

Ruth

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Date: 26 June 2016

[0:00] Ruth, it's the eighth book in the Bible.

! The name Ruth means friendship.

And Ruth's story is a story of faith and of faithfulness. And of God's love enduring for his own people as he leads and blesses in the lives of ordinary people through difficult times.

So there's something for everyone here. I tried to crystallise it and structure it, but it's multifaceted, so I couldn't really make it a simple cut-and-dried three-point sermon, which I tried to do.

There's just so much jam-packed in there. The story of Ruth, it starts with the death of a husband and it ends with the birth of a baby. It begins with sorrow and it ends with joy.

[1:21] It begins in Ruth 1, verse 1. There was a famine in the land. A famine in the land. It was a time of drought. A harsh time.

No rain. Only death and hardship. And in this time, it was the time of the judges. So it was a dark period in the Hebrew nation's history.

The time of the judges was when people did what was right in their own eyes. It was a time of falling away, of apostasy and of social chaos. Things were desperate.

There was a famine in the land. And we read how there was a man from Bethlehem named Elimelech.

And Elimelech was forced out of his home by this famine in the land. And he went to live in the forbidden land of Moab with his wife Naomi and their two sons.

[2:20] They went to Moab and they continued there. It was a forbidden land. Moab was a despised tribe, a cursed nation. A pagan people.

It was a pagan place, Moab. You wonder why on earth did Elimelech take Naomi and their two sons to this place.

This pagan place. Next up, Naomi's husband died. In chapter 1 verse 3. What's more, Naomi's two sons even married women from Moab.

This was also against God's law. And it was wrong in God's sight. And after ten years then, these two sons of Naomi also died.

So this then left Naomi as herself a widow. And her two daughters-in-law also as widows.

[3:29] And they were childless. It was desperate times. Naomi had lost both her own husband and both of her only two children.

So here she was. Naomi now has left a widow in a strange land. And what's more, she had the care of her two daughters-in-law who were also widowed.

And being a widow in these times was certainly a difficult position to find herself in.

So Naomi then heard how the famine was now over in Judea, her homeland. And she decided then to return to Bethlehem.

Bethlehem. Bethlehem, it means the house of bread. The famine was over in Bethlehem. So she decided, Ruth 1 verse 6, And then she arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread.

[4:45] She'd heard how Bethlehem had bread again. She had no home, no husband, no sons. Naomi was in despair now.

She'd hit rock bottom. Rock bottom. It was terrible for her. Naomi urged her daughters-in-law to remain in Moab.

Go and find husbands there, in their homeland, from among their own people. She said, go home.

Go home. Orpah, one of the daughters-in-law, decided that she would.

So Orpah kissed Naomi, her mother-in-law, goodbye. And she took the easy way out of the situation. She went home to Moab. She took the easy way out.

Ruth 1 verse 14, And they lifted up their voice and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law. She kissed her goodbye.

[5:50] She went back to Moab. But Ruth clave unto her. Ruth clave unto Naomi. She would not let her go.

Her mother-in-law. Now who's got a mother-in-law like that? Ruth clave unto her mother-in-law. She would not let her go. There was something special there.

Naomi also urged Ruth to return to her people and her gods. Verse 15 of chapter 1. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and unto her gods.

Return thou after thy sister-in-law. But Ruth was determined to step out into the unknown and to go on with Naomi.

She chose not to go back to the land where she was from and her gods, small g. But she chose to go on into the unknown for her with Naomi.

[6:53] So notice here Ruth's faithfulness. She was faithful. Faithfulness is one of the key themes of the book of Ruth. We see Ruth's faithfulness to Naomi.

We see Boaz's faithfulness to Ruth later. And how they all ultimately were faithful unto God. So Ruth determined that she would be loyal.

She would be faithful. She cleaved. She cleaved. She clung. She held her mother-in-law. And committed herself to her mother-in-law and her mother-in-law's God.

The true God. The God of Israel. Ruth chose to forsake her home, her homeland, her people and the gods of Moab, so-called gods.

And she went with Naomi. Ruth showed her commitment and her care for her. Ruth 1 verse 16. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee or to return from falling after thee.

[7:54] For whither thou goest, I will go. And where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people.

And thy God, my God. Amen. Here was a turning point for Ruth. She said, where you go, I'm going to go.

Where you stay, I'm going to stay. Your people are going to be my people. Your God is going to be my God. My God. It was a conversion point. A turning point in our life.

Verse 17. She goes on. Where thou diest, will I die. And there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

She was with her till the end. Unto death. It was a rock solid commitment, wasn't it? A faithfulness in Ruth.

