date stamp. It's a theological description of the character of the times in which the events took place. And the verse just before Ruth 1.1 is the last verse of Judges. So look back at Judges 21.25. It says, in those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. We know that there's a repeated cycle, or maybe more precisely, a downward spiral in the events of the book of Judges. At the beginning of each cycle,

God's people rebelled against him and sinned, and then God acted in judgment against him. And then the people repented and cried out to the Lord. And finally, at the end of each cycle, the Lord sent a deliverer to rescue his people, and they experienced some measure of rest. And then later on in the book of Judges, though, we saw that this step of repentance is missing. And as the book of Judges progressed, both the nature of the deliverers who were sent and the deliverance that God's people received changed. You may remember when we studied Judges on Sunday night, the first judge, Othniel, was a squeaky clean hero. But the last judge in the book of Judges was Samson. And Samson systematically undermined our expectations of what a deliverer should be. We know that he was called to be a Nazarite at birth, and he was separated by God to be separate from the defiling influence. But he systematically broke every vow that was made on his behalf. And instead of avoiding contact with everything dead, he scooped honey from the corpse of a lion. And instead of avoiding contact with the

Philistines, he wanted to marry one. And instead of avoiding fermented drinks, he participated in a drinking party with his future Philistine in-laws. And he ended his life by bringing judgment on God's enemies, but he really established no rest for God's people. So with that as the backdrop, let's start looking at the verses tonight. We'll break tonight's passage into three sections, starting with just verse 1. And in verse 1, we see the famine. So the famine is the first thing for your blank there.

[3 : 38] Verse 1 again says, In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. We talked about how verse 1 gives us the time period and the theological description. But the first clauses of verse 1 have even more significant news than that. It says, In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. That may not seem so unusual at first, but remember that this was no ordinary land. It was the land that the Lord had promised to give Abraham, and it was the land that the Lord had promised to give to his people, the descendants of Abraham, when he rescued them from slavery in Egypt. And if you'll remember, it was described as the land flowing with milk and honey. So it was the promised fruitful land which the Lord had prepared for them.

But even Bethlehem, a place whose name means the house of bread, and which was usually a fertile area, was suffering from this particular famine. So let's think about why there was a famine in

the land, and why there was no food that the Lord had promised when he said it would be a land full of abundant fruit.

Well, the answer is that the Lord's warning of punishment is no idle threat. Leviticus 26, Leviticus chapter 26, contains one of the many warnings the Lord gave his rescued people as he prepared them for life in the promised land. And there was the promise of blessing if they followed his decrees, and if they were careful to obey his commands. And that included the promise of rain in season, and the ground producing its crops, and the trees their fruit.

But there was also a warning of what would happen if they did not listen to the Lord and obey him. So flip over to Leviticus 26, and we'll look a little bit about the promise of blessing, and the promise of disaster for disobedience. And God's promise of blessing for obedience comes in verses 3 through 13. So this is Leviticus 26, verses 3 through 13. It says, If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time of sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely.

[6 : 15] I will give you peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will remove harmful beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land. You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.

Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and will confirm my covenant with you.

You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new. I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people.

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke, and made you walk erect. Continuing on in Leviticus 26, verses 14 through 20, have the promise of punishment for disobedience.

God said, starting in verse 14, But if you will not listen to me, and will not do all these commandments, if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, then I will do this to you.

[7 : 35] I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease, and fever that consumes the eyes, and makes the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies.

Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you. And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins, and I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron, and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit. Every Israelite would have heard about these promises.

And despite these promises, Elimelech decides to leave Bethlehem anyway. And when he leaves, he chooses to go to Moab. For an Israelite, leaving Bethlehem was quite an astonishing decision. He was leaving the land to which God had given to the nation, and that was equivalent to deserting his God. God's presence was especially believed to be linked to the land.

[8 : 45] And the tent of God, which was probably at Shiloh at the time, was a symbol and testimony that God was the God of this people and this land. And Elimelech chose to leave the land anyway.

We know that God had delivered his people from Egypt and brought them to the land of Canaan as a special place for them to live. And God had called Elimelech to live in Bethlehem. So he had no business leaving there to go anywhere, least of all Moab.

Let's think a little bit about Moab, because for Israel, Moab was known for several things. None of them was good. The Moabites had originated out of an incestuous relationship between Lot and his older daughter.

That's back in Genesis chapter 19, verses 30 through 38. Later on, their king Balak had hired Balaam to curse Israel when they came out of Egypt. And their women had been a stumbling block to Israel in the wilderness, seducing them to worship false gods.

