

From Barrenness to Blessing

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[0 : 00] All right, well, as we are hopefully going to recover from these technical difficulties this morning, we're still in the book of Ruth. As a matter of fact, this morning, we're going to finish the book of Ruth.

We're going to go back just a little bit into verses one and following that we were a little bit last week, but we're going to continue on and go through the end of our time together this morning. We have some note sheets for you. If you would like to follow along, also those who would like to follow along from your phone or your iPad, we have our latest message notes that you can follow along and actually make notes on your phone or iPad, and that will be always there for you when you go back to those notes.

Also, if you type a little bit faster than you, then you write. And so as we've looked in this last chapter, we see that Ruth has married, excuse me, has proposed marriage to Boaz, and he said yes.

And it appears that the maiden from Moab is going to wed the bachelor from Bethlehem. And we're going to also see a baby that will be born. However, a closer relative than Boaz was available.

[1 : 14] And Boaz did all that he could, and he wanted as soon as possible to go and take care of this situation. So we saw that Boaz went to this nearer relative, gave him the opportunity.

Chapter 3, verse 18, we saw about this nearer relative. And so the stage is set for us to see the rest of the story, as the saying goes.

And we know that nothing is impossible with God. When Elimelech, Naomi, and their two sons went off to Moab, and they ended up having three funerals, and when Naomi and Ruth come home, it seemed that things looked utterly bleak for them, that there seemed to be no way, it was impossible for them to recover from their great loss and from their poverty.

But we know that there is nothing impossible with God. God is always in control, and God will take care of it. So this morning, the title of our message is From Barrenness to Blessing.

From Barrenness to Blessing. And in chapter 4, what we do is we see, I believe, three lessons that chapter 4 provides that we should learn.

[2 : 34] And number one, the first lesson is God may use you to answer your own prayer. God may use you, and this may sound novel, and a lot of people pray, Lord, we pray that you would do this, and we pray that you would that.

The need is so great. I pray, Lord, that you would provide someone to take care of this need. And God is saying, okay, I'm waiting on you.

And we see that in Boaz. Boaz prayed in Ruth chapter 2 and verse number 12, if you remember, while we were back there. Boaz prayed the Lord.

He's saying this to Ruth, but he's praying. He says, the Lord repay your work with the full reward be given you by the Lord, God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.

So what does Boaz pray? He prays that Jehovah God would protect and provide for Ruth. And guess what? The provider and the protector comes through in none other than Boaz himself.

[3 : 46] So Boaz in chapter 2 prays that God would protect and provide. And so now Boaz, because the nearer kinsman redeemer says, I'll buy the land.

But wait a minute, I don't want to marry Ruth. And if I have children with Ruth, and that will encumber maybe the inheritance that if I have any other children, if I have another son, and I don't want to do that.

So Boaz, you go ahead and you buy the land and you go ahead and carry on the Levirate part of marriage, which would be go ahead and marry Ruth and carry on their family name from Elimelech and from Ruth's husband.

So God is about to answer a prayer through Boaz himself. God can answer these prayers through Boaz, I believe because of two aspects that we see both from Ruth and from Boaz himself.

And I believe they're lives worth emulating. Let's take a look in God's Word, chapter 4, beginning with verse number 1. Now Boaz went up to the gate.

[4 : 55] We looked at this last week, but we are recapping just a little bit. Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the close relative, the one we talked about in chapter 3, verse 18, to whom Boaz had spoken came by.

So Boaz said, Come aside, friend. Sit down here. So he came aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, which was the typical way that contracts were made during that time, so they could act as witnesses, and said, Sit down here.

So they sat down. Then he said to the close relative, Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold a piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.

And I thought to inform you, saying, Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitants and elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not redeem it, then tell me that I may know, for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you.

Here's the way things went. We had the... We don't even have the name of the nearer kinsman. I mean, he gave up his right. He wasn't willing to pay the price.

[6 : 12] So we don't even have his name recorded in history. So Boaz said, he says, I will redeem it. Well, but that's not all of the story.

Then Boaz said, On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, because he would go from Elimelech, Naomi's husband, to Ruth's husband. And so he said, not only do you buy it from Naomi, but you have to continue the line of succession and buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance.

And the close relative said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. What was he worried about? He was worried about himself. He was worried about his name.

He was worried about his property. He was worried about those who would inherit from his own family. He says, you may redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it.

[7 : 20] More, I would not redeem it. Now, this was the custom in former times in Israel, verse 7, concerning redeeming and exchanging. To confirm anything, one man took off his sandal and gave it to the other.

And this was a confirmation in Israel. Now, we saw last week that this was a little bit of a picture of when God said, this is your property, part of that possession was to go and walk the property, to go and look at what you've just purchased, look at what you just have.

