

A Redeemer, a Son and a King

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[0 : 00] A reading this evening is taken from the Old Testament. We're in the book of Ruth, Ruth chapter 4. We're going to read the whole of that chapter. I think on the larger pew Bibles, it's page 224.

Someone pointed out to me some of the new Bibles we have. It's not page 224, but I'm sure you'll be able to find it. Well, hopefully. Ruth chapter 4, reading from verse 1, and we read to the end of the chapter at verse 22.

Let's hear and read together in God's Word. Now, Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there.

And behold, the Redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, Turn aside, friend. Sit down here. And he turned aside and sat down.

And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, Sit down here. So they sat down. Then he said to the Redeemer, Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative, Elimelech.

[1 : 10] So I thought I would tell you of it and say, Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it.

But if you will not, tell me that I may know. For there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you. And he said, I will redeem it.

Then Boaz said, The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth, the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance. Then the Redeemer said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.

Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging. To confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other.

[2 : 14] And this was the manner of attesting in Israel. So when the Redeemer said to Boaz, Buy it for yourself, he drew off his sandal. Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belong to Elimelech and all that belong to Kilion and to Malon.

Also Ruth, the Moabite, the widow of Malon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place.

You are witnesses this day. Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel.

May you act worthily, worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem. And may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman.

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. And he went into her and the Lord gave her conception and she bore a son. Then the woman said to Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer.

[3 : 45] And may his name be renowned in Israel. He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.

Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name saying, A son has been born to Naomi.

They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. Now these are the generations of Perez.

Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Aminadab, Aminadab fathered Nashon, Nashon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

This is the word of God. Well, I'm Chris, and we are in the last of our short series on the book of Ruth.

[5 : 04] And you'll remember, we have covered Naomi, the story of Naomi, where she left the land that God had promised to his people with her husband and her two sons.

And they traveled east, away from Bethlehem. And they traveled into the land of Moab. And they were there for 10 years. And in that time, both Naomi's husband and her sons died.

And she was left destitute in a strange land among a strange people. And this becomes then the tension for the book of Ruth. It's called Ruth.

But really we're focused on Naomi. What's going to happen to Naomi? And you remember over the last few weeks, despite her loving daughter-in-law, Ruth, coming back with her, leaving everything that she knew, her land, her people, her family, her gods, to come back with Naomi.

When Naomi arrived back in Bethlehem, she said, I'm bitter and I'm empty. But as we went through the book, we saw that by using Boaz and by using Ruth, God starts to fill up empty Naomi.

[6 : 15] She first of all receives food. There was a famine in Bethlehem. That's why we had to leave. And she now has grain. She's got provision day to day.

And as we left chapter three, we saw that she was moving towards another kind of seed, an offspring. But tonight, what we're going to see, that while Naomi's emptiness is being reversed, God will continue to fulfill Naomi through Ruth and Boaz.

But amazingly, by blessing this poor widow in Bethlehem, God is working his plan to redeem the whole world.

We're going to see how God cares so deeply for his people in spite of their lostness, their loneliness, their suffering, their poverty. No matter how rudderless your life feels right now, no matter how heavy the weight feels that you've carried into church with you tonight, no matter how random or inconsequential you feel like your life is compared to other people around you, know that the God of Naomi, the God of Boaz and Ruth, is the God who takes every strand of every story of his people and he weaves them all together for good.

Ruth feels like a book. When you read it at first, it feels like a book about ordinary people doing ordinary things. So we've got a widow who kind of travels home looking for food and security.

[7 : 51] We've got a young girl who moves to a new town and meets this older guy. We've got love and we've got marriage. But when you slow down and when we consider that God's hand is at work in every turn, every moment, every step of this journey, we realize that Ruth is actually the extraordinary story of God at work in the ordinary.

So we've got three sections tonight in our quite long chapter that we're going to work through together. All which might seem ordinary at first glance, but when we look at them carefully, we see that they're all anything but.

So three parts and the first part is no ordinary land deal. So the end of chapter three, where we left off last week, we were left on a bit of a cliffhanger.

