

Boaz's Redemption Plan

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[0 : 00] We're coming towards the end of this Old Testament love story and almost to the climax and in some ways it's a little bit of an anti-climax but it's a tremendous story that we learn a great deal from just not last week but the week before we were in London and as you know London is the underground and the underground is great, it's a wonderful communication transport arena but to get around the London underground you get the use of just a very small map and as long as your eyesight is okay that map is great because it just on a flat small colourful bit of paper it highlights exactly everything that is there in the underground, it's all that you really need it super and you'll know what I mean you get it in the back of diaries and all kinds of places.

Well in a sense Ruth is very similar with regard to the Bible, Ruth is very small and very compact but in essence it gives the whole of the theme of the Bible in its few chapters, it covers so much and it's in seed form, it gives us everything that the Bible is about, everything that God wants us to know is at least in seed form in the book of Ruth, it's a tremendous book and we hope that by his spirit he brings that alive into our lives and into our thinking today as we seek to be met by him in his word because that's what we look for when we come together for worship, we don't believe it's a dead word, we don't believe it's just a gentle story for us to meditate on for a few moments, we believe that God is in his word and speaks to us through his word and challenges us as believers and encourages us and deepens our understanding of himself.

So I want to do for a little while this morning is remind ourselves of the themes, if you've been here over the last few weeks, forgive me for this, I think it bears repeating and it reminds us in what way that the small book of Ruth envisages the whole gospel message but and there's different levels to it of course as we've seen, it's a love story, it's a faith story and it's an anticipatory story so you've got these at least these three different levels, it's a love story at a very human level between Ruth and Boaz, a beautiful, simple love story that speaks about love lost and of sadness and of joy and of love found and of family and of individuals and it's just a heartwarming story of love and of a loving relationship between two people and as it blossoms and as it happens, certainly in a very different culture to our own and in a very different background to what we're used to but nonetheless in its place and in its time an ancient Near East story, love story and that for us is significant at that level alone because God has placed in our DNA the need for love and the need for love relationships and the need for it being accepted and that really is the core of humanity isn't it?

The core of our being made in God's image is that we want relationship, is that we want love, is that we want accepted, is that we want to belong and at a core level it must always be what our church is about, it is about loving relationships and it's about community and coming together and recognizing that that reflects what God made us to be.

[3 : 55] Love is at the very core of our identity, at the core of our being and when we suffer hatred and separation and loneliness then we can know that that is not at the core of what God wants for us in our lives.

So a very basic human level love story is important and it's important to remember God is the author and the giver of that but it's also a faith story because it reflects that human love relationship and reminds us that there's a deeper love relationship that happens in humanity, a spiritual love and the Bible speaks about a spiritual love between humanity and God and the story of the Bible is how that deepest and most significant and most fundamental of relationships vertically between ourselves and God has been broken, has been lost and it's a catastrophic reality for us that while we carry on living and when we carry on loving that spiritually the Bible says that we can be dead, that love relationship between us and God is dead, humanity having rejected that sovereign love of God, introducing death and brokenness and hatred and loneliness which we all experience to

greater or lesser degrees with Satan as the progenitor of all of this in his rejection of God and of a loving relationship with God and his expulsion from God's presence and his determination to allow love to die and hate to flourish through God's image bearers as but this faith story is not just that story of love broken but it's of rescue isn't it, it's about God reaching down, God reaching out and revealing to us redemptive love, his redemptive plan and his redemptive love for us which we see in the, in not just the story of Ruth and Boaz but in the story of Ruth and Boaz and Naomi and their faith relationship with God and how that peaks and troughs and how we see and recognize that God reveals his grace to them and God redeems them, we see right and wrong choices of faith in this story, choices that have negative influences, choices that bring other believers down with them, choices that bring up other believers and encourage them and so we see in seed form faith being outworked and this relationship with God we see the power, the patience, the faithfulness of God at work in his people in this small story. I've got musical background today so it's a love story, it's a faith story, we'll need to get double glazing that's the next collection, okay. And we need also then, we see the third thing which is an anticipatory story so there's these, at least these different levels and we find a great kind of principle of interpretation that we can take for interpreting the Old Bible, the Old Testament sorry, when we look at Ruth because the Old, we believe and recognize that the Old Testament is looking forward to the coming of Jesus, it's anticipating his coming, it's reminding us that, or the people in the Old Testament know that something better is coming and so when we look at the New Testament and the life of Jesus, it helps us as we look at the Old Testament to understand Jesus better, it helps us to visualize what Jesus came to do and to see the purpose of God. Now there's kind of academic, religious, the academy and liberal thinking that is very snobbish about this and says that no, you can't really see Jesus Christ in the Old

