

# Redemption

*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: 19 July 2020

Preacher: James Barnett

[ 0 : 00 ] Have you ever had that joyful feeling of being set free? Earlier in the week, Alyssa's parents came and picked up our three kids.

Yes! Freedom! Freedom of the bondage of snotty noses. Freedom from the bondage of being woken up at 6.30, if not earlier, every single day.

Freedom from fights over dinner. I remember a similar feeling once I'd finished university and started working full-time. I didn't have this burden on my shoulders of always having another exam or assignment or something coming up.

That feeling of freedom when you first get your driver's license. And you can go anywhere. And invariably, at my time, we just all went to Macca's.

That feeling when maybe the first feeling when lockdown happened a couple of months ago and there wasn't the daily grind to get out of the door with kids or to go places and we could just stay at home.

[ 1 : 11 ] Or maybe that freedom when the restrictions opened up and we could go out again. How wonderful is that feeling of being set free?

Unfortunately, all of those freedoms I mentioned were fairly temporary. We picked up our kids yesterday. I did really miss them, but we've got them back. You know, the full-time job that you get gets busier than just the nine to five.

Moving out of home brings all kinds of burdens. And you just wish you had, you know, mum and dad to cook and clean for you again. Well, we can get a taste of freedom and long for it.

God's good news for us is that he offers us the most wonderful freedom. It is called redemption. We are set free from the bondage of sin and death.

Our debt is paid. Our sin and shame are covered in the blood of Jesus. And this freedom is not short-lived. It is eternal. And whilst we only see it dimly now, we will enjoy this freedom to be the people that we have been made to be.

[ 2 : 20 ] And I think this is the most wonderful thing that we can be rejoicing in. But I wonder if we can take this redemption, this freedom for granted.

I wonder if we can forget how amazing this freedom is. And I wonder if we can chase bondage too quickly. Today we are finishing our short series in the book of Ruth.

And as we have seen Naomi and Ruth, they have gone from ruin to refuge. And now they are heading towards redemption. They moved from Bethlehem in Israel into Moab.

Naomi's sons found wives. But Naomi's husband and sons died. And so Ruth, Naomi's daughter-in-law, came back to Bethlehem with Naomi and Ruth, you know, their tails between their legs as they came back.

They aren't slaves yet. But these two women were within touching distance of being forced to sell themselves to just stay alive.

[ 3 : 30 ] As we look at the conclusion of this short story about God's people, we will see three things this morning. We will see a Redeemer sought, a Redeemer found, and a Redeemer born.

And we will be reminded of the joy that we have today in our redemption that God has given us. So first of all, we're going to see the Redeemer that is sought.

Ruth has been picking grains in Boaz's field. He has been very kind and very generous with her.

And Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, has just found out that it's Boaz.

Boaz is a family member. And in Jewish law, a family member could redeem a person stuck in debt or stuck in slavery. So Naomi devises a plan.

A plan to get herself and Ruth out of their situation. Please have your Bibles open. Ruth chapter 3 verse 1. You can be in the app following these points and reading along in the Bible.

[ 4 : 36 ] But we're going to start in Ruth chapter 3 verse 1. And Naomi said, My daughter, I must find a home for you where you will be well provided for. Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours.

Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor. But don't let him know you were there until he has finished eating and drinking.

When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go, uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do. And so Ruth goes down to the threshing floor where they have just brought in the harvest.

And Boaz, he's in good spirits. The grain has been harvested. It's been brought in. And maybe out of a desire to protect the grain and protect his earnings, he goes and lies down at the end of his pile of grain.

Verse 8. In the middle of the night, something startled the man. He turned, and there was a woman lying at his feet. Who are you? Which I think is a fairly small exclamation to just find a woman lying at your feet when you're asleep.

[ 5 : 49 ] Who are you, he asked. I am your servant Ruth, she said. Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian redeemer of our family.