Now Ruth had gone into the threshing floor and she'd met with Boaz and she had, in a very unorthodox manner, proposed to him. And Boaz has said, yes, I'll marry you.

I'll be your redeemer. The Hebrew word goel. I'll be your kinsman redeemer. I'll be the one who will look after you and not just you, but also your mother-in-law, Naomi, as well.

[9 : 06] But. And these are the words that no one ever wants to hear. There's someone else. There's a closer relative and he has the legal right to redeem Naomi's land before I do.

It's not a romantic scene in that sense, but it's a custom of the time. Leviticus 25 tells us about this situation there's a, it speaks about a kinsman redeemer, a goel in Hebrew.

And if an Israelite becomes so destitute that they have to sell their land or they have to sell themselves into slavery to work off their debt, it falls on a close relative to, they're obligated to pay to redeem them if they can.

So this is what's happening here. And at the end of chapter three, Naomi says to Ruth, listen, Boaz will do exactly what he says he will do. This is a guy who gets things done.

He's going to do it the same day, in fact, is what she said. And so when we join chapter four, the first verses of chapter four, this is the same day and Boaz has gone to the city gate.

[10:16] And the city gate is the place where everyone would pass by. Everyone would be traveling in and out this one gate. And so it became the place where meetings took place and decisions for the community were made.

And Boaz is looking for someone. He's looking for this closer relative. And wouldn't you know it, he just happens to walk by. In our Bibles, it says that Boaz calls him friend.

He says, hey friend, but that's not really what he calls him at all. The Hebrew is peloni almoni, which I think sounds funny in my Inverness accent, which means something like someone, someone.

Maybe we should read it as so-and-so or such-and-such. In our house, we used to read the Enid Blyton book series, The Far Away Tree. And there's a character in that called Mr. What's-His-Name. So in my mind, Boaz is saying, what's your name? Come here, sit down. I need to talk to you about something. And he does. And Boaz also calls 10 of the elders of the city together.

[11:20] And he makes them sit down. He asks them to sit down, giving us a glimpse, I think, of Boaz's stature in the community. People listen when Boaz speaks. And Boaz is bringing these guys together.

But what's he really doing? What's Boaz doing here? So he's kind of, he's called a defendant and then he's got himself a panel of witnesses. He's creating a court case for us to follow.

Leviticus tells us that there was strict laws about land ownership because the land ultimately belongs to God. And Boaz says to what's his name, you have got first right to buy this.

The land's yours if you want it. But if you don't want it, let me know and I'll redeem it. And of course, the man jumps at the chance to have more land. He says, yes, absolutely. I'll redeem the land.

That's fine. No problem at all. He thinks to himself, I would imagine, well, I'll redeem the land. I'll have to pay for that. But when I redeem the land, I'll get Naomi as well.

[12:22] But once I've cared for Naomi and once Naomi dies, the land's going to become my inheritance. The land's going to benefit my family. My sons are going to get this land. I don't know if you've ever bought a new build house.

Maybe sometimes you go and look at the show home and they say, and by the way, we'll throw in free flooring or we'll give you turf for your garden too as a little bonus. Well, Boaz hits Mr.

What's His Name not so much with a bonus but with a catch. And he says, if you buy the field, you get Ruth as well. Now, this is a reference to leverage marriage, another provision that God has built in to Israelite society to protect land and to protect people.

In Deuteronomy chapter 25, it says, if a man dies without any children, his brother is to marry his widow and the firstborn child will be raised as if it is the son of the man who's died.

And that's a way of preserving the name, preserving the land through family lines. When Mr. What's His Name hears about Ruth, he loses his appetite for the deal completely.

[13:39] It's true that Ruth was a Moabite. She's an outsider. And she's from a land that are Israel's enemies. And Boaz kind of makes that clear. He says, Ruth the Moabite. But it seems like the man's more concerned about paying for something that he's not going to fully benefit from.

