

Ruth: The Son

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[0 : 00] Now, let's turn in our Bibles to the Old Testament book of Ruth. Ruth chapter 4. And while you're turning there, just to remind you that next Sunday evening will look slightly different.

And that there's a chance for us, after we've thought about a big truth from the Bible, and what it means for everyday life. A chance for us to discuss in small groups.

You don't need to stay, but hopefully be a helpful time for us to work those truths into our hearts and lives. So we're doing that for six weeks, and so everyone's very welcome to that.

Ruth chapter 4. As we finish this wonderful story. Meanwhile, Boaz went up to the town gate and sat down there just as the guardian redeemer he had mentioned came along.

Boaz said, come over here, my friend, and sit down. So he went over and sat down. Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, sit here.

[1 : 06] And they did so. Then he said to the guardian redeemer, Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimele. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people.

If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me. So I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line. I will redeem it, he said.

Then Boaz said, on the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.

At this, the guardian redeemer said, then I cannot redeem it. Because I might endanger my own estate. You redeeming yourself, I cannot do it. Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other.

This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel. So the guardian redeemer said to Boaz, buy it yourself, and he removed his sandal. Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, Today you are witnesses.

[2 : 20] I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilian, and Margo. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Malon's widow as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his home town.

Today you are witnesses. Then the elders and all the people at the gate said, we are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel.

May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. Through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young woman. May your family be like that of Herod, whom Tamar bore to Judah. So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The woman said to Naomi, praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian redeemer.

May he become famous throughout Israel. He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you, and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.

[3 : 33] Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for her. The woman living there said, Naomi has a son, and they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

This thing is the family life of Perez. Perez was the father of Hezron. Hezron, the father of Ram. Ram, the father of Aminadah.

Aminadah, the father of Neshon. Neshon, the father of Salmon. Salmon, the father of Boaz. Boaz, the father of Obed. Obed, the father of Jesse.

And Jesse, the father of David. Amen. And that's how the book of Ruth ends. So this week, as I was reading, especially the conclusion, I was thinking, how different would the book of Ruth look if Disney did Ruth?

We know that we'd done Moses. What if they did Ruth? Well, certainly they would focus on what we have in the story of Ruth. We've got this on the boy meets girl. We've got the romantic angle.

[4 : 37] What we've seen is the story of Ruth is one of love across death grids. Ruth is from Moab, a foreigner to Israel. You can imagine Disney would like the rescue.

We've spoken of Boaz as a redeemer. So the idea of a heroic rescue, perhaps. And certainly, Disney, they would all live happily ever after.

Then we come to the true story, to the Bible story. We see that some of those things are there, but there's also some surprises. So we have got a rescue. We have got a redeemer.

But there's not so much in the way of dramatic rescue. It's taking place in a courtroom. And we do have a happily ever after, but there's a surprising focus to it.

Because it's almost as if Ruth and Boaz are going to disappear out of shot. And the focus is on Naomi. And then it's on the nation of history.

[5 : 39] So we're given a happy ending, but it's a surprisingly big one. Because this story began in the dark days of the judges.

And what we know about the days of the judges is that everybody was doing just whatever they wanted to do. So there was moral and spiritual, religious chaos. And in the days of the judges were told that there was no king.

So the hope at the end of the judges is that God would provide a king as the answer to the darkness. And how does Ruth end? Ruth ends with a family line that leads us to King David.

So the hope in the story of Ruth comes first of all in that God provides a redeemer, this man called Boaz. But he also does that so as to provide for a king called David.

And so we take the whole story of Ruth in view, especially when we come to chapter 4 here. And we see again how this helps to highlight for us God's redeeming love.

[6 : 44] That this is much more than a happily ever after for Naomi or for Israel. That through Jesus, the redeemer, who is also God's king, there can be good news for each one of us.

There is hope extended to a world that is lost in sin, that is knowing much hope, brokenness and confusion, just like the judges.

We can find hope in the sending, in the promise of Jesus. So let's look at this story together for a little while. Looking first of all at this first scene, which takes place in the courtroom.

So we can see a family rescue that is taking place in the first 12 verses here in the courtroom in Bethlehem. And I guess we, as a culture, we enjoy a good courtroom drama.

We have some classics, the 12 Magnum Ends, Kill a Mockingbird, we have our John Grissoms, we like. Courtroom dramas. This one takes place in Bethlehem.

