

How to become a Great Person     Ruth 1

Raise you hand if you know who this is? This is Justin.

He became a media sensation in this past year.

It all started with 10,000 pop-star wannabes,  
young people lining up to audition their talent for a  
new TV reality show hoping to become a famous singer.

After months of shows it came down to two people:

Justin Guarini and Kelly Clarkson,  
vying for the title of "American Idol" and  
a million dollar record deal.

Most of us can relate to that desire.

We wannabe connected to a greater purpose and  
a greater story.

We all need to have some significance to our lives.

We all desire to be remembered for something,  
to be valued, to play a part in a greater story.

We want to make a difference in the lives of others,  
in our work, in our families, in our marriages.

We want to be the person God intended us to be,  
especially if we are Christian.

And not only do young people want to be significant and  
valued, so do older people.

That was the whole point in that new  
Jack Nicolson movie About Schmidt -  
a story about a retiree name Warren  
who was searching for significance.

For those of your who saw the movie

Here we see Warren

sitting in his office on the last day on the job.

His whole career packed up in those boxes along the wall.

Everything significant in his career is contained in  
those boxes.

A few days after his retirement party Warren goes to visit  
the young person who took his place.

His replacement is not the slightest bit  
interested in talking to him,  
could care about what he did in the past,  
and crassly shows him the door.

It's an awful experience for Warren – he feels so useless,  
so insignificant, so by passed, but it gets worse.

On his way out of the office building Warren sees  
all the boxes that contained his life work sitting at  
the curb as trash blowing in the wind.

That's what his life amounted to - garbage.

Ever have that feeling?

The rest of the movie is about Warren Schmidt trying somehow to discover the significance of his life.

His life work, his marriage, his family.

At one point in the movie he was so desperate and so deep in despair about the total uselessness and insignificance of his life

he goes up on top of his RV and there he cries out to the stars.

“What did you really think of me?”

And then to the spirit of his dead wife he says,

“Was I the man you really wanted to be with?”

He was in such deep distress he fell asleep

on top the RV in a confused stupor.

Here we see him on top of the RV as he wakes up.

About Schmidt is a great movie about a person in search of significance.

a person in search of that bigger story, in search of meaning.

It’s a very sad movie because Warren didn’t know where to find it.

Ruth is one of the great persons in the bible.

She is one of the people who have a bible book named after her. As a matter of fact Ruth was so significant that her book was read in its entirety every Pentecost Sabbath.

She is called in this book an “issah gadol.”

The woman of Proverbs 31. A great person.

A person of significance.

A person whose life made all difference in the world.

In chapter 3:11

Boaz a wealthy business man in Bethlehem says to Ruth,

“Everyone in town knows you are an Issah Gadol, a great person,

someone destined to make an eternal difference.”

Who is this great person, Ruth?

The word Ruth means friend or companion or satisfied.

Even her name spoke of greatness.

A friend who truly satisfies.

Ruth however, was born in Moab.

Now for the people of Israel

Moab put a bad taste in their mouth.

It was the Iraq of the ancient world.

Just the mention of Moab brought bad national memories to mind.

The Moabites were descendants of Lot and his incestuous relationship with his daughters (Gen 19:36-38).

The Moabites were also the nation who tried to curse Israel before entering the promised land.

Remember Balaam and his talking donkey?  
Balaam tried to curse Israel and couldn't,  
but instead tempted the Hebrew men with their beautiful women. (Num 22)

And during the time of the judges Moab was the country that came into Israel again and again to oppress the people.

Surprisingly Ruth was from Moab.

And when people heard that,  
they right away thought "what good can come from that pain in the neck access of evil nation."

But that is where we first meet Ruth.

She seemed to be living an ordinary insignificant life in the hills east of the Dead Sea.

So why did Ruth become an ishah Gadol,  
such a significant person in God's great story?

For that we need to go to the beginning of the story.

And there we meet a man named Elimelech and his wife Naomi.

They were the ideal Hebrew couple.

They were the Adam and Eve for a new era  
God was about to usher in.

They were the royal family descended from that hero and leader Caleb.

The word Elimelech means God is King.

And Naomi means pleasantness or loveliness.

Or God's blessing God's grace.

This ideal Hebrew couple were the hope of Israel to bring in an age of Glory for God and his kingdom.

They were called as God's image bearers to show that God is King and his rule brings loveliness and grace to the people who live in a relationship with God.

They were like a hand and glove of God's kingdom.