Perhaps he thought that, well, Naomi will come with the land, but she's an old lady. She's not going to have another son. The land's eventually going to be mine. But Ruth, well, she's young. She might have a child and then the land will go to that man, not to me, not to my offspring.

There's something at stake for me here. And what we see with Mr. What's His Name is a complete contrast to what we see from Boaz. Mr.

What's His Name, the other redeemer, he's got the money to redeem Naomi and Ruth. He's already said that he would purchase the land. But he's not wanting to fulfill the duty of a kinsman redeemer. He doesn't want to give a son who is then going to take that inheritance away from him. Ruth would be the heir of her husband. Ruth's son would be the heir of her husband.

[14:56] And Mr. What's His Name is happy to help to a point. He's happy to help right up until the point where it's going to cost him something. Just a few verses down in the story, we see reference to Judah and Tamar.

And this is another episode that happened previously involving Leveret marriage or what was supposed to be Leveret marriage. But it's one of the most scandalous and cruel episodes in the whole of the Old Testament.

And both these episodes, Mr. What's His Name and Judah and Tamar, they make Boaz's sacrificial, redeemer, redeemership, shine even brighter in the darkness.

Boaz willingly bore the cost of redeeming Naomi and Ruth. He was happy to sacrifice his own position. Boaz doesn't act out of ambition in any way, but out of chesed love, that faithful, steadfast love that we've spoken about throughout the series that people show towards one another in this book, often called kindness in the ESV and which God shows towards His people.

In the book of Ruth, we've mentioned this before as well, people's names are significant. I think it's therefore significant that Mr. So-and-so, Mr. What's His Name isn't given a name.

[16:21] His self-serving behavior means he's not going to be remembered as opposed to Boaz because his name is going to be remembered as part of the most important family that there's ever been.

But as well as not leaving a name, Mr. What's His Name, I think, stands as a warning to us. He clings to what he has, his material possessions.

They're more important to him than serving other people, than caring for the poor, or the afflicted, the dying cast, even though these people are members of his own family. What's your version, I wonder, of the Kingsman Redeemer's refusal tonight?

Where are you willing to show generosity up to a point? Show generosity right up until it costs you something. Are you willing to care and serve and even love other people as long as it doesn't impinge on your own comfort or your time or your convenience?

Or like Boaz, do you go looking for ways to bless other people even when you already know it's going to cost you? Because the gospel, the good news that Jesus came is the announcement that in Jesus someone's stepped forward for you when nobody else could or would.

[17:49] Boaz's commitment is a picture of Jesus' commitment to his own people. So Mr. What's-His-Name, he takes off his sandal, which is the custom, and he says to Boaz, the land and the Moabite, they're all yours, you can have them.

And Boaz calls the elders and all the people who are there and he says, you're my witnesses. And not just of the deal, not just that this is an agreement, but also to the purpose of the agreement. He says, to redeem the land and to continue the name of the men who had died. And then the witnesses pray a blessing on the now formally engaged couple, Ruth and Boaz.

They say, may the Lord make the woman come into your house like Rachel and Leah. And we see two things here, I think, with Rachel and Leah. So Ruth the Moabite is coming into Boaz's house. This is an outsider, somebody from a strange land, but who's shown faithfulness to Israel's God, the true God. And now she's becoming a member of the covenant family.

[19:01] She's entering Boaz's household. But secondly, the people pray that she'd be blessed like Rachel and Leah because these are the women who are responsible for giving Jacob his 12 sons.

Jacob, who was later called Israel, his 12 sons, the 12 tribes of Israel. And the story of these two women all revolves around fertility, about having children, providing children.

And they do that in different ways if you've read the story. And then we understand that this prayer is needed because Ruth was married back in Moab.

We're not sure how long she was married for, but we know that she was married and they lived in Moab for 10 years. Women, children are incredibly important in this society, having children.

A husband and wife are likely to start having children as quickly as possible. But Ruth and Malon, her husband, they had no children. So prayer is really needed here because the suspense is even higher than at the threshing floor in the night when Ruth came and proposed to Boaz.

