

# Ruth 4: The Redemption of Ruth

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, the courtship and marriage and the offspring of Ruth to Boaz form what has to be one of the most enjoyable narratives in all the Bible. What a story. And although today we come in at the fourth and climactic chapter, if you were to take time to go back and read the first three, it would only heighten the beauty of the story. And so as we travel to Christmas as a congregation this month, we have seen the scandal of Tamar, the faith of Rahab, but today this narrative, the exquisite redemption of Ruth. Lisa and I rate this as the number one marriage of all time. Today when you are young and you go on a date or you go out, you might go watch a movie. In the old day, we would sit around and talk. And I like to remember it as a cold winter night with the fireplace going and maybe one child in the house. At that point, we were so young and we sat down in an evening in the living room and asked a question like a parlor game. Let's come up with the five best marriages of all time. They could be imagined or real in the Bible or those we know. Ruth and

Boaz, number one. Number one of all time. By the way, most of the marriages in the biblical record aren't all that worthy of emulation. But when you think of this one, you've got Ruth, who is a woman completely dependent and devoted to God. Back to that first chapter.

Where you go, I will go. Your God will be my God. You have her dedication and her industrious nature. She is a hard-working woman reaping in the field from morning to night. Everything about her is to be emulated. And she's described in chapter 3, verse 11, as a woman of excellence by those who knew her. She almost is the personification of wisdom literature's Proverbs 31 woman. And then when you look at Boaz, he's actually worthy of the woman.

And they are the exalted couple in courtship and in marriage. He is, from the very beginning, preoccupied with her welfare. I mean, what every woman wants in a man. His first words to her in the narrative are words for her protection. And then Boaz is honorable in all matters related to sexuality, both in the way that he guards her and defends her in that culture and the way that he treats her in chapter 3 and waiting for marriage. And then you could say that he lives a life that was familiar with God's Word and that he was always under God's Word. Remember, the narrative of Ruth takes place in the days of the judges when every guy did whatever he wanted to do. And here is a man who knows the Word, is living under the Word. Everything about this couple puts them at the top of our list.

What a story. And we come in at chapter 4. And the first six verses give themselves to the marriage that might have been whore of all whores to the reader. The first six verses we see the one who refused Ruth and the lessons to be gained from it. Take a look. He is a tragic figure on the pages of history.

[ 4 : 4 0 ] And imagine living with the retrospective shame of having rejected the one whom God had anointed to be the grandmother of the king. That is his lot. And perhaps that's why he goes without name.

This derisive, it looks friendly, verse 1. Friend, come sit down. This derisive, anonymous, tragic figure on the pages of history. He shows up, it says in the first two verses, at the city gate.

Now, the city gate is in some measure likened to the agrarian board of trade and the courthouse all in one. The city gate is where the elders would have met. And notice, while today we stand and trade in the pit, in that day they sat. And so he elects ten men who are there of the neighborhood.

They are seated. And then he sees this nearer redeemer, this one who, by way of family, had the privilege and responsibility of being closer to Elimelech and his clan, who had the rights, the privileged rights, of raising up children on behalf of the deceased.

And so he gets them there at the gate and they are now seated. And verse 3 and 4, you see Boaz's offer. Take a look. Then he said to the redeemer, Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech.

[ 6 : 22 ] So I thought I would tell you of it and say, buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me that I may know, for there is no one beside you to redeem it, and I come after you.

Now, for the reader, had we had the weeks of preparation coming to this point, this would come as a surprise. These words of Boaz relating to the land of Elimelech, now under the name of Naomi.

We thought he would have come to the gate and taken up the subject of marriage to Ruth through a Levitical prescription of Leveret marriage where a spouse who had a deceased husband had within that clan the next of kin who would marry her that the name of the husband might go on in perpetuity.

And we're expecting that. And he comes in with a land deal. Well, what you really have in that aspect is the tactical wisdom of Boaz.