[8:52] This was a trying time nevertheless for Naomi. And Naomi's life was overwhelmed with grief and sorrow. And loss and loneliness. And bitterness.

Like it consumed Naomi. Here was this woman all alone. A stranger. Vulnerable. In hard times. Without a husband. Without a family. And when she walked into her hometown. People were, is that Naomi? They were whispering about her.

That's not her, is it? Now she'd left Bethlehem. When she had plenty. But now she was coming back. A widow woman. Forlorn.

And worn down. As she walked into her hometown. People were saying about her. Is this Naomi? Verse 19. So they too.

[9:53] Ruth and Naomi. Went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass. When they were come to Bethlehem. That all the city was moved about them. And they said.

Is this Naomi? Naomi? She looked so different. From the woman who had left. Bethlehem.

Those many years before. At that time. When her family made that unwise choice. To go to pagan Moab. To live. That pagan land.

And life had taken its toll. On Naomi. Naomi. She even told them. Don't call me Naomi anymore. Naomi. Naomi means sweet.

Or pleasant. Naomi meant sweet. She said. Don't call me Naomi anymore. Call me Mara. Bitter. Bitter.

[10:53] Verse 20. And she said unto them. Call me not Naomi. Call me Mara. Bitter. For the Almighty.

For the Almighty have dealt. Very bitterly with me. It seemed a hopeless. Helpless situation. And Naomi. As much as she recognised the Almighty. Yet in her troubles.

In her deep sorrow. She was in bitterness. Some have compared Naomi. To being like a female Job. She lost everything.

Everything. Her home. Her husband. Her sons. Even her livelihood. And she became the lowest of the low. A widow. An outcast in her society.

Someone who was going to be doing it tough. For the rest of her life. She was poor. And widowed. Later we see. Naomi's faith strengthened. And was restored.

[11:56] But for now. She cried out. In her great grief. It was a difficult time for her. And yet. Even in her grief. God had given her a gift.

Ruth. Ruth was God's gift to Naomi. The Lord had not forsaken Naomi. Ruth had lost her husband as well. Yet she yielded to God.

She didn't yield to bitterness. And God was still working out his plan. In all of this hardship. And heartache. God was working out his plan.

For world redemption. Through Ruth. So the two women. They arrived in Bethlehem. Just in time. For the harvest. The early spring harvest.

It says from verse 22. Of chapter 1. So Naomi returned. And Ruth the Moabitess. Her daughter-in-law with her. Which returned out of the country of Moab.

[12:55] And they came to Bethlehem. In the beginning of barley harvest. The time of harvest. A great time of joy. Of praise.

It was spring. In the eighth book. Of Ruth. Of Ruth. Which means new beginnings. It was now spring.

A time of new life. Of new beginnings. And Naomi. And Naomi had there. A kinsman. A distant relative. Of her husband.

Named Boaz. Chapter 2. Verse 1. We meet Boaz. And Naomi had a kinsman. Of her husband. A mighty man of wealth. Of the family of Elimelech.

And his name was Boaz. And then it was that Ruth went straight to work. As she arrived. Pretty much straight away. She got into the fields.

[13:52] Into those harvest fields. Wanting to support herself and her mother-in-law. She didn't wait around. She got busy. And the Lord made a provision.

In the law of Moses. For such a scene. For the poor. And the stranger. So that in the land of Israel. This land of promise. No one.

Who would work. Would ever have to starve. There would always be provision. And even the poorest of the poor. Could go behind the reapers. In the harvest fields.

And pick out the small amounts of scraps. The leftover grain. To earn some kind of living. To scrape together. Something. To gather.

And support themselves. So that poor could go and glean in these fields. And they collected the grain that was left behind. By the reapers. And it just so happened.

[14:51] That Ruth came. To the field. Belonging to Boaz. So we see. Ruth. Faithful.

We see Ruth. Humble. That she was willing to. To roll up her sleeves. So to speak. I don't know if she had sleeves. But whatever she did. She got stuck into it.

In the harvest field. She took that place of humility. To serve. To support. To work. To earn. To sustain. Her mother-in-law.

Verse 3 of chapter 2. And it says. And she went and came. And gleaned in the harvest field. After the reapers. And her hap. In other words. It just so happened.

Her fortune. Of sorts. Her hap. Was to light. On a part of the field. Belonging unto Boaz. Who was of the kindred.

[15:47] Of Elimelech. So he was of the family. Of the line of Elimelech. Naomi's now deceased husband. And next. While she was working in the fields.

Ruth. Was noticed by Boaz. This wealthy landowner. Now Boaz. In the book of Ruth. Is like a picture. Of our Lord Jesus.