Poor old Boaz. There's women plotting to get him married. But Ruth's actions can seem very strange to us. And it's important to note here that there's not even a hint of sexual inappropriateness.

Ruth lies down at his feet, not by his side. But in this situation, Ruth is claiming a new relationship, a new level of intimacy.

In chapter 2, when she first met Boaz, Ruth said to Boaz, Why are you being so kind to a foreigner? I'm not even your servant. Why are you being kind to me?

But now, Ruth's language has changed. She describes herself as your servant Ruth. Spread your garment over me.

[ 6 : 50 ] Protect me, because I am your family. Boaz is someone who can redeem her. Someone who can save her family. And she's putting that to him. Please, save my family.

I really love this. It's like a love story. It's really great. And Boaz responds, verse 10, The Lord bless you, my daughter. This kindness is greater than which you showed earlier.

You have not run after younger men, whether rich or poor. Boaz says that she is being kind, because it seems that there were younger men that Ruth could have approached.

And he's inching towards a problem. There is a closer relative. There is a redeemer closer in law and in the family that should have been the first to redeem.

Verse 12, Although it is true that I am a guardian redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. Stay here for the night.

[ 7 : 54 ] And in the morning, if he wants to do his duty as your guardian redeemer, good, let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives, I will do it.

Now, I really love this interaction between Ruth and Boaz, because it comes across as a love story, but it doesn't play like a normal Hollywood love story.

Usually in your Hollywood movie, you know, two people, star-crossed, Romeo and Juliet types, they would fall in love, they would profess their love to each other, and then they would fight at all costs to be together.

You know, they would go off on a lode, they will do anything, they'll fight any battle, whatever, just so that they can be together. But that's not Boaz and Ruth. Boaz and Ruth are both far too godly people for that.

Boaz says, well, look, there's somebody else who's got the first responsibility. And if he does that, that's fine. I'm not going to fight. I might love the idea of being married to you and caring for you, but he's got first rights and that's okay.

[ 9 : 04 ] But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives, I will do it. That is a very large oath to make. I really love this story because Boaz wants to do things in the right way.

He wants to obey God. He wants to honor God and he wants to obey the Lord. And so Ruth has sought a redeemer. But Boaz needs to go and speak to the other one, to the other redeemer who is closer, so that we can see the redeemer that is found.

Boaz goes to meet the man who is closer and we see the wonderful godly character as the redeemer is found here. He doesn't just, you know, take Ruth off and they don't just elope somewhere.

He doesn't sneakily redeem her on the side and then deal with the consequences. He's not creeping around in the dark. He went to the town gate and met with the other redeemer.

Verse 2. Boaz took 10 of the elders of the town and said, sit here. And they did so. 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.

[10:19] 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. Boaz, again, obeying the law, wanting to honor God, he is giving this closer relative the right to redeem it.

And the man agrees. All right. I will redeem it. But Boaz has very cleverly hidden one piece of information. Verse 5. Then Boaz said, The man says, I can't redeem it because it will endanger my own estate.

Now, this could be because he's already married. Maybe he already has a wife and children and he needs to take care of them. He doesn't want to add on another wife and potential rivalries of inheritance.

And so the man says, You buy it yourself. You redeem it. And he takes off his sandal. I thought about taking my shoe off, but, you know, that's a bit annoying. So he takes off his sandal and hands it to Boaz as a sign.

And Boaz says, Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilian, and Marlon.

[11:42] I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Marlon'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 witnesses. Then the elders and all the people of the gate said, We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel.

It's a really strange but exciting development. It's not the usual response to an engagement. You know, there's, I don't know if there was cheering. It's not the kind of, you know, I've gone to my parents and I've told them I'm engaged and there's, you know, cheering and celebration.

But there is a blessing that is made here. And again, Boaz is shown to be a man of standing, a godly man who obeys God.

He cares for the poor. He loves and he shows mercy. I just want to take a very brief aside to talk about how great Boaz is. When people see men or boys doing the wrong thing, being buffoons or idiots, people often have a saying, boys will be boys.