They live in Bethlehem.

Bethlehem was the place of great expectation.

The city of hope. The city of promise.

The prophet said, " But you Bethlehem, though you are

small among the clans of Judah out of you will  
come to me one who will be the ruler over Israel,  
whose origins are from of old from ancient times.

(Micah 5:2)

Bethlehem means house of bread. House of provision.  
This is where the ruling part, the dynamic the  
defining part of God's kingdom would be birthed.  
And it would come from this lovely, hand and glove,  
couple God is King and Lovely Grace.

But that is the problem.

In Moab image bearer of God is King dies, and  
so do his sons, the future of his family.  
All that is left in Moab, in the world is  
an old crumpled up handless glove. Naomi.  
God's grace in the world is all withered up and  
seems destined for the trash can.

There is more to the emptiness than physical pain.

Look at verses 20: Call me Mara,  
without God as King my life is bitter.

The Lord pulled his hand from me and now  
I am empty shell. Useless,  
an insignificant glove tossed in the trash,  
passed by.

I am afflicted and misfortune has come upon me.  
Naomi is experiencing what life is like without the  
presence of God. She experiences what it is  
like when God is no longer king in your life.  
When God is no longer king in the society.

Your life become like a withered up widow, bitter, empty.

With out God you feel like trash at the curb side.

But even though Naomi's life seems like Warren  
Schmidt's God in his providence provides for a  
friend, and helper.

Enter Ruth. The ishsah gadol.

Ruth as we will see in the next number of weeks will  
restore life and hope and a future for God's great couple  
Elimelek and Naomi and for Bethlehem.

Ruth will provide a child that will restore the beauty of  
Naomi and the glory of God is King.

What makes Ruth great is that she becomes a person used  
by the Holy Spirit to bring life to God's people.

This foreigner, this stranger, this person of odd national  
descent brings back the splendor and the purpose for

which Naomi and Elimelek were chosen.

It was God who made Ruth a great person.

It was God who made Ruth one of the great great grand mothers of Jesus. One of the royal ancestors of Jesus.

Ruth was used by the Holy Spirit to bring the  
reality of God as King and God's lovely grace  
back to the human family.

She was used by the Holy Spirit to bring significance and  
purpose back to the human race.

Ruth was used by the holy Spirit to help us connect to  
the greatest story ever told.

Ruth was used by the Holy Spirit to connect us to Jesus.  
And that my friends is what made her so great.  
It was God.

Now the question I posed is

How do we become a great person?

Do we line up and audition for American Idol and get  
our 15 minutes in the light of the stars?

Do we do as Warren Schmidt,  
send \$15 month to support a starving child in Africa?

Do we work hard at making a good family and  
building a powerful career?

Do we work at being a nice person? A good father?

The bible tells us

our life only becomes significant when we are  
connected to that greater story of Jesus.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit and  
enabled to show that God is king in our lives and  
testify that God's grace is so pleasant and lovely.

The Hebrew ideal couple who image God as King and his  
lovely grace in the new testament is Jesus.

They together are a type of Christ.

Jesus is the true image of God, full of grace and truth.

In him we see the glory of God,  
God's kingship and his loveliness.

His sovereignty and his presence with us.

Ruth became great because she clung  
to that empty shell of God's grace.

She clung to Jesus we would say today.

When the world urges us to go

after the things of this world,  
after human security human significance and fame,  
Ruth refused.

Ruth made a passionate vow to stick  
with Jesus in life and in death.

She made a personal commitment to Jesus.

She says to Jesus.

**“don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.”**

Ruth was totally loyal to God’s grace and truth.

She was wholly committed to what

God was doing in the world.

Ruth was tied in an unbreakable covenant to Jesus,  
and in that connection she was used by the Holy  
Spirit to bring about God’s plan.

Do you want to be a *ishsah gadol* or *ish gadol* –  
a great person?

Do you want your life to have significance and meaning?

Do you want to be connected to the greatest story  
ever told,

to experience God’s grace and God’s truth,  
then cling to Jesus.

Tie yourself to his ministry and his life and his people  
just like Ruth, the friend of Naomi.

For when you are connected to Jesus as

Ruth was connected to Naomi,  
the Holy Spirit uses us for eternal ends  
in our careers,  
in our families,  
in our marriages, and  
in our person.

Lets pray

Help comes from surprising places

Through the holy Spirit

When people live out their love and commitment to each other. Loyalty

Through Jesus