In other words, he's heading off a problem in the future. If he merely goes for the Leveret marriage to Ruth and raises up offspring, he's pretty well aware that it's not going to be long before the nearer Redeemer's kin and Ruth's kin are going to be in court over who actually owns the land, both laying claim to it.

[ 8 : 10 ] For Leveret marriage is not the only stipulation in the law. Also, there's a stipulation concerning land. Leviticus 25, 23-25.

If you became impoverished on your land and you needed to sell it, you sold it to the family. You kept it in the family to the nearest one.

And so Boaz comes with this offer of purchase of land. It's there. And look how he receives it, this one who rejects Ruth.

He says the very last words of verse 4, and he said, I will redeem it. I don't know how much you know about the book of Ruth, the scroll.

It was in ancient literature. We find it on scrolls with four other short books in the Old Testament. One of the five megaloth.

[ 9 : 07 ] And it was read, this one, read at harvest time every year. And so you can imagine the oral nature of Ruth coming out among the children and the people at this point in the story and listening and having watched Boaz along the way and having seen Ruth and having moved to this very moment and then to think that this could be the marriage to this unknown closer Redeemer.

I'm sure that by the end of verse 4 when he says, I will redeem it. And all those listening, the little ones especially, would have risen up and said, no, not him. We don't like him. We don't know him.

And then Boaz brings out the fine print in the contract. He comes with full disclosure. Take a look.

He says, verse 5, And only now does he say, The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth. Now look what he says about her. The Moabite.

The widow of the dead. In order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance. And the listener waits with bated breath the marriage that might have been.

[ 10 : 31 ] And after pregnant pause, verse 6 is read, Then the Redeemer said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance.

Take my right of redemption upon yourself, for I cannot redeem it. And all the children, Yay! The rejection of Ruth.

The marriage that might have been the one who refused her. I want to say a couple things about him just by way of application.

The character of this one is now revealed. There is a brisk denial. In a sense, a renunciation of the familial obligation that related to both property and the inheritance of children in perpetuity.

Walked away from his responsibility. This man who goes unnamed shows little, if any, respect for the living, namely Naomi, or the dead, the son of Elimelech, or his widow, Ruth.

[ 12 : 00 ] In one sense, he shuns both orphan and widow. He will neither buy nor marry. How humiliating for Naomi.

How utterly devastating for Ruth. You know, the Levitical law says what would happen in such a case is that if you were humiliated in this way at the gate, you'd take your sandal and come up to this guy and take him across the face with it.

How dare you? Of course, that practice had somewhat been altered along the way. I mean, all we're left with is verses 7 and 8. Now, this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging to confirm a transaction that one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other and this was the matter of a testing in Israel.

So, the transaction is complete. There is now one who rejected her and he rejects her and rejects his whole privileged responsibility.

Let me say a word about this for many of us in this congregation. The application of his love of family would have meant the out-of-pocket expenses to retain the land and Ruth and children for her deceased husband.

[ 13 : 29 ] But he forgoes that because he doesn't want to jeopardize his own inheritance, that is, the name of his own child. In some measure, reading between the lines, it's a bit short-sighted and selfish.

By way of principle, those of us in this congregation who are now arriving at ages where our parents are older, remember this well.

We have an entire congregation that is moved toward and moving into the principle of caring for the family line, the one above us.

1 Timothy, there is a great section in chapter 5 concerning the care of widows in the church, but also in regard to the care of widows for the family.

And he says, honor widows who are truly widows. And he goes on to talk about what kind of women they would be. But he says in verses 8, but if anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for members of his household, he is denied the faith, he is worse than an unbeliever.

[ 14 : 47 ] the privileged responsibility of dozens of families in our midst here today is to begin to consider how we apply the Word of God in the care of our own.

This man could only think of what was in front of him and he had no space for Ruth. Well, the one who rejects gives way fortunately to the one who redeems.