And they recently had oppressed the Israelites in the days of the judge named Eglon. So history should have been more than enough to show Elimelech that he should have avoided Moab.

[9 : 54] But scripture also was very clear on that point. As his ancestors entered the promised land, the people of Israel were commanded not to make a treaty of friendship with the Moabites.

Listen to Deuteronomy chapter 23, verses 3 through 6. Again, this is Deuteronomy chapter 23, verses 3 through 6.

And it says, No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the Lord forever, because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired Balaam the son of Baor from Pether of Mesopotamia to curse you.

But the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam. Instead, the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loved you. You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever.

And whether Elimelech knew this or not, we don't know, but we know that he should have known this, because one of the Lord's commands as his people entered the promised land was that his law should be read to the people every seven years so that it would not be forgotten.

[11 : 08] The record of judges indicates that this command to read the law was disobeyed, disobeyed, and very soon generations grew up knowing nothing about the Lord and his word.

And when the Lord's word is ignored, then the Lord and his rule are soon ignored, and men like Elimelech do as they see fit to the detriment of themselves and their families.

And despite the history and the warning from Scripture, Elimelech decides to take his immediate family and leave the land of promise to sojourn in the land of Moab.

And sojourning is an interesting term there. It's actually a technical term used in antiquity for someone who's living as an alien in a foreign land. That person is not planning to stay there for very long.

Instead, it describes the social standing of someone who works in a foreign country but has very few rights and privileges of citizenship. The sojourner doesn't own the land, but he's generally in the service of a native who is the master and protector.

[12 : 11] So Elimelech leaves the lands allotted to his tribe and clan and puts himself in a position equivalent to servitude in a foreign land. So like we said, the term sojourn implies that the family initially intended to stay only temporarily in Bethlehem, but still the decision itself implies doubt about God's promises to provide for his people.

So as we move into the next section of the lesson now, we'll get more insight into why the family felt the need to move. And in fact, the family is the heading for the second section.

And verses 2 through 4 tell us about the family. This is really the first time we see Elimelech's name. And it says, The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Malon and Kilion.

They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there, but Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons.

These took Moabite wives. The name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years. Before he went to a place like Moab from the Promised Land, Elimelech's very name should have given him pause, because Elimelech literally means, My God is King.

[13 : 37] It appears, though, that God was not king in Elimelech's heart any more than he was in the hearts of Elimelech's fellow countrymen. Looks like there was no king in Elimelech's life, and therefore, like so many others in the days when the judges ruled, he chose to do what was best in his own eyes.

And instead of following the path of repentance and faith, trusting the Lord to provide for his needs, he decided to follow what seemed to be the best prospects of supporting his family, and he chose the road to Moab.

Perhaps Elimelech's name expressed the hope of Elimelech's parents, and possibly it was the name given to him by his contemporaries, as may be a nickname. Sadly, though, despite his name, Elimelech acted in a thoroughly unspiritual way.

Naomi actually means amiable, sweet, or pleasant. The names of the two sons don't have very nice meanings.

Malon and Kilion mean sickly and failing, or pining. How would you like to grow up with a name like sickly, or a name like failing? You know, maybe.

[14:52] Maybe Malon actually felt a little bit better. He could say, Hey, my name is sickly, but my brother is failing, so I've got the better part of it. Anyway, we can guess from this that Elimelech had two sickly sons in a society where sons were essential.

So sons would normally look after their parents when old age came. And we know that in time of famine, the weak always seemed to suffer first, and so that probably caused Elimelech some great anxiety.

So concern for himself and his wife, as well as his sons, naturally led him to explore possible ways out of the famine. The second sentence of verse 2 may give another clue about why the family wanted to move.

The text informs us that Elimelech was an Ephraimite. And to be born an Ephraimite means that Elimelech was of ancient and noble lineage. The writer intended us to understand that Elimelech came from a distinguished family.

He was used to being looked up to and respected in the community, and he probably also was accustomed to wealth and therefore less likely to be able to withstand its loss. Fear of losing his wealth and its imagined influence in the community may have been another motivating force behind his decision to sojourn in Moab.

[16:11] We'll see later on when we get to our next study in Ruth that Naomi says that she left full and came back empty. So obviously they did still have some possessions left whenever they decided to go to Moab.

And now look at the last sentence of verse 2. Now it says, At first it seems like Elimelech had made the sensible choice.

