

Intergenerational Blessings (PM)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 October 2021

Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 00] Let me add my welcome to you all. My name is Aaron. If you're brand new, I would love to meet you after the service. Come and say hello. And I also want to thank Meryl for her testimony and challenge for us tonight. That was wonderful.

I'm going to spend about less than 10 minutes looking at this final chapter of Ruth. First we'll pray. Father, would you open our hearts to hear your word this evening?

In Christ's name, Amen. So, Ruth chapter 4, it seems to sort of tie up the whole story rather nicely. But it would be a mistake to see the end of the story, which is quite a happy ending, and go, Oh yeah, Ruth, it's just like sort of the Bible's version of a Jane Austen novel.

No, I think what I said at the start of the series was that Ruth is a great story and I hope you enjoyed the story. But it's not just that. It's a window into some of the great truths of God played out in the life of this little, little family.

So, we're going to go to chapter 4 and see what God is showing us in the end. You remember, right at the end of chapter 3, we sort of left the story with some uncertainty.

[1 : 22] There was that sort of unorthodox marriage proposal on the threshing floor. It was all looking good, except we discovered there's another guy, another redeemer, who's first in line to help Naomi and Ruth.

And that's where chapter 3 ends there, a little bit in limbo. So, now we find ourselves in chapter 4 and we're at the gate. In ancient times, the gate was, this was sort of like the administrative center of the city.

It's where business deals were done. Boaz is at the gate and he really wants to talk to this other redeemer guy who just happens to be walking past at that time in God's providence.

Now, you would think that Boaz would say something like this, hey man, I mean they probably knew each other, hey man, look, there's this woman, she's a widow. You know, I'm the redeemer, I'm one of the redeemers, I really like her, but you're the closer redeemer so you can marry her.

But if you're not into it, I'm really into it. So, you'd think he'd sort of just come out like that, but he doesn't, he starts talking about the land. Apparently, Naomi's late husband had some land and being poor, Naomi had to sell it, it would seem.

[2 : 40] And the person who was supposed to buy it, should buy it, is the closest family redeemer guy. Remember from a few weeks ago, under God's law at the time, each family had this redeemer, or a kinsman redeemer it's sometimes called.

And they were responsible for the welfare of the extended family, so when somebody was in trouble, they would help them out. They could be buying somebody out of slavery, it could be buying the land so it stays in the family and looking after the widow.

It's a great idea. Boaz was one of those redeemers, but there was a closer relative. So, back to the gate. So, Boaz is there with this other relative and the elders. And they're there to talk about Naomi's land.

The other relative isn't named, we'll call him Mr. No Name. So, Boaz says to Mr. No Name, you have the first option on the land. It's your job to buy, look after Naomi, if you don't, I will.

Now, Mr. No Name is thinking, this is great. I get the field. Naomi is an older widow, is not having kids.

[3 : 44] So, my kids will inherit that land that I buy. And he says, yes, I'll take it. And then Boaz adds, listen, there's one more point, it's just a detail really, but by the way, if you buy the land, it means you have to marry Naomi's daughter-in-law, the Moabite woman, Ruth.

And, obviously, it means you have to raise her kids if she has them, etc., etc., etc. And Mr. No Name backpedals very quickly. He goes from, I will buy the land to, I will not buy the land.

Now, his reason is interesting, isn't it? He says it will impact, basically says it's going to impact my family's inheritance. So, what's he talking about there? And we'll come shortly to why this is important.

Well, the land deal without Ruth is great. He cares for Naomi until she dies. Then he gets to keep the land, pass it on to his kids. If he marries Ruth, and they have children, the land goes to those children in the name of the dead husband.

So, that's a net financial loss for Mr. No Name. So, Mr. No Name is happy to be the redeemer whilst it worked for his advantage, but not when it cost him.

[5 : 03] So, let me make a couple of points here. Firstly, the reason this passage includes all of this detail about why Mr. No Name rejects the offer is to show us that Boaz does the right thing, but at great cost.

This act of redemption costs him. And he's happy to sacrifice something to help. Mr. No Name was not. And that's probably why we don't know his name.

It's a clever irony in the passage that in an attempt to keep his name, his family line as strong as possible, he is eternally anonymous.

