

Empty No More God Of Salvation - Ruth 4:1-12

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- [0 : 0 0] We get there because we lie that the institution of marriage is not going to change, and that is a lie. The institution of marriage is going to change, and it should change. And again, I don't think it exists.
- So as Christians, as much as we want to be countercultural, marriage is something that is very countercultural today, that we can make a stand at what it means to be Christians and to be married if we are married.
- That's not to say that we can't be single and be Christians. But if we are married, that is an opportunity to reflect something different back into the culture. And I just say that by passing, because we are talking about marriage here this morning.
- But let's look at the text. And so we're going to see here the cost. We're also going to see it happens at a gate, and it also happens in a seat, and it also has to do with a shoe.
- You say, what do all those things mean? Well, in verse 1 it says, So the gate in Bethlehem, as in the gates in Israel at the time, where basically you would have had the town behind the gate, so everybody's protected behind the wall.
- [1 : 3 1] And all the streets are going to be really narrow, to the point where actually sunlight might not even get behind the streets. So the only open space is at the space in behind, directly in behind the gate.
- And that's where obviously you would have had all your commerce, your shopkeepers. It was also basically a metaphorical town hall. It's where the elders of the town sat. It's where they discussed matters of importance.
- And it's also where they decided legal matters. Matters like marriage. Matters like the selling of property. And so that is why Boaz heads for the gate.
- And it just so happens that when he gets there, the person who he's looking for just also happens just to come by, just at the right moment. Because that's, God is involved and Boaz doesn't have long to wait.
- And here he is, the man is coming. If you want to do a little survey of what gates mean in the Old Testament, you can have a look at Proverbs 8.3 or 22.22 or 1 Kings 22.10.
- [2 : 3 5] And it talks about, you know, kings sitting, making decisions at the gate. Or, you know, your husband being well known and well respected at the gate of your people. So it's the place where the elders have sat.
- And he says, he finds this guy. It says, come over here, my friend, and sit down. And that maybe disguises a little bit what the text actually is trying to say.
- And so I'm going to ask you a question. Please don't raise your hand. But you can maybe nod to me if you know the answer. Does anybody know who Randolph Peter Best is? Okay.
- Well, you know, that's good. Because if you do know, it spoils the conclusion. But if I was to mention John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr, and I was to say to you, does anybody know who Randolph Peter Best is?

You might make a guess that it was the drummer before Ringo Starr, before the Beatles became famous. He's the nobody. He's that guy over there that missed out on being world famous.

[3 : 36] And that's a little bit here what the text is maybe hiding here in the NIV. It's more like saying, hey, you there, Mr. So-and-so. Him over there, that guy, the guy with no name.

Come over here and sit down. The text doesn't actually give this man, this other guardian redeemer, a name. In fact, as we see in the text, he's actually more concerned about his own name, and yet the Bible forgets his name.

Maybe it's a lesson there to us that, you know, if we're concerned with our own life and our own inheritance, we might lose it. Isn't that what Jesus said? He who loves his own life in this world will lose it.

But if you give up your life in this world, you will have one through him. So in contrast to that, I want to ask you, does anybody know who Oscar Schindler is?

And hopefully there's some educated people at least who have seen a film, and they know that, you know, Oscar Schindler, he's credited with saving the lives of 1,200 Jews during the Holocaust. He's someone that did a great deed.

[4 : 44] He's someone that did a good thing, and as a result, history, rightly and correctly, remembers him as being someone that at great personal cost rescued people from their death.

And then Sir Boaz has his redeemer. He has the other person. He has the other person who you flagged up to Ruth that was a problem in the whole idea of marriage and redeeming the land.

And so Boaz then, in verse 2, Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, sit here, and they did so. So to me, Boaz must have been someone who was well-respected to early in the morning go and lynch ten elders and say, you know, come on, you need to sit down.

I've got something to sort out. And they were to say, oh, yes, Boaz. And they came and they sat down. And this other individual, whoever he is, he came and he sat down. So they went to the gates, the place of where authority, and they came and they sat down where power would be brokered and they would be able to create a legal transaction.

So Boaz shows that he's respected and that everybody agrees just to come and sit down. And he came and they had to have it. It numbers ten. There's no information that says that ten is a legally required number around this time.

[6 : 12] But history, as it goes on, so if you are going to have a synagogue and you want to constitute a Jewish prayer meeting, you need today what they call a minyan.

You need ten men. So there is a historical context of this, this number ten, that it's an important number to be able to clarify or make the transaction legal.