While his kinsmen back home were suffering and hungry, there was food in Moab. But like the prodigal son in the story that Jesus told in Luke 15, Elimelech's stay in the far country went well at the outset, and he was able to support his wife and his two sons in relative comfort.

And after a while, Moab started to feel more like home. It's not really clear in the process when that happened, and there may not have even been a conscious decision to settle there permanently.

But verse 2 literally says, They went to the fields of Moab, and they were there. So unlike their plan in verse 1, it doesn't say they sojourned there, and it doesn't say they settled there, as if they'd made a conscious decision that the move was now permanent.

[17:27] Instead, they just existed, perhaps not really thinking about what the future might hold. And so that's not unlike what we see today. Like so many, they now seem to be simply drifting through life without a grand plan for what they were going to do.

And we know that Elimelech is typical of many unspiritual believers today. Living in sinful days, he adopted the attitudes of men and women around him and gave little thought to God.

And he was self-willed and unsubmitive to God. And instead of seeing the famine as a reason for him to come in repentance to God, he added to his sin, and doubtless he excused his behavior by appealing to the needs of his family.

Starting in verse 3, things take a turn for the worse. And it says, But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons.

After Elimelech's death, the remnant of the family had a decision to make. They could repent and go back home to their own land and their own God, or they could stay where they were in exile.

[18:33] And they also made a choice to stay where they were. But look at verse 4 now. It says, These, talking about the two sons, took Moabite wives.

The name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other, Ruth. They lived there about 10 years. So the remaining family members still rated their prospects more highly in Moab than in Judah. They felt more at home in the land of compromise than they did in the land of promise. And they even took Moabite women as their wives. The names of the women that they took for their wives are unclear.

Orpah is often associated with the word from which neck is derived. And that's thought that it may be the case because she turned her neck or turned her back on her mother-in-law.

We don't know that for sure. But Ruth is the most obscure name in the book. One option is female companion as if from the word for friend. And refreshment is another possibility for the meaning of Ruth.

[19:36] The Mosaic law actually didn't prohibit Israelites from marrying the Moabites. It did prohibit the Israelites from marrying the Canaanites. However, Solomon's later experience showed

that the greatest problem in such a marriage is the temptation to serve the gods of the foreign wife. No doubt, even though marriages to Moabites weren't expressly prohibited, Orthodox Israelites would have thought that marrying Moabite women was unwise.

Because throughout the scripture, the Lord's people are commanded repeatedly not to marry outside his people. And the book of Ruth does not record the length of these marriages, but we can tell that they were childless.

And not until Ruth 4.10 does the reader learn from which son was Ruth married and she was married to Malin. And they lived in Moab about 10 years, which is probably longer than the family intended to stay.

So we've seen the famine and the family. In the last verse we'll cover tonight, we'll see the forlornness. So the forlornness is the last blank for you.

[20 : 46] Forlorn is a word we seldom use anymore, but it really fits here. Listen to the definition of forlorn from Merriam-Webster. The definition of forlorn is bereft, forsaken, sad and lonely because of isolation or desertion, desolate, being in poor condition, miserable, wretched, and nearly hopeless.

So listen once again to that definition and just see how much forlorn describes Naomi here. The definition is this. It says bereft, forsaken, sad and lonely because of isolation or desertion, desolate, being in poor condition, miserable, wretched, nearly hopeless.

And here is verse 5 again. It says, And both Malin and Kilian died so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. Jewish tradition has regarded the death of these three males, Elimelech, Malin, and Kilian, as God's punishment for their leaving Bethlehem.

And that's possible, but the text doesn't explicitly indicate that. It's clear, though, that their plan to leave the promised land in order to save their lives failed. It's possible that the sons of Elimelech provide a future picture of the state of the Lord's people at the time.

Doing as they saw fit, they were sick, failing, and in danger. And the solution to the problems caused by sinful rebellion is never of human origins. So now put yourself in Naomi's position.

[22 : 25] She'd accumulated a great load of personal grief. Her husband and her only sons had died before their time. She was a stranger in a foreign land, and if the family name were to carry on, there had to be an heir.

But having no sons, Naomi was left without hope. Her Moabite daughters-in-law offered no apparent means to an heir for her. So in the space of just half a verse, Naomi's whole world became crashing down around her, and she was left alone.

She was a remnant of one under the judgment of God. So who was going to now support a foreign widow in her declining years? No family meant no food, and government-sponsored welfare programs were scarce in Moab.

She was a stranger in a strange land, and she was aging. She was a single woman of no significance in a family-oriented culture, and she had no one to care for her or about her.