Our Redeemer. And Boaz. In his place here. Was the master. Of this harvest field. And of course we know.

The Lord Jesus. Is the Lord of the harvest. So we see that little picture there. Even in that. And so Boaz. Also happened. To be related to the family.

Of Naomi's husband. Just so happened. Just so happened. She was related to Boaz. Just so happened. She happened to be in the field. Just of all the fields. Happened to be his field.

[16:44] You know. God was working. Behind the scenes. Orchestrating. The events. Chapter 2. Verse 4. And behold. Boaz came from Bethlehem. And said unto the reapers.

The Lord be with you. And they answered him. The Lord bless thee. So he greeted them. And Boaz asked about this hard working. And devoted young widow. Working in the fields.

And he came back. With Naomi. Out of the country of Moab. Chapter 2. Verse 7. The man still recounting. What has happened. And he goes on and said.

And she said. I pray you. Let me glean and gather. After the reapers. Among the sheaves. So she came. And hath continued. Even from the morning. Until now. That she tarried.

A little in the house. So basically. The foreman. Of the harvest field. Was saying. This Ruth. Is the one who came. With Naomi. Out of the country of Moab.

[17:40] And she asked. If she could glean. You know. Pick up those. Leftover grains. And she's continued here. From the morning. Even until now. Scarcely taken a break.

Basically. She's taken little time for rest. So here was Ruth. Poor. And helpless. And she'd work hard. Again. Another character. A trait. Of this woman of God.

That she was faithful. She was humble. And she worked hard. In supporting. And sustaining her family. Her mother-in-law.

And so Boaz. Realised now. That this Ruth. Was his relative. By marriage. Boaz. Was kind. He was generous. A man of honour. And he introduced himself to Ruth.

Verse 8. Of chapter 2. Then said Boaz unto Ruth. Hearest thou not my daughter. Go not to glean in another field. Neither go from hence. But abide here fast.

[18:36] By my maidens. He said stay here. Stay here in my field. With my workers. With my maidens. With the other women working here. Boaz was pleased.

That she was working in his field. And Boaz promised her protection. And provision. What a picture this is. Of how God sustains. His people.

And chapter 2. Verse 9. Boaz goes on to Ruth. He says. Let thine eyes be on the field. That they do reap. And go thou after them. Have I not charged the young men.

That they shall not touch thee. And when thou art a thirst. Go unto the vessels. And drink of that. Which the young men have drawn. So he made sure she was protected. On the field.

Which might have been. A risky place. For a young woman to be. And also. That provision would be made. That she could drink. And partake.

[19:32] Of the refreshments. That his workers. Were provided. Verse 10. Then she fell on her face. And bowed herself to the ground. And said unto him. Why have I found grace in thine eyes.

That thou shouldest take knowledge of me. Seeing I am a stranger. She was saying. Why are you caring about me? Why are you bothered about me? I am a stranger. And she bowed herself to the ground.

In humility. And Boaz commended Ruth. For her faith. And her faithfulness to Naomi. Her mother-in-law. He commended her. Verse 11. And Boaz answered.

And said unto her. It hath fully been showed me. All that thou hast done. Unto thy mother-in-law. Since the death of thine husband. And how thou hast left. Thy father. And thy mother.

And the land of thy nativity. And art come unto a people. Which thou knewest not. Heretofore. You've left the land of your birth. You've come unto this strange land. You've looked after your mother-in-law.

[20:30] Boaz recognised. This was a woman. Who had faith. And faithfulness. And then he goes on. Verse 12. He encouraged Ruth in her faith.

And he recognised. He encouraged her. To realise. That over her. Were the wings of protection. Of God almighty. Her refuge.

And her strength. Verse 12 of chapter 2. The Lord recompense thy work. And a full reward be given thee. Of the Lord God of Israel. Under whose wings thou art come to trust.

He said. May the Lord reward you. For what you're doing. And know that the Lord. Has his wings over you. As a protective bird.

Over her chicks. The Lord. Has got his wings. Over his people. And he sustains us. And shelters us. He is our refuge. And our strength.

[21:27] And Ruth had put her trust. Under the wings. Of the true God. Of Israel. Boaz told his men. Drop some extra grain. Drop some extra handfuls.

Here and there. On purpose for her. And when Ruth had got home. After that day. She had these arm loads of grain. You can imagine. She'd gleaned so much grain.

It was amazing. And Naomi. Naomi was just staggered. About what she had gathered. And asked her. What's happened? How has this happened? And Ruth explained.

How Boaz had showed such kindness to her. There's another theme. Of the book of Ruth. Is loving kindness. Loving kindness. Through the book.