And so, in effect, okay, Boaz, here, you walk the property. This is your property now. So he removes his sandal, gives it to Boaz, and he says, buy it for yourself.

Verse number 9, And all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, we are witnesses.

The Lord, make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, hearkening back to others in their line, the two who built the house of Israel.

[8 : 54] And may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah because of the offspring which the Lord will give you from this woman.

And so what we see based upon this, a couple of things that we should emulate. The first thing, what Ruth did is be devoted to the right person.

Be devoted to the right person. The nearer Redeemer was willing to buy it back, buy back Naomi's property, but wasn't willing to encumber himself with marrying Ruth and endangering his family's estate.

So he was willing to do part of it, but he wasn't willing to go all the way and marry Ruth and carry on Malon's line and carry on the family name.

This individual had neither the character nor the desire to step up to the plate and take care of his responsibility. And we see that today.

[10 : 01] Many will hitch their wagon to the wrong person or the wrong thing in life, and they think that it will bring them happiness. They lay all their eggs in one basket into someone that they feel can meet all of their needs.

Or they hitch their wagon to a job. Or they look at their family or their children to meet all of their needs and realize that while they do meet needs and while God has given us these things to fulfill our life and to fill our life, they're ultimately not that which we are to be devoted to as the thing or the person that can provide all of our needs.

And we know that person to be Jesus Christ. The person for Ruth was Boaz. She could have said, you know, everything is going to hang on this nearer Redeemer because he's the closest one. And well, what if he, as he did, chose not to carry everything out? Well, then she would have been in a bad place.

But she was devoted to Boaz. Boaz was the right person. Only Jesus will come through in the end. Just like Boaz. Boaz was willing because he loved Ruth.

[11 : 25] And he was willing to pay the price. So, not only do we need to be dedicated to the right person, we also need to be dedicated to paying the price.

We see that in verses 9 through 12. This other person, the narrow kinsman Redeemer, was willing to do part of it. He was willing to go part way. But he wasn't willing to go all the way.

So Boaz kept his word. He was willing to pay the price, not only to redeem the land, but to marry Ruth and have children with Ruth to carry on her dead husband's name.

And so he was willing to pay the price. So the question we might ask ourselves, what's the price that we have to pay for our complete obedience to Christ?

What is it? What's our price? What is it that we have to give up? What is it that we have to pay for complete obedience?

[12 : 28] Well, what does God require? He requires full surrender. And just like he said to that rich young ruler, what did he say when the rich young ruler said, I want to come into your kingdom.

I want to be part of your family, God. And what did Jesus tell him? Sell everything you have and literally make yourself poor as this world goes.

And he says, when you've sold everything and you have nothing left to trust in, he says, then you're willing to trust me. Isn't that so true in our lives?

To what are we holding on? Are we holding on to job, money, retirement, 401k? What are we holding on to trust in for the future?

The price that we pay to follow God is full, complete surrender, trusting nothing else but Jesus Christ. Full and complete surrender to him.

[13 : 32] Boaz was willing to give everything if it so demanded because he loved Ruth and he was willing to pay the price. He was dedicated to pay all that was necessary.

And we know that Jesus did that very same thing. Jesus paid it all, just as the song says. He gave his life. He gave his all to die on the cross in our place for our sins so that he could be our Savior.

And he was the only one that could do it. He paid the price. God used Boaz to answer his own prayer. He could do so because Boaz was the right person willing to pay the right price.

But God's not through with either Boaz or Ruth. The second lesson that we learned this morning from these verses is, second main point is, God may bless you beyond your expectations.

When we are willing to pay the price, when we are willing to divest ourselves of everything that we're trusting in but Jesus Christ, when we do that, then we can expect God to bless us beyond our wildest imagination.

[14 : 47] And he can do that because he's God. And God is a God of miracles. God is a God of coming through in the end and just blowing our mind with what he does. So Boaz marries Ruth.

The long-anticipated love story is complete. Or is it? God has been gracious to Ruth. But what about Naomi?

In verses 13 through 17, we see Boaz took Ruth. She became his wife. And when he went into her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.

So a lot of months take place in verse 13. So as we begin this portion, verses 13 through 17, they get married.

They have a baby. Well, we continue on here in verse number 14. And verse 14 says, Then the women said to Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a close relative, and may his name be famous in Israel.

[15 : 57] Verse 15, And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has born him.

Notice the perfect number. Then, verse 16, Naomi took the child, laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. Also the neighbor women gave him 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. Now remember Naomi? She had come to the point where she was finally willing to let go and willing to let God come through for her.

There had been many months, there had been many weeks, many months, where Naomi was bitter, barren and bitter. Not only had she buried her husband, she had buried her two sons. They were in a foreign land, around foreign people, and now she comes back to their hometown, Bethlehem, and they're poor. They have no visible means of support.