[7 : 49] And it takes place at the city gates. So let's dive into this. And let's see, first of all, the preparation for the courtroom.

We see in verse 1, if you have your Bibles, Boaz goes up to the town gate. And the town gate in that day was the courtroom of his day. That's where community business happened.

So he deliberately goes to the town gate. And then we see, again, God's guiding hand. Boaz is just sat down, just as the guardian redeemer he had mentioned came along.

So just as we've seen all throughout the book of Ruth, God is guiding action so that Boaz might serve as redeemer.

So what does Boaz say? He says, come over here, my friend, and sit down. And that's not, let's sit down for a cozy chat. This is sit down, let's transact some legal business here.

[8 : 56] And we see that because the next thing that Boaz does, verse 2, is he calls 10 of the elders of the town to sit. So they act, in that sense that we think about that, during the act as witnesses to all that's about to unfold.

So the preparation has been made. And now in verses 3 to 8, we can see it here. We've got a report of what happens in the court. And it's very much driven by the words of Boaz.

And so he says to his friends, here's the situation. There is Naomi. She's part of your family. She is in poverty.

She's needing to sell the family land. You're in the legal position to buy it, to act as her protector. Are you willing?

So this unnamed actor, and I think it's deliberately unnamed because he serves as a contrast to Boaz. He's thinking, okay, I'm being asked to care for an old lady.

[10:04] And when she dies, I will receive her land. And I can add it to my inheritance. So he says, yes, I am willing. And at that stage, Boaz turns to him and says, well, there's one more complicated factor.

When you buy the land, you also will inherit a new wife, Ruth. And you have to raise a family with her in order to keep that land, to keep the family line of Elimelech going.

And at that stage, this unnamed guardian or kinsman redeemer said, no, no, thank you. I can't do that.

It seems like perhaps the cost was too high. I can mean the financial cost was too high to care for Naomi, to care for Lou. Perhaps he certainly thought that there was a risk of his estate being weakened.

Boaz also deliberately draws attention to the fact that Ruth is from Moab. Perhaps he felt there was a risk to his status to take to his own home someone who is from outside of Israel.

[11:15] But either way, he says to Boaz, I am not willing to be the redeemer. You do. And then we come to that unusual bit in verse 7 and verse 8.

We find that legal practice of the sandal swap. Legal practices, I guess, adapt over time.

We discover that even here in the book of Ruth. This idea of taking off your sandal and giving it to the other party. Say, here's a transfer that's now taken place and being formalized.

They didn't do that in the time of writing anymore. But with that sandal being taken and handed over, the deal is now sealed.

There is an agreement that Boaz is going to function as the kinsman redeemer. He is going to pay the price to secure the land for Naomi.

[12:13] He's going to commit to Ruth and to raising a family with her. And that takes us to Boaz's response in verses 9 and 10. And what does he do?

He asks the elders and all the people who were gathered to be witnesses. To be witnesses to those two realities. The one who will act as the kinsman redeemer to secure the family land.

But also that he's going to take Ruth as his wife. To preserve Maraul's family name. And then we get verses 11 and 12.

The reaction in the courtroom. Where they announce that they are willing to be witnesses. And then what we see is that they seek blessing from Boaz.

One of the wonderful features of Boaz is that in every scene he is regarded as honorable. He is presented to us as a man of faith.

[13:13] And so this crowd, the elders and others, they seek this blessing from Boaz. And it's got some significant features. And so they want that Ruth, this Moabite foreigner, would have as significant a part in the story of Israel as Rachel and Leah.

And they're mothers of the first twelve. And they became the twelve tribes of Israel. And may the Lord make the women who's coming into your home like Rachel and Leah.

And together build up the family of Israel. They seek a blessing and a legacy of faith on Boaz. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.

And then in verse twelve. It says, Through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young man, may your family, a bit like that, of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.

And this is interesting. This is another one of those Old Testament legal details. Tamar, this woman Tamar, is the other famous, it's called a leperate marriage in the Old Testament.

[14:26] And so where there is a widow who dies without children, and it's the responsibility of a family member, a brother, to raise a family for the dead man.

Tamar, Genesis thirty-eight, is the other famous story. And there's some parallels, and then some significant differences. But we get to verse twelve, and we get to the end of this courtroom scene. And what we discover is that Boaz, the hero in our story, he has, and that's it, won his case, and there's honour that's given to him.