I think this is the principle that Jesus talks about in Luke 17, where he says, Whoever seeks to reserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it. Folks, redemption costs.

When it comes to redemption, when it comes to sin, for example, redemption costs. There's no sweeping sin under the carpet. We see this in God's first act of hesed loyalty to us in the garden.

[6 : 14] It's one of the very first stories in the Bible when we rebelled against them in the garden. Adam and Eve, after listening to Satan, realized their nakedness and they feel ashamed. You know the story, right?

What did God do? He covered them in animal skins. Do you ever wonder where those animal skins came from? It's easy to pass over that fact.

God had to sacrifice one part of his creation to cover the shame of somebody else. To help them was costly.

We see it played out in the Old Testament through the sacrificial system. When we hear about the sacrificial system, and to us it sounds so sort of primitive and distasteful and messy and bloody, and was it necessary?

The whole thing was necessary. And the whole thing was meant to, amongst other things, show humanity that redemption costs. There's a price.

[7 : 14] You know, when they would sacrifice some of these animals, the priest would lay his hand on the animal. And it was an act to say, this should be me.

This is you that's going to get killed right now, but it should be me. It's you. Redemption costs. And of course the climax of all of this, all of this is pointing to, is of course Jesus on the cross.

The most costly act of redemption. A redemption that costs God the most precious thing to him in the world, his own son. Now let's jump to verses 13 to 17.

We'll skip all the sandal stuff because nobody knows what that means, to be honest. So Boaz marries Ruth. They have a son.

And there's this lovely scene in verse 16. You remember Naomi, at the end of chapter 1, says, don't call me Naomi, call me Mara, which means bitter. So you have that. And then we have this lovely scene in verse 16.

[8 : 16] Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. Isn't that wonderful? What a great picture. And the woman of the neighborhood gave him a name saying, a son has been born to Naomi. They called him Obed.

He was the father of Jesse, father of David. Come back to that. It's great, isn't it? God is reversing Naomi's situation. And then after that, we have what seems to be an appendage to the story, a short genealogy.

And it's always a mistake to skip the genealogies in the Bible. What's the genealogy here for? It seems a bit boring considering it's such a cracker of a story.

We get a little bit of a genealogy. What's it all about? In 1912, there was a guy called John Henry Jowett. He was a pastor of a Presbyterian church in New York. And he gave the Yale lectures on preaching one year.

And he said, a great preacher is someone who looks to the horizon rather than the local landscape. And here is, let me quote him now. The preacher has a marvelous way of connecting every subject

with eternity past and with eternity to come.

[9 : 22] Folks, that's what the author of Ruth is doing here with this genealogy.

Because we hear on the very last line, the son, David, King David. The author is lifting our eyes beyond this little family to the greater work of God in history.

See, God here is not just doing a nice thing for a struggling widow. He is preparing his people for the coming of the great Old Testament king, King David.

Who in turn prepares us for the true king, Jesus. And what's really cool is the people in the story have no idea. Boaz, Ruth, they've got no idea about this stuff.

They never know. They don't realize that their lives meant so much more than they could ever know, as do yours. The meaning of your life is greater than you can see.

[10 : 41] Okay, let's finish up. We covered a lot of ideas in the last four weeks. Let me finish with a reminder of a really big one. A couple of big ones here, I think.

There is a God. He has a plan. Which he is working out in history. And that plan can look accidental.

It can feel random to your human experience. It can look like a coincidence. Like a young widow happening to wander into the right field.

Or a coincidental meeting at the town gate. Folks, do not be discouraged if you don't feel like God is in control of your life. Because your life just feels random.

He is in control. And this is something we should meditate on. We should meditate on this. God is in control. Think on that. Consider on that. Why? Because it will suppress our natural tendency towards atheism.

[11 : 45] Practical atheism. Which Christians can live. We can live as practical atheists. We can live as if it's all just up to us. Meditate on this fact that God is in control.

He has a plan. And you know what his plan is? His plan is for redemption. That's why the genealogy is there.

Ruth lifts our eyes and points us to God's great plan for the redemption of it all. Every wrong will be undone.

Every injustice will be paid for. All tears will be wiped away. That's why Jesus came.

And his hesed love to save us. Amen.