[20:12] It's even higher the suspense now than when the Redeemer, Boaz asked the Redeemer, will you redeem the land in Naomi? Is there going to be a child?

There's an air of suspense. So we see that this is no ordinary land transaction. And now we're going to see that there is a child, but this child is no ordinary child.

We see this in verses 13 to 17. From the end of chapter 3 until over halfway through chapter 4 is one day of time.

But now, the timeline, it speeds up really significantly. So in verse 13, we experience what must be the best part of at least a year from Boaz and Ruth getting married until a baby arriving in one verse.

So there's all this tension when the people prayed that Ruth would get pregnant. And then we get an idea of the significance of the fact that Ruth is pregnant, I think, from the language that's used in verse 13.

[21 : 17] Because it says, the Lord gave her conception. And of course, the Lord gives every conception. He is the one who makes all things work together.

But this is only the second time in the whole of the book of Ruth that God has been implicated directly in the action as the subject of the verb. This is a God-given child.

And then I think it's really interesting that Ruth and Naomi have just been married, they've just had a child, and the focus immediately pivots away from them and back to Naomi.

In verse 14, the women say, blessed be the Lord who's not left you without a goel, without a redeemer. But who is the redeemer? Because it's not talking about Boaz anymore.

It's talking about the baby that's on her lap. He's the one who's going to provide for Naomi in her old age. He's the one who's going to continue the family line.

[22 : 18] The neighborhood women say in verse 17, a son has been born to Naomi. Well, he's been born to Ruth, but this is Naomi's son. And they say in verse 15, he'll be a restorer of life to you.

You see, in having a son, Boaz and Ruth haven't so much started a family, they've rescued one. The child is Ruth's, but he's the heir to the Elimelech family inheritance.

And he's the one who's going to carry forward this family name. It looked like this family was about to die. We were at the end of the line. But through this child, the family line's been resuscitated.

Naomi, the one who wandered away from the Lord, from the land that God promised to his people, and came back claiming to be empty, now has her hands full.

And she's got the two kinds of seeds that are so important in the Old Testament. She's got grain, which meant food, but she's also got offspring. And now, through Boaz and Ruth, God has filled Naomi up.

[23 : 35] And notice as well, that it's not Ruth and Boaz, the parents, who name the child. It's not even his grandmother who gives him a name. It's the women of the neighborhood. And they call him Obed, which means servant.

He's going to be the one who serves Naomi in her old age. But he's also going to play another role, an even more significant role.

You see, in Ruth's story, Ruth's story is Naomi's redemption. God answered Naomi's prayer in grief with much more than she asked for.

She wanted to go back to Bethlehem, back to her hometown. She just wanted to be among the people that she knew. But she received a grandson. Maybe there's some of us here who feel like Naomi in chapter one.

We feel like we've been traveling for a long time. We feel like we have lost everything that we had. We feel empty and lonely and afraid. But this story reminds us that God is at work constantly in people's lives, even in the pain, in the suffering, in the loneliness.

[24 : 53] The things that we sometimes have to go through that we wish that we didn't. One of the dangers when we look at Ruth like this, for us, is that we look at the way that Naomi has been restored materially, and we think, if we keep our faith in God, then everything I've ever lost, I'm going to get that back.

Whether that's your home, or your job, or your fortune, or even a person. But that's not what the book of Ruth is about.

God's not a repairman. He's a creator and a restorer and an artist. One of the persistent patterns in Scripture is that God answers prayer at a register that's much higher than the prayer itself.

Naomi prayed that Ruth would find rest, and what she ended up getting was a covenant line that would lead to Israel's king. This book is about God's covenant love, and how it's shown to people that extends beyond individuals, to the whole of Israel, and to the whole world.

So we're going to live by faith. We live by faith in the God who keeps his promise, and who ultimately is going to bring restoration that far exceeds anything that we could have asked for.

[26 : 25] Okay. Thirdly, briefly, no ordinary ending. So I read as I was looking at this passage that some people used to argue that this genealogy that stuck on the end of Ruth was a later addition, and it's kind of to strengthen the link between the story of Ruth and the coming King David, but I mean, I don't think so.