And we can imagine the courtroom breaking into cheers, perhaps. And they ask for these wonderfully large blessings to come to Boaz. But little did they know how God would answer so far above and beyond their expectations.

That God's plans for this family in Bethlehem would include the future king of Israel, the king after God's own heart. Little did they know that Ruth would be in the family line of the Lord Jesus.

[15 : 36] Little did they imagine how God was going to use this little family to demonstrate God's covenant faithfulness far beyond Bethlehem to all peoples everywhere.

Now before we leave the courtroom, maybe a couple of lessons to draw. First of all, thinking about Boaz. And to think about Boaz as an everyday hero of faith.

You know, we think about, maybe we think about our Sunday school heroes. They're usually known for very courageous, brave acts. Maybe in battle, we think of our Gideons and our Davids even.

But here is Boaz, and he's just a wonderful, upstanding man of faith. He is a model employer who seeks God's blessing on those who work in his fields.

He protects and cares for those who are vulnerable as they work. He shows mercy to an outsider. He extends hospitality. We see him absolutely committed to this work of being a redeemer for Naomi and Ruth and honoring Ruth for her covenant loyalty in the dark days.

[16 : 53] In the dark days of the judges, boy, that shines bright for his faith. And isn't that a wonderful call to us as the people have gotten an encouragement to us?

To be faithful in the everyday stuff of life. So much of this isn't spectacular in that sense, but called to be faithful to honor God in what we're given to do.

And do you know we do that understanding that God has his plans for how he will use them. Now, we don't know what those plans are, but God does. What does he call us to do?

He calls us to be faithful in the everyday stuff of life. Knowing that that's how he is able to work in and through us.

Let's also think about the sacrifice of Boaz. Because we meet Boaz in chapter 2 and never once do we find Boaz asking what's in it for me.

[17 : 57] He is committed to serve, to honor, to love. Never thinking about the cost to himself. Or the things are affected because he's willing to pay. And he stands in stark contrast to this guy who was supposed to act as the guardian redeemer.

I would say, no, that risk is too high, that cost is too high I'm unwilling to pay. I'm unwilling to care for this old lady. I'm unwilling to extend her family life. I wonder if we recognize something of that dependency in our own hearts and lives.

Perhaps to be asking, well, what's in it for me when it comes to serving the church? what's the cost going to be? Is this going to be too much of an inconvenience for me and my family for the things that I want to do?

I think Boaz stands as a wonderful reminder of that call that we have knowing how God has been so kind to us and served us that he calls us to serve others, to care for others, to have a heart for those who are needy.

so we don't want to be like that, but we want to be like Boaz. But then to think about the way that Boaz's story goes and we find him in this courtroom scene taking the initiative to function as the redeemer, that also helps us to think about the gospel and it helps us think about God's amazing grace.

[19 : 30] Because we find legal language being used at the gospel, we find the idea of the judge and a judgment being used in the storyline of the Bible.

And what we need to understand as people is that our place in God's courtroom by nature, our standing in the drama of human history, where do we find ourselves in God's courtroom?

We would find ourselves by nature in the dog, standing before God the judge guilty as charged. guilty of pride, that we live without God, guilty of idolatry, where we would make other things to be as important and more important to us than God, guilty of rebellion, where we ignore God as king and turn our back on his law.

All of those realities the Bible calls sin, so we would stand in the dog guilty as charged and we would have no case for the defense. As the Bible says, every mouth will be silenced before God the righteous judge.

That's us by nature without God's intervention. And then we need to see how Boaz points us to the coming of Jesus, because into this courtroom drama steps Jesus, and Jesus is willing to become our legal representative.

[20 : 58] He is the judge, but he enters the dog and he takes our place and he takes our punishment. That there on the cross the judge is judged for us.

He is condemned so that we might be forgiven and set free to enjoy peace with God. That faith in Jesus means that we receive the declaration over us that we are righteous, that we are not

condemned.

Jesus, the judge who has taken our place, he is ready to honour us and to take us home to where he is.

And so great is his love for us, a great love that far exceeds that even of Boaz. The story of Ruth and the story of Boaz, it also reminds us about how wide God's grace is.

Because in God's kingdom we discover there is grace and there is a welcome for Ruth. Yes, she is from Moab and yes, she was serving other gods but now she has come to faith in the one true God and there is grace for her.