So here we are. And he's going to then bring about, why are we here, Boaz? They're all sitting down. They're all eager. They want to find out what on earth this is all about. So then in verse 3 he says, 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 Elimelech.

And so the text there is an idea, has sold or is selling. There is the prospect that the land is actually owned by someone else and it needs to be purchased back again.

That's the idea of the text. Undoubtedly the land is probably in use. Nobody is going to leave a nice piece of land in an agricultural economy.

[7 : 18] They're not just going to leave it lying there. They're going to take it and use it. And so it's interesting. It's at the end of the harvest when all of the crops would come in that this legal transaction is coming to take place.

And so he goes on and he says, because 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 and if you redeem it, do so.

But if you will not, tell me so that I will know, for no one has the right to do it except you and I'm nixed in line. So he goes on and he says, look, here's the fact.

You are the legal person. You're the person that needs to reject before I can purchase it. And so he gives him the offer and says, do you want to accept it?

And of course, he says, quite heartily, very quickly, he says, I will redeem it, he said. He's a man of few words, is Mr. So-and-so. But he has good financial sense.

[8 : 20] It's the prospect of being a hero and also expanding his portfolio. He's going to gain land. He's going to gain land from a widow who has no prospect of offspring.

He's going to gain land from a widow. And so that's going to be, if you like, it's going to expand his own estate. It's going to expand his own piece of real estate. And it means that he's going to pass that on to his own children.

And so he sees it as a great financial opportunity and it makes good sense. And to be honest, I think if we put ourselves in that situation, that's exactly what our response would be. I don't think he's doing anything wrong by wanting to do this.

Naomi's going to have money. He's going to seem like a good guy. He's going to keep the land in the tribe. But sadly, Naomi and Elimelech's name is going to be, if you like, blotted out from the history of Israel.

He's going to lose his inheritance. But Boaz isn't prepared for that. So Boaz rightly then tells him about the other side of the bargain and he decides to throw a spanner in the works.

[9 : 34] In verse 5 it says, Then Boaz said, On the day that 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.

I'll highlight to you, it doesn't really affect the text, but I highlight it to you just for the purposes.

It's not completely clear in the original text whether Boaz is saying, You go ahead and redeem the land. I'm going to marry Ruth the Moabite.

And the reality of that is, if Boaz marries Ruth the Moabite and produces an heir, then the land that he's just bought is going to have to revert back to the heir. Or whether or not he's saying that you're going to have to marry Ruth the NIV, in a lot of translations that's what they take.

I just highlight that to you in passing, just in case you come across it in your studies. But it doesn't affect the outcome or the overall meaning of the text.

[10 : 44] So the whole purpose here then that is being raised then by Boaz is saying that, okay, buy the land today, but you're going to have this other issue to sort out in the future with Ruth the Moabite and her potential offspring.

And so what then is the Redeemer going to do? So at this the Guardian Redeemer said, then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate.

You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it. And so he backs out of the whole deal. He says, the cost is too great. I can't do this. You know, I have my own inheritance to think about.

I have my own family line to think about. If I do this, this might mess that whole thing up. And so he says, I'm out. Deal or no deal? He says, no deal. So he was a Guardian Redeemer.

He only wanted to go so far. He only wanted what was in it for himself. He only liked the deal while he was benefiting from it. I think there's a lesson here to us also in terms of there's lots of things out there that say to us that they are the answer to our solutions.

[12 : 00] There's lots of self-help books. There's lots of religious ways. There's lots of people that say that if you do this, if you exercise more, meditate more, you know, be positive in your thinking or worship this God or have that philosophy, that you will have a better life.

But really and truly, they're a little bit like this Mr. So-and-so, this Guardian Redeemer who, it's really only surface.

It's really only beneficial to the people selling the philosophy. So, just as Orpah, if you remember in chapter 1, highlights the great, shows that Ruth is making such a great sacrifice to go with Naomi and to choose Israel's God over the God of the Moabites.

If you like, Orpah is the foil that highlights Ruth's great transaction. So here, we have Mr. No-name.

And what is he highlighting for us? He's highlighting what great cost Boaz is making to his own personal account. But before we get to that, we have this little strange transaction to deal with.

[13 : 22] In verse 7, it says, Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and the transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transaction in Israel.

So, please don't, you know, if you're selling anything, take off your shoe and hand it to someone. Today, that doesn't mean anything and it won't do anything. There is the idea that, you know, it's where you place your foot is yours.

The idea of walking into the land and owning the land. Some people think the idea is coming back from that. And so, by giving the sandal, you're saying, you know, what was mine or what is mine by right, I'm now passing on to you.