Take a look at verses 8 and 9. So when the Redeemer said to Boaz, buy it for yourself, he drew off his sandal. Then Boaz said to the elders and to all the people, you are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Malon.

Also Ruth, the Moabite, the widow of Malon, I have bought to be my wife to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance that the name of the dead may not be cut off among his brothers and from the gate of his native place you are witnesses this day.

Two things you should see about Boaz in those short verses and in his speech. Number one, he exemplifies a readiness and a willingness to redeem.

[ 16 : 10 ] He's ready to do it. He's ready to bear the cost for the honor of the name even though the inheritance or the offspring coming forth from it wouldn't go under his name.

He was ready and he was willing. Now, as you begin to prepare your heart for Christmas, think then of Jesus.

Think of the Christ of Christmas. Think of the one who is both ready and willing to redeem. Let me put it this way.

Passages like this in the Hebrew narrative should rub against your mind and soul to the extent that they in an agitated way shake off the spiritual malaise that's forgotten the glorious truth of redemption.

Jesus was ready and willing to redeem. Christmas is a wonderful time for a fresh consideration of your state before you knew the Lord.

[ 17 : 31 ] when is the last time? You spent 15 minutes and we ought to in preparation for Advent. What was I like before I came to know the gospel if I indeed have come to know it at all?

What state was I in? Metaphorically speaking, you were like Ruth. You were an outsider. You were one destined for the wrath of God. You were under his judgment.

You were not part of his family. You were without all the blessings. You stood outside of everything in Christ. You were simply without hope.

Save his sovereign mercy. Consider these weeks a fresh way your life before Christ.

secondly, may it be a fresh recollection of the cost of the incarnation. The cost of redemption.

[ 18 : 39 ] Your redemption. Jesus standing on the cusp of what was the eternal word of God and plummeting into the world in flesh in the form of a servant and to death not of his own doing or for his own deeds but as a transaction to turn away God's wrath that you might have his righteousness the cost of the incarnation.

It's not merely sentimentally found at the cross. it's the cost from eternity that he would regard himself of so little estate that you might know him.

What a consideration. What a recollection. I think of the book of Hebrews which has those wonderful words of Christmas in one sense where Jesus says in chapter 10-5 consequently or the writer says when Christ came into the world he said and then he quotes the Hebrew scriptures sacrifices and offerings you have not desired but a body have you prepared for me in burnt offerings and sin offering you have taken no pleasure then I said behold I have come to do your will oh God it is written of me in the scroll of the book I mean that's the way you need to consider Christmas Jesus standing behold I have come to do your will what is your will to take on a body for what purpose the bride of Christ might be redeemed might be brought back at the gates how is it that we enter the season of advent of all seasons with hearts so mysteriously calloused to the glory of being loved like this the glory of the cross a fresh appreciation for redemption well

I think the application at least for this message begins to flow with words of rejoicing the one who rejects Ruth gives way to the one who redeems Ruth and when that redemption is complete and your heart begins to feel it then it gives way to words of rejoicing and the words of rejoicing in the text come from two primary groups they're the elders at the gate who bring words of witness!

concerning Boaz and then there's the women at the bedside after the birth of the little one and they are words of rejoicing there they are verse 11 and 12 we are witnesses of what well the words that come forth first may the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah there's this blessing that goes forth may your house be a wonderful house of the growing people of God words of rejoicing words of rejoicing concerning Boaz may you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem remember Boaz was very much like a father figure to Ruth he says in fact of her he bestows upon her blessing because she didn't go after all the young men in other words he has this kind of paternal love the love of the father is what he gives to her in covenantal way and now the phrase is may you be renowned may your name grow that's exactly what your heart ought to be saying come

[ 22 : 43 ] Christmas to the heavenly father he has come with covenantal love he has thrown his love upon you he has covered you he redeemed! He bought you he created you you you are his what a holiday what a holy day it really is and then the third word may you may your house be like the house of Perez I mean isn't that great these three worshipping words of rejoicing!