Testament and that's reading into what is there and it's not, it's not being faithful to the text and all that kind of stuff. But we read in Luke's Gospel that Jesus with the disciples opened scripture to them in the Old Testament and told them everything that was written in the law and the prophets concerning himself. So Jesus could see it and that my friend says, that's good enough for me, whatever the academics say, that's good enough for me is that Jesus could see it himself in the Old Testament and I think unless we're incredibly bigoted, we will see that also and we will see it in this story, it is a great anticipatory story. Now of course we avoid spiritualizing the story out of existence and forgetting it is grounded in real life and in real people's circumstances. We don't take it out of its context, it's not a myth, it's not an allegory, it is a real story of real people. But it clearly foreshadows and anticipates the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ so that New Testament believers who were Jewish, who knew their Bibles, who knew the Old Testament would understand

[9 : 09] Christ Jesus better when they read the story of Ruth and Boaz. They would understand a little bit better what it meant that Jesus was the messianic redeemer because this speaks of a redeemer, a kinsman redeemer which we saw before. So we see that the Old Testament anticipates the coming of Jesus very clearly and very powerfully in various ways. I'm just going to say a little bit about this before going into the story. It pictures the human need for rescue, doesn't it? This story of Ruth and indeed all of the Old Testament is all about, it's not the history of the world, it's not everything that ever happened but it's clearly the history that speaks of Christ's genealogy moving towards him and it speaks of the need for rescue, for redemption, for being brought back to life spiritually. We spoke about that love that was broken and in the Old Testament as we saw a few weeks ago, the Old Testament because Jesus hadn't yet come was much more visual, it was much more sensual, it appealed to the senses so that people could understand it without seeing

Jesus because he hadn't come. So you have the whole Old Testament with the making of the covenant, the cutting of a covenant, the burning of a bush, animal sacrifice, slavery, exodus, manna being provided, land, harvest, famine, exile, kings, prophets, temple. All of these things visualized the coming of Jesus. They spoke of faith issues, they spoke about what it would mean for Jesus to come and live among his people where we become the temple of the whole, this isn't a temple, it's just a building. We become the temple of the Holy Spirit and so anticipatory truth about our need for rescue very visually described and pictures of the divine provision of a redeemer seeing here, we see here with Boaz speaking, pointing forward gently to the coming of Jesus, someone who was a flesh and blood relative who did this work. So Jesus would come and become a brother to us, would take on flesh.

Interesting isn't it that while the New Testament speaks a lot about faith and about the invisibility of faith, we still need a physical Savior, we still need to see God in the flesh because that's the only way we can understand God, God is Spirit, but as he comes in the person of his son, we understand what it means for God to look like us and of course then he's motivated by our need driven by his love as the only one who can be the redeemer and do what we can't in the way that Ruth couldn't do without this kinsman redeemer in the same way and he acts urgently and he pays the whole price for our redemption, pays the whole cost, we don't add anything to that. So we have that picture of the provision of a divine redeemer here, but it's also a picture of a redeemer who loves radically. We see that in Jesus that he often turned convention on its head didn't it, the people he invited or that he accepted invitations from, the people he ate with, the people he spoke to, he always was breaking the convention of the day, turning human convention on its head so that influence and the people he noticed, he wasn't driven by their material possessions or by their power or by their influence and the Old Testament speaks of that, it speaks into that, it speaks of Christ who chooses a despised and the rejected people who were slaves, it speaks about the importance not necessarily of the firstborn as it would have been for the people in the ancient Near East but maybe the secondborn or the second youngest like Joseph or like David, who's he going to choose to be the king, is he going to be the big tall oldest brother, muscly and strong who had experienced it, no he chose David who was still a young boy living at home and we see that throughout the Old Testament,