I'm not sure I like this idea of holding somebody's dusty sandal and, you know, having to take it. But anyway, that's what they were doing. And so, that's the meaning here. I suppose today it's like a handshake or, you know, a spit and a handshake or I don't know whether you, you know, children do pinky promises, you know, they have witnesses here.

Please witness this transaction, you know. Today, we go into the solicitor's office and, you know, we buy a house. We sign our name, sign here, sign here, please sign here, please sign here and you end up, you know, you've signed, you know, I don't know how many signatures if you've ever bought a house.

[14 : 39] You will understand that. You have to sign for the mortgage. You have to sign, sign, sign, sign. There we go. So, this is the signing, this is the legalizing here, that's why he needed the ten elders and so they're all here.

So, the guardian redeemer said to Boaz, buy it yourself and he removed his sandal. Off you go. And so, we have the shoe, the transfer of rights, the purchase of property.

So, he is free to marry Ruth, he's free to purchase Naomi's property and the deal is confirmed. And so, there was the great cost to Boaz.

So, everything that the other redeemer was rejecting, Boaz is saying, I'll pay. I don't mind if it infects my inheritance, I don't mind.

See, Boaz is thinking with his heart, he's thinking with the law behind him, he's saying that this is the right thing to do. If you're ever stuck and you wonder what thing you should do, be like Boaz.

[15 : 52] I think I can, the wee stick man that runs around Facebook, you know, be like whatever it is. You should really think about this and be like Boaz. Boaz decides things based on whether they're the right thing to do.

And if you do things based on whether it's the right thing to do, I would say more often than not, you will be doing the right thing and that's a good way to make your decisions. And that's what Boaz is doing. He's saying it's in the law. It's the right thing to do regardless of my own inheritance, regardless of whether it means I gain from it, it's the right thing to do.

And so, we have the heart of the redeemer. We have had the cost. He's going to buy the field. He's going to take on two extra mouths to fill. He's going to want to take Ruth as his wife, but why does he do it?

And so we have, these three things, we have selfless action, we have covenantal action, and we have loving action. You see, what Boaz is doing is not without emotion, but it's covenantal.

It's what the law said. And it's his love for God's law. It's his love for God. And it's his love for Ruth. It's his love for Naomi. But it's also his love for the wider family, for the deceased, for Elimelech, for Malon, for Killon, Killion.

[17 : 09] And we find that in the text. And this is the last we hear from Boaz. So in the rest of the verses, Boaz doesn't speak.

These are, if you like, Boaz's final words to us in the book of Ruth. Verse 9, it says, Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Killon, and Malon.

And 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 hometown.

Today you are my witnesses. So he tells us, he says, I have a love, I have covenantal love. He is concerned about other people's names.

He is concerned about other people's inheritance. He wants to keep the property for others and not himself. It is a selfless act of redemption. Boaz doesn't gain anything out of this except financial burden.

[18 : 17] And even into the bargain he has to marry a foreigner. Ruth, the Moabite. But does it remind us of someone else?

John 3.16, For God so loved the world that he gave. God so loved the sinful, dirty, stinking world that didn't love him. A world that was, if you like, his enemies, that needed help, that needed rescuing, that needed redemption, that he sent his son.

Christ came in a selfless act of redemption. John 12.25-26, Is anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life?

Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am my servant will also be, and my Father will honor the one who serves me. Is there a heart in how Boaz is serving this family that says it's something that we should do as Christ laid down his life you know, we should lay down our lives.

Let's lose our life for Christ just as Boaz decided to, it cost him to be a redeemer.

[19 : 37] You see, redemption costs, it costs an awful lot. On the scale of things, Boaz's redemption wasn't as costly as Christ's, but still, it cost him a lot.

Greater love has no one than this than to lay down one's life for one's friends. And Boaz, and that is laying down his life. He is, he's risking his own inheritance.

So what happens then? What, what, it all happens. It goes through. Everybody's a witness. And, what's the response?

What's the response to Boaz's redemption? What do the people say? What do the elders at the gate, what is the people in the, you know, what do they think of this marriage between Boaz, this prominent, high-standing man in Israel, in Bethlehem?

What do they, what do they, they think about him taking on a Moabite widow and redeeming Naomi? Well, it says, in verse 11, it says, then the elders and all the people at the gate said, we are witnesses.

[20 : 45] May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah. Now, we read that and we think, that doesn't mean anything. But really, this is the first time that Ruth isn't called a Moabite.