[17:14] And God begins to bless Ruth in the field through Boaz and what he allowed her to do, what he told his servants to allow her to do, and in his saying that he would take care of her.

And so Naomi now begins to hope, and she allows God to begin to bless her, allow God to come through for her. As Naomi, what we learn through her is the next point under that is we need to trust the Lord to bless us.

Not only expect the Lord to bless us, but trust him to bless us. Allow God to bless us and literally put all our eggs in that one basket. Trust him completely.

We see that in verses 13 through 15. When we first met Naomi, she was in a place of bitterness. She was in a place of barrenness. She was empty, and she had no hope of anything getting better. And she came back and she said, don't call me Naomi. Call me bitter. Call me Mara. Because I feel horrible.

[18:26] God has been bitter to me. God has laid on me this every... He's been terrible to me. And she says, there's no hope.

So she goes from bitterness, she goes from barrenness to blessing, and she realized there was hope through Boaz's kindness through her daughter-in-law, or to her daughter-in-law, Ruth.

So in these verses, we see a marriage. Then we see a baby. The women of town come, come to Naomi, and they pronounce a blessing. And I find it interesting, they don't talk to Ruth.

They come to Naomi in verses 14. Then the women said to Naomi. It's almost like they leave Ruth out. They come to Grandma, and they talk to Grandmother, and they give her the blessing.

And then, it's the neighborhood welcoming committee that gives Boaz and Ruth's baby a name.

Think about that.

[19:32] How would you like leaving up the name of your... the naming of your child to the local women's club? Yeah, right. Who knows? I mean, like, who knows what they would come up with?

So the women of the town come, they pronounce this blessing upon Naomi, and they say, this boy is going to be a blessing in your old age, and it's going to be a blessing to the nation.

And so this is what they're telling Naomi. And so God blessed Naomi in Obed. They say in verse 14, then the women said to Naomi, Blessed be the Lord who has not left you this day without a close relative, and may his name be famous in Israel, and may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher.

Not Boaz. They're talking about Obed now. They're talking about this baby would be a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age. For your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has born him.

Then Naomi took the child, laid him on her bosom, became a nurse to him. Verse 17, the neighbor women gave him a name saying, There is a son born to Naomi, and they called his name Obed.

[20:58] And he was going to be a blessing. He's the father of Jesse and the father of David. He was definitely a grand baby, was he not?

And our grandchildren are definitely grand. Every grandparent can probably bear witness that grandchildren are better than the fountain of youth. Like they make you young again.

Up to a point. Not all grandparents might agree with this, but they all know the saying that they're called grandchildren because they're grand when they come and they're grand when they leave.

But they are better than a fountain of youth because it's almost like they give new life. And it's like mom and dad, they're not fun, but grandparents, they're fun, right?

Because they know they can come to grandparents' house and they can get food they normally don't get at home. They can get stuff. I mean, they know how to play grandparents, right?

[22:02] Wrapped around their little finger. So they're grand. And so Obed would be a new life, would nourish, and would care ultimately for not only his mama, but also he would care for his

grandmother as she got even older.

So Obed would bless Naomi in another way. He would one day care for the family that brought him into the world, including his grandmother Naomi. So she trusted the Lord to bless her.

Then, verses 16 and 17, the next thing that I believe we see is we need to let others rejoice with us. It was a happy time.

It was a blessed time. And the ladies of town come and they're excited. They're excited for Naomi. And they pronounce his blessing upon her.

Let's look at verse 16. Then Naomi took the child, laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. And, verse 17, also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, there's a son born to Naomi, and they called his name Obed.

[23 : 08] He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. Naomi is fulfilled. She is a full-again grandmother, enjoying, helping, caring for her grandson.

Ruth sees joy in her mother-in-law's eyes again. She sees that sparkle because of the blessing that God had given them. So the neighborhood women are rejoicing, and Naomi rejoices with them, and I'm sure is thankful for the blessing that God gave to her.

The women of Bethlehem continue to rejoice as well. They probably didn't actually name Obed, I'm not sure, but they, if nothing else, they for sure pronounced that blessing based upon what his name meant, servant, and he would be a servant to Israel, and ultimately through that lineage would come King David, and ultimately down through the line King David would come our Savior, Jesus Christ.

And so God uses this Moabite woman who was at one time not in the family of God, but now is in the family and in the plan of God, and would be a great, great, great, great, and however many greats there are, grandmother to the earthly Jesus Christ.

And so it's amazing how he blessed. Obed will be famous, as we see in verse number 14, he will have a son named Jesse. Jesse is going to have a son named David, and the rejoicing in Bethlehem was just about to begin, and we would see rejoicing that would continue on.

[25 : 00] Finally, what we see is number three, the third lesson that we see in the life of Boaz, and in the life of Ruth, because we have trusted in our Redeemer, who was willing to pay the price, because we have done this, we see that God may do through you what transcends your imagination.