[22 : 10] And in God's wisdom and God's mercy, she is in the family tree of Jesus. How is Jesus known when he came to live among us?

He was known as the friend of sinners. Some people hated him for that. Religious people should just stay with religious types. And Jesus would just come for the good.

God would just want to say that that wasn't Jesus' pattern. Others loved him for the fact he was friend of sinners, especially those that everybody else despised. Those that were on the margins, they flocked to Jesus because they knew they were by mercy and grace.

Yes, they would be confronted about their sin, but they would also have the prospect of forgiveness and life of God through him. And what we see in the gospels is his deliberate kindness to the least and to the most unlikely.

And it's what we see all through the Bible, it's what we see in the story of grace. And so as we think about that, if that's God's pattern in the Old Testament, that plan right from the beginning to extend his blessing to all the nations, and if that was the pattern of Jesus, it makes us ask some practical questions of ourselves.

[23 : 34] Who is my welcome, brothers? How is the mercy and kindness of God expressed by me to others?

What is our attitude to the poor? What is our attitude? to those who come from other nations to live among us and to worship with us?

Where we be as broad as our King, as loving as King Jesus. Well, let's move from the courtroom to where our story closes in the family home of Boaz and Ruth.

I hear the focus isn't just on the rescue of this family, the focus is now on the royal family line. In a sense, we might expect chapter 4, verse 13, to be where the story would end.

This is the happy ending we expect. We've been looking forward to seeing Boaz and Ruth be married, and then nine months later, as the drama moves on, a son is born. If this was dizzy, you'd hear the big song, to be incredibly credited.

[24 : 47] That's not where we finish. Rather, what we see is the director of this story having this wide-angle lens on joy, so that we also find joy, verse 17, in the fact that Naomi has a son.

So we're back to thinking about God's provision for Naomi. And then in verse 17 and verse 22, we're left with the good news that the nation has a king.

Obey was the father of Jesse, and Jesse, the father of the king. Verse 13 is also significant.

Because it's only the second time in the story where God is named as an actor.

We see him directing, as it were, behind the scenes, guiding in providence, but here we see the Lord enabled Ruth to conceive.

In chapter 1 and verse 6, the Lord had come to aid of his people by providing food. And now the Lord has come and provided a child for Ruth and for Boaz.

[25 : 57] She had been married for 10 years to Madeline, and no child ever here, by God's grace, she is able to conceive. And again, to highlight God's glory and God's grace, we find this theme throughout the story of the Bible.

Women who are unable to have children, they're enabled by the grace of God to conceive. We find it back with the story of Abraham and Sarah, we find it with Rebecca and with Rachel, we find it with Hannah and we find it with Ruth.

Whenever there is an act of God to enable someone to conceive and give birth to a child, we know that God is going to use that child for his own purpose.

And that prepares us for the beginning of the New Testament for the greatest miraculous conception when God by the power of the Holy Spirit would cause Jesus to be conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the great Redeemer, the great King has come.

But back to our story, verses 14 to 17, what we find is Naomi's friends gathering in the family home and it's very much her story that's in view, we would probably expect Boaz and Ruth to be in view, but the focus is on Naomi.

[27 : 23] Naomi who left many years before with a husband and two sons. Naomi who came back with Ruth to Bethlehem and she came back bitter, came back empty, came back feeling the Lord's hand was against her.

Now her friends are saying, praise thee to the Lord who this day has not left you without a guardian redeemer. They can see just as Naomi can see God's gracious hand at work in her life.

Now in chapter 2 and 3 the focus of the guardian redeemer was Boaz, but did you notice as we read chapter 4 how it switched? None of the guardian redeemer in Naomi's like, it is this little child who has been born, little Obeg.

And why is he the kinsman redeemer? Because for this elderly widow, having a son in her family was for her a source of security.

Obeg, when he grows up, will be able to work to provide for Naomi and for Ruth. And through Obeg, the family land will be killed. So we have this wonderful story where Naomi is really moved and motivated towards, at the beginning, finding a place of rest, a home, and security for Ruth.

[28 : 47] First of all telling her to go back to her own land and her own people, and then to seek that rest from Boaz. And God provides for Ruth through Boaz, but also has provided for Naomi.

His kindness is so much wider than Naomi could anticipate. And then we look at the request and the prayer of blessing from Naomi's bride.