This is Ruth the Moabite being associated with Rachel and Leah, if you like, the mothers of Israel. These are the, from these women come the sons of Israel.

It's from them that comes the nation. And in that, they're embracing Ruth and saying, she's one of us. And not only that, they're saying, we hope that she is as influential and as well renowned as Rachel and Leah.

That people will know the name of Ruth the Moabite. See, there's something special taking place here and they're saying that God is involved. We want God to bless this union.

We want God to bless Ruth. This Moabite who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in a Pephra and be famous in Bethlehem.

[22 : 03] May your name be great. Mr. No name has gone, but will history remember the act of Boaz? Will history remember Ruth and this act of redemption?

And so they are hoping that there will be blessing that God would make their name great and that they would be significant future blessings not just for Bethlehem but for all of Israel.

And then we have this other figure, this other character. In verse 12, through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young woman so they're anticipating baby.

May your family be like that of Perez and Tamar who bore to Judah. And the question you're answering is who are those people? And that's very interesting also. If you go back into Genesis and you find the story of Tamar and Perez and Judah so I'll tell it to you in brief.

Tamar was another Gentile lady. She was another person outside of Israel and she married one of Judah's sons and he died.

[23 : 13] Then she married in the Levirate marriage idea his brother married her also. But he didn't want to continue on with the idea that his son would then be considered his brother's son so he made sure that they didn't have children and so he died.

Judah blamed Tamar for both her son's death and so he sent her away. He had a third son and he didn't give in to her in marriage. And as a result Tamar then dresses up as a prostitute and tricks Judah into sleeping with her.

And from the result of that Perez is born. So that might be a lot of information to take in quickly and we don't want to preach the Genesis and Tamar story but that is the background to what they're saying here.

you see Tamar everything about that situation was wrong.

So it just was completely wrong but God blessed it. And out of that that Gentile lady she actually is one of the descendants of Boaz. Next week we'll find out how significant all of these people are in terms of their descendants and even into the line of Christ.

[24 : 31] But they're saying may you be blessed, may you be remembered like Tamar and Perez. So they're expecting significance from their offspring.

And also they're saying that we're accepting her just as we accepted the Gentile Tamar and her offspring as our own so we will accept the offspring of Ruth the Moabite.

and this is huge. This is way beyond the expectations if we remember in chapter 1. Naomi was like go home. Don't come to me to Bethlehem.

Go home. Go back. And Ruth's like no no I'm coming with you. I want to follow your God. I want to stay with you. And so I'm going with you to Bethlehem.

But no one could have foreseen or expected that here in chapter 4 everyone in Bethlehem is embracing Ruth as someone who could be a blessing to the nation of Israel.

[25 : 38] And so we have the cost. And so the people they are their witnesses. They pronounce blessing and they want to be significant in the family in Bethlehem.

They're going to be significant people. But this story doesn't it really does just scream the gospel. When we think about it and we take a step back doesn't it remind us of Christ?

John chapter 1 John sorry chapter 2 verse 2 says he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not only for ours but for the sins of the whole world. See Jesus sat in a seat of power.

See after he died on the cross and paid for the salvation of sinners he rose from the dead. And it says in Hebrews 10 he says but when the priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins he sat down at the right hand of God.

You see Jesus is sitting he has made it a legal possibility for us to be free of guilt. A legal possibility for us to be cleansed. A legal possibility for us to be set free from sin.

[27 : 05] For us to be forgiven. Jesus sat down because it was finished. The work that Jesus did on the cross is permanent. It had witnesses.

It was public. And it was because for God so loved the world. It was based in the love of sinners. I don't know if that makes you happy this morning. It makes me extremely happy.

That Christ has sacrificed everything for us. It says in 2 Corinthians for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor that so through his poverty we might become rich.

See the cross just doesn't forgive our sins it actually brings us into the family of God. It brings us into his presence. See there's room for us in the family of God.

There's room for us in God's presence. Through Jesus Christ there's room. Through Boaz there was room for with the Moabite there was room for her in Bethlehem.

[28 : 27] So we have Jesus he's a better redeemer. Boaz is good but Jesus is better. In fact the book of Hebrews is really all about that. That verse where Jesus sat down.

Jesus is better than the angels. Jesus is better. He's a better high priest. He's better. He's better because he is the last sacrifice.

He's better because he was able to pay for our sins. And so Jesus paid the greatest cost. So does forgiveness, does the forgiveness of our sins cost us? And the answer to that, yes it does.

It cost Jesus his very life. Yet it is freely offered to us if we come to him in faith. Let us pray.

God will in peace. Peace.