Typically, we think that the knowledge that God is at work in our lives is a comforting truth, and sometimes that is the case. But in the days when the judges ruled, God's activity included both judgment and blessing, and those who rebelled against Him and did what seemed right in their own eyes consistently saw their life turned sour before them just as God had warned.

[23 : 46] But by contrast, those who repented and turned to Him found Him more than ready to forgive. So Naomi, along with her husband and children, had set out on a road of disobedience, and they had experienced the reality of God's judgment.

Whether or not the three men died directly because of the judgment, they were a consequence, or their death were a consequence of the sin that had entered into Israel and the sin that had entered the human race in general.

So there was no hope of repentance and return for those that had died, but God in His grace had not left Naomi and her family completely without survivors. A remnant remained, and that still gave them hope that there might be a future after all, and God's judgment on sin is definitely reliable because His word is faithful, but even more consistent is God's desire to restore wandering sinners to Himself, and we know that grace is always God's last word.

So from the verses tonight, we see the consequences of one bad decision. It all started out when Elimelech left Bethlehem. We've already talked about how there was no reason for Elimelech to leave Bethlehem, but there's another reason why he didn't need to leave, because if by some dire

necessity he'd been forced to sell his property and was brought into poverty, God's law required His kinsmen to relieve him, but this was not his condition.

We've already talked about how he went out full. We'll see that in verse 21 next time. And though there was famine in the land, it was not so severe that people perished by it.

[25 : 25] We know that because Elimelech's neighbors who stayed in Bethlehem, many who probably had larger families than he did, managed to keep body and soul together during the famine. But Elimelech wasn't content just to live in Bethlehem.

He wanted to live in luxury, even if it meant moving to Moab. So rather than lose his riches, and rather than being reduced to depending on God to supply his daily bread, Elimelech was willing to disobey and dishonor his God, lead his family away from God, and turn his back on the kingdom of God.

Suppose everyone had done what he did. Then Canaan would soon be empty, and rather than dealing with trouble, Elimelech chose to run from it instead. So this man, who claimed to be a child of God and whose very name said, My God is king, moved to Moab.

He took himself, his wife, and his family away from the worship of God. And he took his family away from and forsook the people of God. He also led his wife and his sons into the land of Moab, and thus to the gods of that land.

So Elimelech's decision was based entirely upon his own understanding or perception of things, and it was motivated by a carnal consideration. There was a famine in the land, and therefore he gave no consideration to the promise of God or the honor of God.

[26 : 48] Especially, he gave no thought to the honor of God in his own soul or the souls of his family. So he can see what a costly decision he made and how costly this move was for him.

But in his own mind, he was fully justified with that decision. Let's bring that forward a little bit to today because like Elimelech, we often act as the sovereign of our own lives, making the choices that seem best in our eyes without reference to God and without serious thought about the long-term implications of those choices.

Many bear the label Christian, but their Christianity has no real impact on life-altering decisions. Just as Elimelech bore the name My God is King, but still lived in a way that made it evident that God wasn't his king after all, people do the same thing today.

And the roads we choose for ourselves often make our deepest heart commitments plain for all to see. So one thing we can already see from the book of Ruth is that our actions have consequences, but our lives are not simply the consequences of the various decisions we've made and the events that have occurred because of them, as if the universe were a giant computer into which everything is plugged in and then the result just comes out with a predictable answer.

We'll see as we go through the book that there's a mysterious factor that's evident in the book of Ruth, and it's a variable that has the power to change everything. We've already talked about it a little bit, that mysterious factor and the power that can change everything is the grace of God.

[28 : 23] And the grace of God directs the outcome of those decisions and events according to his sovereignty and good purpose for his people. Grace is not always evident to us as we go through tough times while we're in the middle of them, but it's always there whether we know it or not.

Ultimately, for Christians, the grace of God is always the defining element in our lives and we need to remember that. Once again, the grace of God is always the defining element in a Christian's life. Even though she was hardly blameless for the events we saw tonight, Naomi nonetheless still had a future because of the grace of God. Naomi wasn't a woman of character simply caught up in a juggernaut of events outside of her control.

She couldn't blame Elimelech for everything that transpired, especially because she had the opportunity to return home after he died and she decided to stay in Moab too. She was personally responsible at least for some of the troubles that she was running into, but however far she wandered from her home, the beginning of the road home was just one step away.

So we can see hope for us in this too because even for those who have chosen the way of rebellion and persisted in that rebellion for a long time, there's still a way home and in the grace of God the road to nowhere may actually be the first leg of our journey home.