[13:02] And I think that can be really dangerous that we just allow boys to get away with doing dumb things and don't hold them accountable. But I want to suggest a new phrase.

Boys should be Boaz. It's not quite as catchy, but I think there's something good about it. The genealogies in the New Testament aren't something that we spend a lot of time on, but there is some really interesting detail.

Boaz is the son of Salmon. We see that at the end of Ruth. He's the son of Salmon and Rahab. Rahab is one of the four significant women in Jesus's genealogy.

Boaz's mom, Rahab, she was a prostitute who helped the spies get into Jericho. When Israel was coming through into the promised land to defeat the stronghold of Jericho, Rahab helped them and then she joined the people of God as they were heading into the promised land and she became part of the people of God.

I wonder what kind of mother she was. Was she someone who had seen the kindness and mercy of God, who had raised her son to show that same kind of mercy?

[14:23] And here we see how merciful and kind Boaz is. He's portrayed as a good boss. He goes above and beyond what is needed to do to protect Ruth.

Ruth came to get food at harvest time where the harvest would have been very high. The wheat, the barley would have been very high. This means that it actually would have been very possible for Ruth to be taken off into one of the fields and raped by one of the workmen.

But Boaz told the men not to lay a hand on her. He placed Ruth with the other female workers. He gave her a blessing. Boaz is a really wonderful, godly man.

And even when Ruth lays at his feet, he doesn't take advantage of a woman being there in the middle of the night asking for help.

He wants to do things in the daytime, in the morning, to do things legally. And remember, this is in the midst of the period of the judges. The period of the judges was when there was great moral failure, so great that God would send armies against his people to bring them back into dependence upon him.

[ 15 : 41 ] But here, Boaz stands out as a model of godly character for us to copy. So let's see if we can get that as a catchphrase, that boys should be like Boaz.

So Boaz has been found to be the redeemer. But this is not the end of the story. Redemption comes fully from the birth of a child.

This is our third point today, that we see a redeemer is born. And verse 13 sums things up nicely.

Verse 13, So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife.

When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. Isn't that wonderful? It's easy to think this book is just about this couple, how God has brought them together and their family.

But it's not just about them. In one sense, it's actually more about Naomi than Ruth, even though the book is called Ruth. Verse 14, The women said to Naomi, Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian redeemer.

[ 16 : 54 ] May he become famous throughout Israel. At the start of this book, Naomi was cursing God. Cursing God, saying that he had brought calamity upon her.

But now she can see that God is to be praised. She has blessed God, and now people around her are blessing God, because how God has cared for her. And she was not left without a redeemer.

Verse 15, He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.

And whilst having a son and grandson will continue the family and be good for Naomi, the women have just said something really interesting. They have used the word love for the first time in this book.

For what can at first seem like a love story, this is actually the first time the word love has been used, and it's used to describe Ruth's love of her mother-in-law, Naomi.

[ 18 : 01 ] The word love wasn't used of Elimelech and Naomi. The word wasn't used of Marlon and Kili and the sons for their wives. It's not even used to describe Boaz and Ruth.

But Ruth loved her mother-in-law, Naomi. At the start of this book, Naomi was filled with too much grief to see Ruth, who had stayed by her side.

When Naomi comes back into Bethlehem, she says, my life is empty. God has brought calamity against me. She couldn't even see the value of Ruth. She, who is worth more than seven sons, a perfect number of sons.

This is a relationship that goes beyond the letter of the law. Ruth could have left her mother-in-law, but she chose to show kindness and faithfulness, like the God of Israel.

It is as if Naomi is the main character of the story, and everyone else is used by God to show blessing and kindness. Boaz and Ruth, and even their baby that is born, Obed, show kindness and God's blessing to Naomi.

[ 19 : 15 ] This conclusion of the story points to the love of God, not from a story about a man and a woman loving each other, but the love of a foreigner to her aged Israelite mother, her mother-in-law who never fully appreciates her.