We see this repeated theme. Of loving kindness. As Ruth showed. Her mother-in-law. Loving kindness.

[22:24] And now. As Boaz showed. Ruth. Loving kindness. We see the loving kindness of God. As verse 20. Of chapter 2. Says. And Naomi said unto her.

Daughter-in-law. Blessed be he. Of the Lord. Who hath not left off. His kindness. To the living. And to the dead. Kindness. Loving kindness. It's a repeated word. In the book.

And Naomi said unto her. The man is near of kin unto us. One of our next kinsmen. So Naomi saw. The kindness of Boaz.

About what he had done. His loving kindness. Of his generosity. Of his provision. Of his protection. And she saw in all of this. This was God's doing. God has done this.

And she gave praise. She blessed the Lord. And gave praise. Ruth discovered now. That Boaz. Was qualified to redeem her.

[23:23] This is another. Custom of the time. Boaz was qualified. As her kinsman. Redeemer. Now the custom of this time.

Was that. When a man died. His brother. Would take on the responsibility. For the dead man's widow. He would take her on.

As an extra wife. And ideally provide her. With a son. Who would both then. Carry on. The name. Of his dead brother. And provide. For his mother.

So. This was the. Custom. The principle. That was. Then. Practiced. And so this then. Meant that for Boaz. Boaz had the right.

To redeem. Ruth. To save her. Her. To provide for her. To make her. As one of his own family. Now it was not the dumb thing.

[24:18] So much for the man. To make an approach here. And so Naomi told Ruth. What to do. To make it known to Boaz. That he could redeem her. As her kinsman.

As her relative. And so Ruth approached him. As she followed Naomi's instructions. And lay at his feet. At one time. Now this did not involve. Immodesty.

It was just the way. Of the east. To communicate. In these. Symbolic. Terms. And she lay at his feet. On the threshing floor. It was an open space. And the workers were sleeping there.

In their garments. But Ruth lay at Boaz's feet. Ruth was by this. Making known to Boaz. Making him aware. Of his obligation. As a kinsman.

To marry the widow. Of the deceased relative. And continue his line. She came humbly to Boaz. And then he was disturbed. He noticed her.

[25:17] And she called herself. Your maid. Ruth. She showed that humility again. And she said to him. Cover me. Cover me. So what she was saying.

By this was. Look. I'm your maid. Your servant. And I need covering. You're qualified. And I know it. So spread your covering. Over me.

And. This again. Was a symbolic. Action. As Boaz. Then spread his garment. Over Ruth. He declared. His plan. And his intention. To protect her. To marry her. To cover her. This was. Virtually a proposal. And so Ruth. Was literally saying. Take me under your protective wings.

It's got that same. Hebrew. Word there. As. The Lord covering. With his wings. Was. How. Ruth. Saw. Boaz. To cover her.

[26:13] To put the mantle. Of. His garment. Over her. And so. What Ruth. Was literally saying. Was. Take me under your protection. Under your roof. Effectively.

She was asking. For his protection. Through marriage. Now. The book of Ruth. Shows people. Living lives. Of honour. And truth.

Here was Ruth. A hard working. Virtuous woman. There was no. Lack of virtue. Or immodesty. Here. No. No. Immorality. And.

She treated. Boaz. With. Integrity. As he treated her. With integrity. And with respect. While fulfilling. His lawful responsibility.

Because verse 11. Of chapter 3. Goes on to say. That there was. Someone else. Who might have. More of a claim. And so. Boaz. Had to follow.

[27:09] His lawful. Responsibility. So verse 11. He says. And now my daughter. Fear not. I will do to thee. All that thou requirest. For all the city of my people.

Doth know. That thou art. A virtuous woman. Ruth. Faithful. Humble. Hard working. A woman. Of virtue. A virtuous woman. Now the Bible says. A virtuous woman. Who can find. She was such a woman. A woman. And Boaz.

Showed his promise. To care for her. And provide for her. So he gave her. Six measures of grain. As a sign of this. Another great. Quantity of grain. But he did go on.

To say. Verse 12. How there was another man. Who according to Hebrew custom. Had prior claim. To marry Ruth. He had to do. What was lawful. Now verse 12. He goes on.

[28:03] He says. And now it is true. That I am thy near kinsman. Howbeit. There is a kinsman. Nearer. Than I. So.

He had to go through. The process here. And so. The very next day. Boaz went down. To the marketplace. And he found. That other man. Who was the nearer. Relative. Who had the first choice.

He had the first option. To buy the family land. And to take Ruth. As wife. And Boaz first gave this man. His lawful. Opportunity. But he refused it.

