

Love Story: God's Epic Tale of Redemption

The Story of Redemption

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THE STORY OF REDEMPTION Ruth 4

Well, if you have a Bible, and I hope you do, I invite you to open with me to Ruth 4. Has the book of Ruth not been incredible? Just walk through. Today we come to the climax of this story, the ending of all endings, the surprise of all surprises. I think Ruth is kind of like one of those movies by a guy I never can figure out how to pronounce his last name, M. Night Shyamalan, Shyamalamalan. I don't know what how you pronounce it, but his movies you get to the end and something happens at the end that causes you to look at the whole picture and say, "Wow. I never saw that coming. I could not have imagined. That changes everything." It makes you want to go back and watch the whole deal over again because now you've got this new piece of information here. Well, Shyamalan has nothing on Ruth 4. And what the narrator is doing here.

So here we go. And just as a reminder—the poetry that we have been listening to is not, like, directly Scripture. It certainly takes different liberties and licenses and different ways and even the photography. I don't want you to walk away from this series thinking that Boaz is a white male and Ruth was a black female like it's the picture – the whole goal in poetry and in photography was to envision some of the tension and the beauty that was represented here but just make sure not to equate that with Scripture.

Let's look at Scripture. Ruth 4. Now if you have not been here throughout the series or maybe if you've missed a week here or there let me recap the story in a nutshell. The curtain opens in Ruth 1 on Naomi, her husband Elimelech and their two sons and they're journeying from Bethlehem to Moab because there's been famine in Bethlehem. When they get to Moab, first Elimelech dies suddenly and the Naomi's two sons die and she's left with two Moabite daughters-in-law, Orpha and Ruth.

She begins to go back to Bethlehem because there's news of food and blessing there. Orpha stays in Moab. Ruth commits herself to stick with Naomi and so Naomi walks back into Bethlehem, bitter, a woman with honest hurt who has lost everything she loved and comes back with nothing or at least she thinks.

The next day we see Ruth going out into the fields and finds herself in the fields of Boaz the night in shining armor. He takes to her. He protects her, provides for her, sends her home in the days to come with plenty of grain, basically, to last them through the rest of the year.

The two main problems in the book. These two ladies they're widowed, childless women in ancient Israelite culture, which means they have need for food, need for provision and a need of family. It was the curse of all curses not to have an heir, for your name to die with you, the name of your family to die with you. And so the picture is their in need of food and family.

Ruth 2. Food is met. And Ruth finds herself day after day working in the fields of Boaz. The only problem is after week, after week, after week in his fields, he's doing nothing else to

pursue her, at least that we can tell. So Naomi, the scheming mother-in-law, decides to take things into her own hands and she comes up with a plot that is just plain shady in Ruth 3. I'm just thankful that we have gotten past that chapter and are not having to deal with that today.

So picture is have a shady night on the threshing floor as Ruth basically proposes marriage to Boaz and Boaz is humbled by this. They stare looking up into the stars together from the threshing floor and Boaz breaks the news that there's actually another guy who has the right to marry Ruth before he would.

It's this big letdown, the wind out of our sails in this romantic scene you get to the end of the chapter and the curtain closes as Ruth and Naomi are sitting there waiting to see what Boaz is going to do. He has promised that day to find out if this other man will marry Ruth. If he will, then so be it. If he won't then Boaz will do it. Today is the day where everything is going to come to light. God has answered the need for food. How is he going to answer the need for family, in Boaz or this other dude?

Ruth 4:1, *"Meanwhile, Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there. When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, 'Come over here, my friend, and sit down.' So he went over and sat down."* Okay, we're going to pause here, much like we've done in the last few weeks and just going to take this verse-by-verse, phrase-by-phrase and make sure we understand what's going on here. You see midway through that Verse 1 kinsman-redeemer. Circle it there. You've probably already circled it if you were here two weeks ago, circled it in Ruth 2:20. This is a theme. A term that we've seen before. We've kind of mentioned here and there, but it's really important here that we understand what a kinsman-redeemer is. So hold your place here in Ruth 4 and go back with me to Leviticus 25. Third book in the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus. Take a left, back a few books to Leviticus 25:24.

"Kinsman-redeemer"—two words in the English, one word in the Hebrew and the picture really is twofold. "Kinsman" meaning: the nearest adult male relative, the nearest of kin to someone and so in order to be kinsman to Naomi and Ruth this would be the nearest adult male relative to Elimelech and his sons. The nearest kinsman.