Rahab the prostitute, Ruth here the Moabite, his genealogy that we've read before when we're dealing with this story is littered with infidelity and intrigue and barrenness and miracle because he's saying it is his way and he provides and he will take into this royal line who he will, it's the most bizarre and unusual royal line there's ever been, there's no blue blood in it, it is the ragtags of society that Jesus is honored to take into his genealogy because he is showing us and reminding us that we are not our own salvation that we don't come into his presence and say, hey look at me, I'm worthy, you must save me because I'm a good guy or a good girl, that is what he is trying desperately through the Old Testament narrative to remind us of as he comes to be revealed. And in that provision and in that radical love he also provides extravagantly, you know he does something great, Ruth's a picture of that isn't it, we've seen that all the way through, not even primarily maybe for Ruth but for Naomi, it could be called Naomi, the book could be called Naomi, not Ruth because it's really her story and it's all about the blessing in many ways, she receives from bitterness to fullness, fullness in her own strength she went to emptiness but she comes to fullness because she sees throughout this book God's amazing forgiveness and patience and redemption and provision and future and hope in very cultural ways for us that maybe we don't necessarily appreciate and understand the significance and the importance of the inheritance of the family of being part of this line which wasn't cut off because it was always going to be part of God's purposes and God provides powerfully, unilaterally, lovingly for her and for Ruth and for Boaz isn't he, it's a wonderful story of the provision, the extravagant provision of God in salvation now sometimes we grumble and complain and say that God's miserable and all sounds very well all these promises but it doesn't happen in my life and it's often because we are possibly looking at things materially or circumstantially and it's important for us to remember the promises that he gives us by faith, the promises of a new heart, a heart to love him, forgiveness, cleansing, purpose, part of his inheritance, part of his future so that we can face death and we can face an illness from which we will never recover with a sense of hope that it's not just the end, that this isn't my time and it's gone and it's finished, that we are part of his purposes and he wants us constantly, the word tells us to return to his extravagant love, you might have been a Christian here for 40 years, he's wanting us all to return constantly to his great sacrificial love for us and understand that, you know, life's more than corn flakes and beer and sitcoms and nights out and salaries and social media, we've been created for more than that, we've been created for a relationship with him that he buys back for us, that he has done the work on the cross, that Boaz speaks forward into, that he's this great redeemer, that's what he wants from us, he doesn't want us to be walling around in the shallows of merely human materialistic existence as if we are simply sophisticated animals, he doesn't want that, he doesn't want us simply to live for today, he wants us to understand that he loves us and he forgives us and he buys us back as believers and if you're not a believer he wants you to know that, that that's the whole of the Bible story, that's what Ruth is an underground map of, that's what the Old Testament is pointing towards, it's pointing towards Jesus Christ and his finished work, it's not an afterthought, it's not made up by us or by other people, it is a great divine sovereign plan, it's

clearly outworked to the coming of Jesus and from then we see that work unfolding.

[18:15] So briefly, in the last 10 minutes we've got the story here, I know I've taken a long time to get the story to you, and you're all going on, no he's only starting now, I don't mean it to be like that, it's because the whole, there's not a great deal within the story, I was wanting to recapture the whole of the book and hopefully just bring it neatly, rightly together in the last section because here we come to the point where Boas, we've seen what's happened before, I don't have time to go over what's happened, if you haven't, we can't remember the story, can I encourage you to go back and read it, we've come to the place where Boas wants to fulfil his redemptive right to Naomi's land and to his, fulfil his covenant responsibilities, but there's one guy that's a nearer kinsman to him, so he sets this whole situation up where he wants to fulfil his covenant responsibilities and also take Ruth as his wife, she wants that, they love each other, it's not the way we would do it, but that's because the culture is hugely different.

So he goes to the gate and the gate is the kind of, it's like the courtroom, it's where we would go to the sheriff court, he goes to the gate, it's very public, it's where the elders were, it's where the legal decisions would be made and where they would be ratified.

And if you've followed this story, there's a kind of a bit of a tension here because there's a third guy, do you remember Diana, Princess Diana when she was interviewed and she said marriage of three people isn't good, it's that same kind of tension, it's a tension here because there's a third guy who could actually come and fulfil his covenant responsibilities as kinsman, redeemer responsibilities and when Boas presents the case and there's the land and everything else, he says yeah, great, I'll buy that and then by the way Ruth's included as well, oh well, maybe not, maybe had his own children, maybe had to think of his own inheritance, maybe, well there might be a million different reasons, let's not go into it, but anyway he can't, he can't fulfil that and so it opens the way for Boas legally to redeem Naomi's broken inheritance and all that went with that and allowed this blossoming romance between Ruth and Boas to be fulfilled legitimately in a marriage that would satisfy all parties concerned and it's sealed.