So this left Boaz. Free. And clear. To marry Ruth. So. God's plan. Was worked out. Even though it seemed. There was so many setbacks.

Right through. The famine in the land. The loss of. Elimelech. The loss of the two sons. The. Being torn away. From a homeland. Going to.

[29:00] Bethlehem. Working hard. In the fields. The hardship. The despair. The bitterness. Of a mother. In law.

And Ruth. Came to this place. This time. And it seemed. Someone has got. A claim. Before Boaz. But God worked it all out.

Because the man. Refused it. And so. Ruth was clear. To marry. Boaz. And Boaz. This kinsman. Redeemer. He. Accomplished.

Redemption. He bought back. He. Paid for the family property. He paid the price. In full. This is Boaz. What he did. It's a picture again.

Of Christ. Our Redeemer. Boaz. This kindly man. This generous man. Who protected. And provided. Paid the redemption.

[29:56] Christ. A picture again. Of our Redeemer. Willing. And able. To save. Boaz.

Like Christ. He was the bread of life. He was the Lord. Of the harvest. He was the giver. Of rest. He was the kinsman. Redeemer. Saviour.

He saved. Ruth. From the. Awful lot. In life. And Naomi too. God's plan. Was redemption. God's plan.

Was for redemption. Ruth. Was redeemed. She was. Purchased. She was delivered. From her. Despair.

From. Her. Difficulties. And she was. Saved. Out of that. God's plan. God's plan. Was for redemption.

[30:53] Not just for Ruth. But for the world. For the whole world. Boaz. And Ruth. Become the grandparents. Of King David. From whose line.

Came our Saviour. And Redeemer. The Saviour. Of the world. God's plan. Wasn't just. About Ruth. Or Naomi. God's plan. Was the redemption. For the whole world.

God. The redemption. Plan. For whosoever will. May come. And know this Redeemer. And this salvation. So. Boaz. Pictures for us.

God's kindness. God's grace. God's loving kindness. And mercy. That he extends still. Tonight. To us. Ruth 4. Verse 14.

And the women said unto Naomi. Blessed be the Lord. Which have not left thee this day. Without a kinsman. That his name may be famous in Israel. Naomi had a reason to praise.

[31:52] Her daughter. Now. Was married. And. There was support. There was. Provision. And protection. Redemption. Came to their house.

And what is significant. Is that Ruth was in. The line of David. And from her. Descended. Our Redeemer. Our Lord. Just the last few verses of Ruth.

4. Verse 15. And they went on. These women that. Gave praise. And he shall be unto thee a restorer. Of thine old age.

For thy daughter-in-law. Which loveth thee. Which is better to thee. Than seven sons. Have born him. Here was Ruth. Naomi. Said. Was. It was said to Naomi.

That Ruth. Loves thee. And she is better to thee. Than seven sons. That's the character. Of this woman. This virtuous woman.

[32:52] Ruth. Naomi's. Daughter-in-law. Was better to her. Than seven sons. Verse 16. And Naomi took the child. And laid it in her bosom. And became nurse unto it.

So Naomi. Naomi. Was blessed to hold. Her grandchild. Her grandson. And she became a nurse. Unto him. And verse 17. And the women. Her neighbours.

Gave it a name. Saying. There is a son. Born to Naomi. And they called his name. Obed. He is the father of Jesse. The father of David.

The women said. There is a son. Born to Naomi. And they called his name. Obed. Obed. Obed means worshipper.

Worshipper. Naomi. Whose name. Men sweet. She changed it. To mean bitter. Had a grandson.

[33:49] Who she. Had named. Worshipper. Worshipper. Now God had a plan. Right through the book. Of Ruth. God had a plan. Right through the life. Of Ruth.

And God's plan. God. Means. Everything to us too. Yes. It's God's redemption plan.

We see. In the character of Boaz. The character of Christ. We see. In the experience of Ruth. The experience that we can have. Out of Naomi.

Through her sadness. And grief. As the book started. With the death of a husband. The book finished. With the birth of a son. A grandson. And so let's be encouraged today.

As we think of this virtuous woman. Ruth. We can learn so much from her. And apply it. Even in our lives. As we see. Her faith.

[34:45] Her faithfulness. She stuck by her mother-in-law. She claved unto her. She cleaved unto her. Clung unto her. She went through.

The hardship. With her mother-in-law. Through the hard times. Through the harvest times. She saw God's provision. God's protection. And God's redemption.

Through Boaz. And so can we. We can know God's. Redeeming. Saving. Grace. We can know that. Today. Because.

Of the great. Great grandson. Of. Ruth. Our Lord Jesus Christ. He's the Redeemer.

And Saviour of the world.