"Redeemer"—meaning that that kinsman would have the right, if he was able, to purchase the property—acquire all the property that belonged to Elimelech, Mahlon or Kilion, Elimelech's sons. And so he would be able to redeem—to buy back, to purchase, to inherit—basically, the property that belonged to him.

Now, this is a law that God had set up, a way of doing things God had set up among His people to provide, in disastrous circumstances, tragic circumstances that people might face. This is just one example here in Leviticus 25:24. I want you to see how God had provided for the redemption of the land through relatives.

Verse 24, *"Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land"* (Lev. 25:24). What does that mean? Verse 25, *"If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold. If, however, a man has no one to redeem it for him but he himself prospers and acquires sufficient means to redeem it, he is to determine the value for the years since he sold it and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it; he can then go back to his own property"* (Lev. 25:25-27).

Now, the picture here is land was everything in that day and so there was a provision for the land to stay within the family or at least, if not within the family, the clan which was the group of families. And so if land was lost because of something—famine or poverty or maybe even because of death—there was a means setup where a kinsman could come and redeem that land, could keep that land in the family. So that’s the picture that relates to the land.

Now, fast forward to Deuteronomy. Two books to the right, Deuteronomy 25. Look at Deuteronomy 25 and I want you to see the picture and the Law leading up to this point when it comes to marriage and God – how God had set up a way for a widow to be provided for, particularly for the sake of producing an heir. Deuteronomy 25:5.

Now as you’re turning there just a little background here. These laws aren’t like exactly being implemented in all the places we see in the Old Testament and even here in the book of Ruth but this is the background. Catch the heart of what God had set up regarding land and here regarding family. Listen to Deuteronomy 25:5, *“If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband’s brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears...”* follow this closely, *“...shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel”* (Deut. 25:5-6).

So God’s going to provide to make sure that this name continues through God providing a kinsman to provide in this circumstance. Verse 7, *“However, if a man does not...”*—this is how serious this is—

...if a man does not want to marry his brother’s wife, she shall go to the elders at the town gate and say, ‘My husband’s brother refuses to carry on his brother’s name in Israel. He will not fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to me.’ Then the elders of his town shall summon him and talk to him. If he persists in saying, ‘I do not want to marry her,’ his brother’s widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, ‘This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother’s family line.’ That man’s line shall be known in Israel as The Family of the Unsandaled (Deut. 25:7-10).

How about that? This is a picture of shame. It is honorable to provide for your family, to provide, to keep the land in your family as well as to maintain the name. So when we come here to Ruth 4 and we have this picture of kinsman-redeemer what Boaz has said is there’s a nearer adult male relative to me that has the right to purchase this land and has the right to take in this family.

And so what we’ve got is Boaz going to the town gate where everybody would pass, whereas we’re about to see business kind of matters would take place. So you’ve got crowds of people, and this is where the English really doesn’t help us out much, it doesn’t help us glimpse this but it’s the same picture we’ve got in Ruth 2. It’s this picture of kind of coincidence when the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned “just happened” to come along or “just then” the kinsman-redeemer. So it just so happens that this guy starts walking along and “...Boaz said, ‘Come over here, my friend, and sit down’” (Ruth 4:1). And the picture here, “...my friend...,” that’s a Hebrew idiom right there. I want you to notice something very, very interesting.

He doesn’t mention the guy’s name. Now, Boaz knows the guy’s name. He’s his near relative. The narrator probably knows the guy’s name. But instead, we’ve got a Hebrew

idiom that basically means... It would be like saying, "Mr. So and So." And the point is to kind of cast light on this guy as fairly insignificant, to give us a negative impression of this guy. Anonymity not having a name, as we're talking about here, implies judgment. And the picture is Mr. So and So over here doesn't even get named in the story.

It's kind of like if, you know, when somebody's coming up to you and you can't remember what their name is, maybe you've known them from a ways back and they're coming up and they're... And you're thinking I need to remember this guy's name. I need to remember this guy and you just can't remember it so they finally get to you like, "Hey, partner. How's it going, pal?" Or the good Christian, "Brother." "Hey, Brother. It's good to see you, Brother."

Well, this is the picture, "Hey, pal. Come on, why don't you come over here and have a seat next to me Mr. So and So?" *"...So he went over and sat down"* (Ruth 4:1). Verse 2, *"Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, 'Sit here,' and they did so"* (Ruth 4:2).