Verse 14, may he, may this child, Obeg, may he become famous throughout Israel. And again, God's going to answer that prayer above and beyond.

They're asking as Obeg becomes the grandfather in the fullness of time of King David. Just as a, in a sense, as a by-the-by, God encourages our dependent prayers, and God encourages us to pray big.

Because our God is powerful, and our God is generous, and we will never out-ask our God. And so, stories like this, and prayers like this, as we see their fulfillment, encourage us, should encourage us to pray and to keep praying for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done in our church, in our city, in our families, in our world.

[30 : 21] And then verse 15, notice the praise that Ruth has given. If you're a doctor in law, who loves you, and who's better to you than seven sons is given birth.

And again, what's in view here, it is the covenant love, the faithfulness, the loyalty, the love in action of Ruth. The whole book is full of covenant faithfulness, from Ruth, from Boaz, and ultimately from God himself.

Verse 17, we come to a naming ceremony. name. The women living there said, Naomi has a son, and they named him Obeg.

And the name Obeg means he serves. And so the natural question to ask is, who is it that Obeg serves? And there are two ways, I think, the story of Ruth invites us to answer.

First of all, Obeg serves God, and serves God's purposes, because he becomes God's agent to remove that bitterness and that emptiness from Naomi, providing a future and a security for her.

[31 : 30] And so he serves God, but he also serves Naomi by functioning as that redeemer, by being that source of security and rest. And so what do we would expect?

Wow, okay, so here's Ruth and she's got a child, and Naomi has a son, and she's got this kinsman, and we would expect a happy life after here. But we're still not done. And we're not done because the author of the book of Ruth has taken us all the way from the dark days of the judges to the wonderful kindness of God in giving the king after God's own heart, King David.

And so the true happily ever after doesn't come until we move beyond God providing the redeemer at the time of the judges to providing the king through David and through this royal family.

And so we finish with a genealogy. That's never how we would expect a great love story to finish.

But it's so important to the people of God to see God's faithfulness working through the generations, working through Ruth and Boaz to take us to David.

David. When Matthew came to write his gospel, that's when he started with a genealogy, taking us through this family to the coming of Jesus.

[32 : 57] In the dark times in which Jesus came to a world lost without God, that genealogy reminds the world that God is faithful, that God is working out his covenant purposes, showing

covenant faithfulness, working out his plan.

And so we leave the wonderful book of Ruth behind, having celebrated in every chapter God's covenant love, God's redeeming love.

chapter 4 finished with a wedding and with a family tree. And with the covenant commitment of Ruth and Boaz, with them coming together and with Obed being born.

When we think about our wedding services, and we have a husband and a wife coming to make vows, with four family, with four friends, with four children, with four God, committing for richer and for poorer, for sickness and in health, and better and for worse till death do us part.

It's a covenant relationship, binding, lifelong, covenant love. Now when we think about Boaz and Ruth, we learn what covenant love looks like.

[34 : 27] It looks like active service, it looks like sacrifice, for the other. It looks like devotion and hard work and generosity and hospitality. And one of the things that we're laying with in the book of Ruth is these wonderful figures to admire and to aspire towards.

In our marriages, in our families, in our friendships, to be showing this love and loyalty, this active loving service. But we don't want to stop just for the human actors.

And we need to see God and his covenant faith with him. That he is committed to loving and to saving sinful, rebellious people.

So committed that he will work his plans through history to give us a redeemer who is a king, whose name is Jesus. Jesus who came to establish the new covenant with his church by giving his own body and blood for us.

Do we know this love? Do we rest in the covenant love of God? Do we all know this love for ourselves?

[35 : 43] Let's pray together. Lord God, thank you for this wonderful story that we've been able to reflect on for the last few weeks.

We thank you for the many pictures of covenant love and faithfulness we see in the human actors. We thank you too for the covenant faithfulness we see from you, our God.

Thank you for your work of providence in guiding and directing so that a redeemer was found, so a king would come, ultimately so that King Jesus, our great redeemer, would come.

Lord, help us to enjoy his love and give us the help we need to reflect that love, to demonstrate that love to one another.

Lord, as we go into a new week, we thank you that if we have faith in Jesus, we know that you go with us, that you are absolutely committed to our welfare, come what may.

[36 : 56] And so we ask that we would trust you and worship you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Now we will close singing from Psalm 147, the first seven verses.

Let's stand to sing. tonight. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.