Notice that at the beginning and the end of Ruth, there's a parallel, the first five verses and the last five verses, they parallel each other. So we begin with 10 years in exile, and then we end with 10 generations of the tribe of Judah that culminate in David.

At the start of this preaching series, I said that the book of Ruth is named after Ruth, but it's actually about Naomi, Naomi being emptied and Naomi being filled up. But this genealogy, it reminds us that whoever the main human character is in this story, whoever the name, the book is named after, the story is about God.

It's about his steadfast love, this never-ending, pursuing love that God shows towards his people. But it also shows us something else.

this genealogy, which features Perez, who was born to Tamar, the Canaanite, Salmon, who was, that's Boaz's dad, who's born to Rahab, who was a Canaanite prostitute, and Obed, who's born to the Moabite Ruth.

[28 : 00] It reminds us that God's steadfast love isn't just for his people Israel, it extends to outsiders, and reminds us that it extends across the whole world. So this genealogy is not a tag-on at the end of a story, this is a covenant record.

It shows us God's guiding hand at work across all people, all times, for all of history, even when we can't see it.

And it shows us that God is desperately committed to his people across geography, across race, across time. The story of God's redemption in Ruth has always been much wider than Naomi, or Ruth, or Boaz, or we thought.

Whenever, whatever your background, however many times you've been to church, however well you know your Bible, wherever you come from in the world, these are not restrictions on receiving God's blessing.

all we have to do is come to him. Tonight we read about Elamela's ancestors, Jacob and Rachel and Leah.

[29 : 18] But the real story, the story that Ruth is a part of, started way before them. God called Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, and he said to him, leave your land, leave your family, leave your people, leave the gods, and go to a place that you don't know, just like Ruth did.

And God told Abraham he was going to make him the father of many nations. He was going to bless him greatly with land and with offspring. And like Ruth in chapter one, Abraham believed God and he went.

But even before Abraham, at the very beginning, when Adam and Eve, they disobeyed God in the garden and they fell and sin came into the world, but God made them a promise.

And he said, there's going to be a seed, a son who's going to redeem you from the curse. You see, the book of Ruth is a story about individuals being blessed by God.

But that story is part of a much bigger, broader family story through which God blesses the whole world. That's why it was so precarious when Elamela's family line was nearly extinct.

[30 : 35] This is God's chosen line of salvation. But then through Naomi, through Ruth, through Boaz, through Obed, God saved that family. And now we see that this redemption runs all the way to the royal house of David and beyond David.

Because we know that just like Ruth ends with the genealogy, the New Testament begins with one. Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Jesus is the redeemer who stepped forward at the city gate when there was no one else to defend you. He's the one who pursued his bride, the church, even before we knew what to ask him.

Jesus is the one born of a woman so that he could be born under the law so that he could redeem those who are under the law. Jesus is the son of David who arrived as an Obed, as a servant.

He gave himself for his people. But he's also the true and the final king who defeated his people's greatest enemy to set them free from the bondage of sin.

[31 : 47] And who's returning to gather his people to himself and to provide a blessing that far exceeds anything that we could have asked for. So this is it.

That's the book of Ruth. The book of Ruth is a book of God's steadfast love to his people. A love that remains faithful across generations, across people groups, across blessings and tragedies, but which is fulfilled in a person, a redeemer, God's son, King Jesus.

King Jesus. Let's pray. Lord God, we praise you. We thank you for the book of Ruth and the reminder it is to us that your hand is at work in all things.

You could providentially control things, but you're sovereign power. And Lord, because of your chesed love, your faithful, steadfast love towards your people, you sent your son, Jesus, who came willingly into the world, who lived as a servant, who died for his people, but who rose again in triumph and who is coming again, Lord, to judge the world and to take his people to himself. Lord, help us as we think about going back to the world tomorrow and to work, continue our holidays, going to school, wherever we're going. Help us, Lord, to have our eyes fixed on Jesus. [33 : 16] And we pray these things in his name. Amen.