Now, what these elders are going to do is they're going to provide basically witnesses to the transaction, the agreement, the conversation that is about to take place as witnesses to this. Now, what you've got is 10 elders are kind of surrounding them both but then, likely, you've got a growing crowd of people because something's – something's going on here and as people are walking by they see something official's about to take place and so by the end of this scene you've got a whole crowd of folks who are watching and listening on to what's happening. So Boaz begins to speak and he is so sly. Listen to verse 3, *"...he said to the kinsman-redeemer, 'Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. 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. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line'"* (Ruth 4:3-4).

That is an offer this guy cannot refuse. Boaz just put it out on a golden platter. Now, because we're separated from this day culturally, chronologically in many different ways there's a lot of debate about exactly what's going on here and it can be a little misleading here when it talks about Naomi selling the piece of land because the reality is, technically, there was land that Naomi and Elimelech had had before they left Bethlehem that he had, likely, sold off and they'd gone to Moab and they come back and so, technically, it belonged to Elimelech's family, to Naomi, to Mahlon and Kilion. But Elimelech, Mahlon and Kilion, the men in the family who would have ownership rights are not there anymore and so, yes, it belongs to Naomi but the reality is she needs someone, a kinsman-redeemer on her behalf to purchase that land to take her and the land and to care for and provide for the land.

And so the picture is Naomi is willing to do that and she is looking for the kinsman who will do it. You're the nearest kinsman. And this is where this is just laid out on a golden platter because this is a no-brainer for this guy. Basically what he gets in the deal is a great piece of land, which again was everything, land that he can then produce fruit from, harvest and in the years to come pass down to his sons. All he has to give in return is, basically, his willingness to bring in Naomi into his life, past child-rearing age, a widow who, it will involve a little bit of assets to care for her, but the reality is in the long run this is a huge investment worth taking.

Now, just imagine what's going on as he's sharing this and then we get the end of verse 4 and the guy responds, no-brainer. *"I will redeem it' he said"* (Ruth 4:4). The emphasis is on "I"—I, myself, I will redeem like, yes, absolutely.

Now, we don't know but just imagine if Ruth and Naomi had snuck into the crowd and were watching alongside as they saw this happen, as we see this happen. Mr. So and So says "I will redeem it," and our hearts just sink. Can you imagine the look on Ruth's face? Mr. Who Cares just said I'm going to redeem this.

Personally, I want to look at Boaz and be like what are you doing, man? This would be maddening if the Book of Ruth ended in Ruth 4:4 and Ruth and Mr. What's His Name ride off together into the distance. No. Like, and Boaz sits there dumbfounded. You talk about Naomi bitter? Like, she's no longer bitter she's now livid. What were you thinking Boaz? My name is no longer bitter. My name is fuming right now, Boaz. What have you just done? You just laid it out there. What was Boaz thinking?

Well thankfully, Boaz knows exactly what he's doing. So the guy says, "...I will redeem it,' and *Boaz said, 'On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property'*" (Ruth 4:5).

Now, Boaz knows exactly what he's doing here in verse 5. He says, "Oh, by the way I forgot to mention one just little detail. You see it's not just Naomi in this picture, it's not just this one widow who's past child-rearing age that you'll always have to take of a little while there's also Ruth. Now, Ruth is of child-rearing age, which means that if you bring her into your family then you have the responsibility to provide her with children, including an heir, a son who will then receive the inheritance of the land that you are purchasing."

So all of a sudden this land that he's about to purchase that he had envisioned in his mind being passed down to his sons, now he's not going to get any of that. It's going to be passed down to this other son, by the way, a son born from marriage to a Moabite. Oh, yeah. Ruth the Moabitess.

"Do you remember like that whole group of people that caused 24,000 Israelites to be struck down one day because of what Moabite women were doing? Yeah, she's one of those. And I just I wanted to make sure that came to your attention. Just a little detail. Would that change anything if you also acquire her and then you have the responsibility to provide descendants to her who will get all the land that you purchase?" That a way, Boaz. Knew exactly what he was doing.

And, "At this," verse 6, *"The kinsman-redeemer said..."* now, this is like a pregnant pause right here. What's going to happen? This is the moment. Is it going to work? *"The kinsman-redeemer said, 'Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it'"* (Ruth 4:6).

Ah, this is the moment that we have been waiting for, ever since the beginning of this book. In need of food, in need of family, in need of someone to provide for them and here this other guy, Mr. What's His Name, goes off the scene and Boaz steps up to the plate. This is where the orchestral music begins to swell from the background and the scene that unfolds, listen to verse 7, *"(Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.) So the kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, 'Buy it yourself.' And he removed his sandal"* (Ruth 4:7-8)

No spitting in the face on this one but a picture of taking off a sandal, it was a picture that represented yielding the right to property, yielding the right to purchase, to redeem that piece of land, that property that belonged to Naomi and her family.