It shows the supernatural, other-person-centered love of God that has worked out the redemption of Ruth and Naomi. Now, we can be left wondering what the point of this little story is in the Old Testament, but the conclusion makes it very clear.

Verse 17, And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. This book is the prequel to the great King David.

Boaz and Ruth are the great-grandfather and great-grandmother of the most significant king of Israel. Ruth and Naomi have been set free by the birth of their son, but all of Israel would be redeemed and saved by the birth of David, who would be king.

This little genealogy points to the much larger genealogy of Jesus, where we see that the birth of that king, that king Jesus, would bring redemption for all people, the son who would lead to the salvation of all of us.

[ 20 : 44 ] The book of Ruth is a really sweet little part of history contained in four short chapters. We've seen Naomi and Ruth go from ruin to refuge and to finally be redeemed.

They've been set free as they are brought into Boaz's family. He has shown them so much kindness. And this is a wonderful picture of the redemption that God offers for us. But we don't need another person to be set free. And I think this is one of the unhelpful things I hear in our culture today, that we need to find someone to be set free.

You know, girls, you need to find a man like Boaz and then you can be happy. He is a wonderful model of a godly man. He is great. He is a man that all men should see and be encouraged by. But marriage is not our path to redemption. I'm trying to teach my five-year-old daughter this. She's grown up on a steady diet of Disney princesses. And they teach you much about how you need to find a man to save you.

[ 21 : 55 ] But there's only one man who can do that and that is Jesus. 1 Corinthians 6 reminds us that we were bought for a price. That we were redeemed by God at the cost of Jesus' blood.

A costly, incredible gift that we can never repay. Far more significant than being redeemed from a life of struggle and poverty for a widow like Ruth.

God has redeemed his enemies and shown his loving kindness to us in Jesus. And in the every day that he allows us to continue to live and to follow him.

Let me encourage us all not to sell ourselves into slavery again. For us in Sydney we probably don't see the impact of slavery that much.

The work of IJM, International Justice Ministries, do some amazing work seeing people in slavery be set free. But for many of us we are not that kind of slave.

[ 23 : 02 ] We can be a different kind of slave. We can have a different kind of slavery that we need to be redeemed from. We can sell ourselves into slavery of things that will make us happy.

We allow other things to capture our hearts and to enslave us again. We can be slaves to our work thinking that pursuing work will bring us happiness and set us free.

We can be slaves to social media. Getting attention and responses to posts that we make it's really addictive. It rewires our brains and we can think that we need to have a certain amount of clicks to show that we have self-worth.

But again that is just another kind of slavery. Our self-worth was shown in the cross that Jesus would redeem us. That he would set us free.

So don't enslave yourself again. There are so many idols that can capture our hearts that we can become enslaved to.

[ 24 : 11 ] I'm not going to be exhaustive and list them here but there are so many things that can fill up our hearts and replace our God. Our band is going to come up and sing for us in a moment but there's another issue that we can have which is ignoring when people share a difficult word for us.

If you've ever had a friend say to you oh look friend James I wonder if this is an issue. I wonder if you're pursuing your career too much. I wonder if you're on social media too much.

If our response to that is to get defensive it probably is an issue of idolatry. God has redeemed us. He has bought us for a price.

We are his. We need to remember that all all that God has done for us but also be people like Boaz who offer redemption and forgiveness. One of the issues I have with our current culture is the culture of cancelling people.

It's called cancel culture where people's past sins things that they have said may be an inappropriate joke they get brought up and people just get cancelled and there is no way forward.

[ 25 : 26 ] It is a way of saying that there can be no forgiveness no redemption because you have made a mistake but that is all of us. God offers all of us redemption and forgiveness.

Let's not be people that just push others away but continue to offer redemption and forgiveness even when that is incredibly hard. Ruth and Naomi have finally been redeemed.

They have been set free but the redemption that we have been offered is far better. And we're going to sing about that now.