One to the woman one to Boaz and then one to his offspring or his house may it be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah where we were two weeks ago when Perez of course was what looked like was going to be the second child of Tamar because the first one came out and the scarlet thread went around the wrist and then he withdrew it and then Perez made a breach he jumped in front and came out first and they go well you must be Perez now they say to Boaz you're like Perez man you you jumped to the front of the family line the friend over here who had the rights to Ruth and the privileged responsibilities for Ruth he rejected it and you come in first how great is this may you leap what great words the extension of the household and it's only followed in the narrative by these words of rejoicing that begin to spill out no longer from the elders at the gate toward

Boaz but from the women toward Naomi in regard to Ruth at the birth of the son the Lord gave her conception verse 13 and she bore a son then the women said to Naomi blessed be the Lord who's not left you this day without a redeemer look the words of blessing are the words that begin to emerge when you see redemption in its full light he shall be to you a restorer of life and I say to us who have walked in the midst of ecclesial assemblies for years but have somehow forgotten the fresh winds of Christmas he can be a restorer of faith when you consider the true depth of redemption this one whose life she said don't call me Naomi call me bitter well how many here today walk into

Christmas singing carols on the front end of the service and out the door on the back end caught in the cobwebs of Christendom have lost the Christ of Christmas he can restore what a great word what a great picture I mean they name him Ovid I mean what a holiday photo are you sending photos this week month I don't know I love getting the family photos got a few of you this week I like to look at all of you thank you for sending them continue please what a photo I mean here's Ovid on the lap of Ruth the Moabite off to Ruth's left is her in a sense her mother-in-law widowed Naomi off her right shoulder is

Boaz who himself was born of a mixed marriage and perhaps even his mother's in the frame coming in for the holiday to see the child born and her name is Rahab here's here's the mother-in-laws the grandmothers Rahab a woman from Jericho who who is married into the family of God happy holidays from our home to yours and you and I look at the photo and we say this is unbelievable and we want to look at the little guy Obed in the middle and say and Obed you don't even know the least of it yet you're going to be the grandfather of the!

[ 27 : 08 ] king! Merry Christmas Redemption those are the responses concerning Ruth what a story the one who rejected her the one who redeemed her the words of rejoicing that should begin to emerge from you and then that problematic record at the end I've come to believe that the genealogy at the end is important if the others are witnessing words of rejoicing for those who delight in what God is doing I've come to think that the genealogy was written for those who doubt or don't don't actually believe that God was doing

I mean you have to ask yourself what's the genealogy for is it merely an appendix or is it so important that the whole book needs to be interpreted in light of it well there's a great debate on that I lean with the latter rather than the former that this book of Ruth was written at least in the days of David for a purpose genealogies are politically very important they they legitimize they authenticate the line of David which means that some perhaps in David's reign had come to think he illegitimate or not wanting to follow his rule in fact we know in the literature of David that many times at least later in his reign some people came and said David everyone to his own house I'm not following David he's got Tamar back there Ruth back there all these sinners back there everyone do what they want to do I'm not following David well then this book emerges as a very politically potent narrative to extol the godly virtues of the one and David's reign the record I wonder!

if there are those here today who discard Christmas Jesus not ready to bring your words of rejoicing for his reign over your life is yet considered to be illegitimate well Matthew would tell you otherwise and the resurrection would demonstrate it and so as we come third week of Advent in the redemption of Ruth may God use it to decalcify your soul and to prepare you to worship our heavenly father we thank you for this great narrative and ask that you would strengthen us to love you well with great appreciation for

Christmas in Christ's name we pray amen let's stand and give our hearts to the Lord through words of rejoicing and worship!

[ 31 : 10 ] there is the Redeemer Jesus, God's own Son Precious Lamb of God, Messiah Holy One Thank you, O my Father For giving us your Son And leaving your Spirit Till the work on earth is done Jesus, my Son