Now I don't know how we, there's lots of different ways of sealing a covenant or a legal document today but in the ancient Near East they took off a shoe, now to me that sounds like a great way of sealing a deal, if you can carry someone else's shoe then that's a good deal that you've done with someone, it was interesting last week at the Olympics we don't do symbolism terribly well in our flat mono kind of gothic kind of culture that we live in but it was interesting in the weightlifting, Oscar Figueroa Mosquera won the gold medal in the weightlifting in a hugely heavy weightlifting contest and when he won it he sat down and put the weights down and took off his shoes and laid them under the bells or under the bar and he signified there he said I'm retiring, that's what he did he symbolised his retirement by taking off his shoes and laying them there and then he like me went into floods of tears and you know there was a symbol here of the take off, it may have people don't know exactly but it may have been that taking off the shoe is a reminder of when you owned or earned the land you would walk through it as a testimony that it was yours and so when you took off your shoe you were saying I'm giving up that right to walk through the land and take it for myself and it may have been that but nonetheless it is sealed and the ownership of the land and setting foot in the land is given over to Boaz and all that that meant in that day and generation and then we have the blessing of the elders and the elders bless Ruth and

Naomi we are witnesses may the Lord may the women who are coming into your house like Rachel and Leah who together built up the house of Israel so remind us that the elders were blessing Ruth and Naomi to be spiritually influential in the way that Rachel and Leah were and were significant in God's plans and purposes then he goes on to bless Boaz himself that you may act continue to act worthily in Bethlehem and that's just a seeking of blessing to him to be influential as he was and as he continued to be and then they bless the house of Boaz that would have been Boaz and Ruth so there's kind of three different elements and says may your house be like the house of Perez who tame our board to Judah because of the offspring that the Lord will give to you by this young woman how interesting is that I'm not going to go into that story go home and look at that story that is a unbelievable story and yet we have this is a blessing and it's the blessing of Judah that comes onto them can I just ask you quickly to look back to Genesis chapter 49 where Judah's father

[23:28] Israel a blesses the 12 sons and he blesses Judah in 49 verse 10 and he says to them an interesting thing he says the sep this is the blessing that Judah receives the scepter shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler staff from between his feet until tribute comes to him and to him shall the

obedience of the people's binding his full to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine this is a blessing of kingship to come and indeed of messianic promise and what the elders are doing here they're invoking that blessing on Ruth and on Boaz that they will be part of this messianic blessing in other words they'll be part of this genealogy which will end up it's a it's a kingly genealogy and it'll end up with the coming of the messiah even if they didn't fully understand what that meant to them and this is God saying that Ruth and Boaz are at the very heart of God's purposes in revealing a redeemer and that's great encouragement for us.

Ruth's an ordinary person she's not mentioned in any of the histories of the world but she is in God's because God is saying I take ordinary people like you and me and I evoke blessing through salvation into their lives and significance and importance so that we become children of God and we become children of God who never are lost to God whatever we go through in our lives. So we have that blessing of the elders and these are as I call spiritual reminders to us that our lives similarly as believers are in God's hands our lives and our loves and in God's hand and all that we enjoy all that you all that you've enjoyed today all the love all the relationship that you enjoy all the friendship all the acceptance it is God's gift in common grace to you and yet so often we are thankless and we take it for granted we actually think it's our right and it's us that are so wonderful that people love us love is his gift love comes from him we are made in his image and despite a rebellion he still lets lots of us live ordinary loving lives only to point him to himself to the prodigal gift of his son who will deepen and fulfill love for us in a way we could never have imagined through a relationship with him which we need because without that we are dead and dying or we are dying and dead whichever we could put it and eternally lost and separate from him is that serious is that urgent we fuff about as if it's not important as religion is just an add-on to our lives it's all about making a church look lovely and all that kind of stuff nonsense it's all about Jesus Christ and about our need to come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ this is all just padding this will go with the rest of the world as we will we might not be here long yes we love what's happened and we want to use it to God's glory but it's not what it's about what it's about is the spit recognition of the prodigality of God's gift and if we can reflect that in our service and even in our building then glory be to God because Jesus also went outside the city gate but he went beyond the city gate to the cross of Calvary he also fulfilled the law of covenant in order to be a redeemer he paid the price fully and absolutely and completely by being our substitute on the cross and it was sealed and it was signed by his resurrection that