[29 : 51] That's kind of an interesting thought, isn't it? That you may think you're on the road to nowhere, but you may actually be on the first leg of your journey back to God. And when God's people go through trials and tribulations, they often glean comfort from the doctrine and the providence of God.

And in other words, if one of God's people is enduring hardship, it's because this fits into God's overall plan for that person's life. And we know that this is true doctrine. If something happens, it's due to providence and it's brought about by the sovereign hand of God.

But we also need to be careful to avoid concluding that when hard things happen to us, we're just mere victims of providence or circumstance. The reality is that adversity often comes because of the way that we think, act, and behave.

Sometimes we bring bad things on ourselves just because of our actions. Think about examples of that from the Bible. For example, when Moses murders an Egyptian, he's forced to flee to Egypt and endure hardship in the desert for 40 years.

So he reaps temporal consequences for his sinful activity. But on the other hand, God uses that shameful activity to bring about God's good purpose. And in that desert hardship, God prepared Moses to shepherd his people through that very same barren land.

[31 : 13] And thinking about another character in the Bible, Joseph, this reality can be summed up by Joseph's statement to his brothers after they had sinfully sold him into slavery in Egypt.

Joseph said, As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today. One commentator ended his summary of Ruth 1, 1 through 5 with this statement that should challenge us today.

He said, The name Christian means someone who belongs to the Christ, to God's anointed king. A limilex failure should prompt us as Christians to ask whether we are living up to our name.

Then he asked the following questions that you have on your handout. So just consider these questions for a little bit. The first is, Am I submitting to the rule of Jesus Christ or am I doing as I see fit?

So, Am I submitting to the rule of Jesus Christ or am I doing as I see fit? The next one is, When trials come and I experience the consequences of living in a society, which is forsaken God, what do I do?

[32 : 26] Do I try to devise my own escape plan or do I seek the wise instructions of my king?

That's a tough one, isn't it? When trials come and I experience the consequences of living in a society that is forsaken God, do I try and devise my own escape plan or do I seek the wise instructions of my king?

We've already seen just in five verses how the decisions Elimelech made affected his wife and sons. And so, with that in mind, here's another question. When I make decisions that will affect those close to me, what criteria do I follow?

And then, related to that, do I act in fear or do I act in faith? So, when I make decisions that will affect those close to me, what criteria do I follow? Do I act in fear or do I act in faith?

Ignoring the Lord's rule is something to be taken seriously. We can already see that it has bitter consequences both for those who ignore his rule and also for those like Naomi who are affected by the godless choice of others.

Fortunately, though, for Naomi, we're a long way from the end of the story. The opening verses of Ruth tell us that tasting the Lord's bitter pill often can be the necessary preparation for undeserving people to experience the Lord's kindness.

[33 : 50] And this same principle is seen throughout the Bible, especially when we read of famine. Because in the time of Joseph, the Lord used the famine to bring salvation to the sons of Jacob even though they were undeserving.

And then, in the time of Elijah, the Lord used a famine to turn his people back to himself. Then, the Lord used a famine in the parable of the prodigal son and that was the part of the process which brought the wayward son back to his senses and turned him back to his father.

So, the Lord can and does use bitter experiences to prepare the way for his undeserved kindness.

And this is the common experience of the Lord's people throughout history.

For Naomi, tasting the Lord's bitter pill was not the only experience she had of the Lord. It prepared the way for a wonderful experience of his kindness. And we won't look at it tonight but a hint of hope is given in verse 6 because in verse 6 news came to Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them.

So, the verses we've studied tonight are sobering verses and they should cause us to ponder how we make decisions today. But we also need to remember the words of David in Psalm 30.

[35 : 07] And of course, we know this is the same David whom we'll later learn is a descendant of Ruth. And David wrote these words in Psalm 30, 4-5. He said, Sing praises to the Lord, O you his

saints, and give thanks to his holy name.

For his anger is but for a moment and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. So, even though the verses are really sobering tonight, we can remember the last verse we just read and it says, For his anger is but for a moment and his favor for a lifetime.

Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the reminder that sometimes the hard things that we see in life are your preparation for better things to come.

Also, help us recognize, though, that sometimes our failure to seek what you would have us to do is the cause for some of those rough times that we face. Let us be more mindful that when we have difficult decisions to make, we should seek first your will and do what you would have us to do as we move through those difficult times.

Continue to be with us as we go through the rest of the week. Make us more mindful of your principles and your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.