So don't think, there's not much I can do for God. You know what? I don't have much. I don't know much. I just don't have that much to offer.

Well, if we look at the pedigree of Ruth, if we look at the condition Ruth was in, she had nothing. She was a poor, alien woman with no means of support, with no hope of buying back the property that would have gone to her husband.

Literally, when she came to Bethlehem, she was on welfare. She goes from welfare to being a great, great, great grandmother of Jesus Christ.

So imagine that. She goes from nothing to blessing. Naomi goes from barrenness to blessing. Ruth is part of that blessing. And in Boaz, we see the picture of Jesus Christ.

[26 : 39] God may do through you what transcends your imagination. Verse 18, Now this is the genealogy of Perez. Remember, we heard the women say, may you be great like Perez.

Perez got Hezron, Hezron begot Ram, Ram begot Amenadab, Amenadab begot Nashon, Nashon begot Salmon, Salmon begot Boaz, Boaz begot Obed.

So verses 18 through 22, what we see is an abbreviated ten-person genealogy, kind of compressed here.

Perhaps the ten names here stand in contrast to the ten barren years back in Moab. In this kind of genealogy, there are different kinds of genealogy, types of genealogy in the Bible.

And in this genealogy, number seven and number ten have an important position. And in this one, number seven is Boaz, and number ten is David.

[27 : 43] The Moabites were not to enter the congregation of the Lord. Now think about this. I think we said this when we first introduced the book of Ruth.

We talked about Elimelech and Naomi going to Moab and talking about them coming back home. A scripture that God had told them not to marry, not to allow their children to marry any person from Moab or Ammon.

Well, that's what they ended up doing. But God had a plan. Remember part of what we had said as well? When we turn our life over to God, we are always going to be part of God's plan. And God had a plan for Ruth. So the Moabites, according to scripture, Deuteronomy 23, 3, were not allowed to enter the congregation of Israel even to the tenth generation. It would take ten generations if someone married a Moabite in order for them to be able to be welcomed into Israel.

[28 : 55] But this little book of Ruth closes with a ten generation genealogy that climaxes ultimately with David. And so I believe what we're seeing here is verse 22, Obed begot Jesse and Jesse begot David.

So this ten person genealogy brings all of this around all the way back to complete the cycle. God had a plan for Ruth.

Ruth obeyed her mother-in-law. Ruth forsook the idols that her family had worshipped. She forsook the land and she forsook the religion that she had been taught since she was a child because she believed in the God of Israel.

She was willing to leave her homeland, come back with or come with her mother-in-law to Bethlehem and she trusted when Naomi said to go out and do this.

Ruth said okay I will. She went out and she started gathering, starting taking care of her mother-in-law. She caught the eye of Boaz and Boaz had a plan and ultimately we see a wedding, we see a baby, and we see a blessing.

[30 : 21] From barrenness to blessing. So what are our next steps? This morning you have your next steps on your note sheet. First thing is be willing to be the answer to your own prayer.

When we pray you might have a need or you might see a need around you. Be willing to be the answer for your own prayer.

Not always, that's not always the way God is going to answer it but sometimes he may answer through you. Well God I pray that you would take care of the needs of this of my neighbor or this other person and God might say well you have the ability to take care of it.

You have the money. You have the skill. You have the time. Why don't you go and take care of that person's need and then you will become the answer to your own prayer.

So be willing to be the answer to your own prayer. next thing that we see, next step would be be devoted to Jesus. Hitch your wagon to the right person.

[31 : 33] Be devoted solely to Jesus. Thirdly, be willing to pay the price for obedience. Full, complete surrender to him.

And then lastly, trust the Lord to bless you. trust the Lord to bless you. So this has been the book of Ruth.

We go from three funerals to a wedding and a baby and a blessing. God can accomplish the impossible.

He did it through Ruth. He used Boaz, a picture of our kinsman redeemer, Jesus Christ. don't give up.

Don't give up. Don't give up. Trust God for the blessing. Let's pray. Father, there are times when we may think that there's no hope.

[32 : 42] There are times, Father, when it may seem that things are hopeless. there's no way that we could ever come back.

There's no way that we could ever have our needs met. But, Father, we know that when we are trusting you, when we are in your family, we're always part of your plan. and you know tomorrow, you have the ability to pay the price, you have the willingness to pay the price, and we see through Jesus Christ that you have done whatever it took, you've done all that it's taken to bridge the gap, to take care of our sin that separated us from you, and you bridged that chasm through the cross of Jesus Christ, and that you have reconciled us back to you through the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

Be with us, we pray, as we continue to trust you, and continue to allow you to use us throughout this week. Go with us, we ask, and be with us, we pray, as we are a blessing to others this week.

We thank you, we praise you, for it's in Jesus' name that we pray, Amen.