God said yes this is exactly what will enable you and I to be friends again and to love again because death and the grave and evil is defeated on the cross so that we also are gifted the Holy Spirit and we are people like Ruth bought with a price we're set free bought with a price of love and 1 Corinthians 6 20 tells us we are we are bought with a price we are no longer our own we are bought with a price so honor God with our lives with our bodies and that's a hugely significant thing for us we are moved from slavery to freedom but it's freedom which reminds us that it was freedom at great cost the cost of Jesus own blood the cost of his sacrifice and his death and as Bo has ended up being the only redeemer that would be able to redeem Ruth both in his resources and in his love so Christ is the only redeemer there's no one else he's the only one that's worthy there's a fantastic this is the last reading I'm going to get you to look up Revelation chapter 5 okay it needs beautifully it sews everything together in Revelation chapter 5 first five verses where we have this pictorial scheme of humanity and of life and of history and from God's point of view from the bits that are hidden to us and then they saw the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back sealed with seven seals and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice who is worthy to open this scroll and break the seals no one in heaven on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll and look in it and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll and look into it and one of the elders said to me weep no more behold listen the lion of the tribe of Judah the root of David has conquered so that he can open the scroll and it's seven seals that's the lion of the tribe of Judah that is the precise wording of the blessing that Israel gave to Judah that we read from

Genesis that was applied to Ruth and Boaz by the elders at the door because it's all God's one purpose and plan the lion of the tribe of Judah remains the only one worthy to redeem and to buy back and to win his people for himself and we have gloriously that new provision not just in this life but also the physical reality of provision we're kind of going back to the visual and essential at one level in the new heavens in the new earth where we will we will put our shoes on the ground we

have shoes in heaven we will stand on the inheritance that is ours we will be given a new heavens and a new earth in which will dwell righteousness and we will live in it and that will be our home because that's what God has promised and that's what God is saying that he has done in Christ so there is an urgency about that gospel message isn't there but claiming that inheritance you may have been coming here for years and years and years but you need to claim the inheritance you need to come to Jesus Christ and invite him to bring you life to change your heart from being a heart of stone to being a heart of love for him and to show grace to one another and we need to be keeping close to this redeemer we may have been Christians for 40 years or more or less many of you haven't been born that long but you will learn the lesson as

[31 : 00] I must and I seek I hope to do always keep returning there never comes a time when we don't have returned back and keep coming back to the Lord Jesus Christ living a life that we pray and hope by his grace and in this favor will have a positive influence spiritually on other people as Boaz is life did with Ruth and Naomi that we are we are drawing people closer together not taking them further away from Jesus forgive me if I've ever given the impression that it's not urgent and important from this poop forgive me if by my life with you and my relationship with you I haven't practiced what I've preached may that be something that we recognize that it's not just in here and on Sundays and when we open the Bible that it matters but our day-to-day living should reflect this sense of returning to God and that God matters to us and God is important that our fullness our blessing our joy comes from building and developing that relationship with Jesus Christ yes he's done it all but we need to build that relation we need to learn more about him and as we look at a book like Ruth we can learn amazing things about Jesus Christ his provision and his extravagance and his love for the ordinary punters like you and me and that we have a direction and a hope and a future and that whatever circumstances feel like famine to us and feel that God's miles away he's there and he wants us to return to him and to trust in him through the famine and to find exactly why we were created to be identified as his because he made us and to entrust every decision and every moment of each day to him in loving and grace because he knows and he understands and he is our Redeemer Amen let's pray Father

God we ask and pray that you would help us to understand who you are better forgive us when we have a miserly and grubby and disjointed and selfish view of who you are that justifies our staying away from you as if you're someone who is unworthy but let us take that picture of heaven that is peeled back to us in Revelation that speaks of the spiritual eyes of the universe scouring around the universe to see if anyone is worthy to do this great work of unlocking the redemption that is needed and the brokenness until the line of Judah is revealed as the one who can do that may we see that great unity of scripture the great power of the gospel and may we apply it to our own lives may we ask Jesus into our hearts if we are not Christians and then trust our lives to him and if we are believers may we not stand a great length from him and condemn and criticize and we would draw close to him and may we seek repentance and forgiveness and newness and a new vision and a new heart and a new desire may we share it with the people that we know and love because they need this gospel just as much as we do and help us to use this amazing resource you've given us here for your glory knowing that one day will pass but you've given it for us today to use in your service and may we do so we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.