And so he takes the sandal off and gives it to Boaz. Boaz beaming from ear to ear and this is where the crowd – it's like in a Rocky movie when Rocky wins and the crowd just goes nuts erupting into applause. That's the picture here. "Buy it yourself," and he gives the sandal to him. And the crowd's going crazy. All the witnesses around. It's happened and then Boaz calms the crowd down, orchestra music fades in the background into a nice soft lull for Boaz to give a final impassioned speech, his last words in the book. Boaz says, verse 9, "*He announced to the elders and all the people, 'Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon'*" (Ruth 4:9). So he's got all their property, but then verse 10, "*I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess...*"—he mentions her nationality—"I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife..." (Ruth 4:10).

Now pause right there. And think about where we came from to where we are now. Ruth 1:10 and 20, "Ruth the Moabitess;" Ruth 2:10, "Ruth the foreigner" is how she's labeled; Ruth 2:13, she is "the slave" in Boaz's field; Ruth 3:9, she is "a servant" wanting marriage. We have come from Moabitess, foreigner, slave, servant, Ruth 4:10, "wife."

This Moabite woman from outside the people of Israel is now grafted into the people of Israel as an Israelite. Why? "...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 the town records. Today you are witnesses!" (Ruth 4:10). It will be maintained. The problem in the beginning of the book: is there a possibility of an heir? Boaz says, "Yes, there is. I will maintain his name." And he finishes his speech says, "...Today you are witnesses." And listen to how they respond. Verse 11, "...the elders and all those at the gate..." the crowd that is assembled, said, "*We are witnesses*" (Ruth 4:11). It's like they're yelling out "Amen. Amen. We are witnesses."

And then listen to what they begin to pray blessing over them, "*May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel*" (Ruth 4:11). That's a stout prayer right there. Rachel and Leah. Talk about a prayer for fertility, Rachel and Leah between the two of them—12 sons. The 12 tribes of Israel. This is a Moabite woman that is having a prayer prayed over her just as God was faithful to bring about the 12 tribes of Israel, may God do the same in this Moabite woman and your home. "*May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem*" (Ruth 4:11).

There's some ambiguity about Ephrathah there. Many think it's just the ancient name for Bethlehem. It means fruitful just like Bethlehem means house of bread. We saw earlier in Ruth 1:2 the narrator had referred to Elimelech and his family as Ephrathahites so it's really kind of the same picture. But may your name be great, your name famous here in Bethlehem, the significance of Bethlehem may it be known through you. Hold on to that.

In verse 12, "*Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah*" (Ruth 4:12). Now, if we had more time we could dive into some of the background here but to be honest I think we've had enough shady stories in the Old Testament for a series. And so just real brief, skim over this one and it's good to skim over. You can go back in Genesis 38 if you really want to look at it but basically it's a picture of...

Deuteronomy 25, the whole picture of the provision for a widow is supposed to be carried out but it's not carried out and the result is Tamar, whose husband had died, ends up having children with her father-in-law Judah. One of those children is Perez. It's twins, one of the children is Perez.

Now, the correlation here in addition to that Deuteronomy 25 picture if it's not carried out there that it is carried out here is that Tamar was a Canaanite woman outside of the people of Israel and the picture is the line of Judah being carried on by a non-Israelite woman in the picture. And so that's what's going on here and, "May just as God carried on the line through Tamar, a Canaanite woman, may God carry on and bless your line through this Moabite woman, Ruth."

And so that's what they prayed. They prayed blessings over them and this is the point where just we're just ready now to see this happen. We have gotten to the climax of how this relationship is going to happen, this kinsman-redeemer, Boaz has stepped up, he has made promises and it gets us to verse 13 and the Bible says, the narrator tells us, "...*Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son*" (Ruth 4:13).

You know what's so interesting about this story? Like, all the build-up, all the precious, minute details. You've got a whole chapter describing a day in the field. You've got a whole chapter describing a couple of hours one night and then in one verse we have a wedding and a baby just like that. The resolution to the problem in the book is solved in a verse. Oh yeah, they got married and they had a baby.

Did you notice, though, what the narrator did here, very, very intentionally? Underline it otherwise you'll miss it. "...Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife and he went to her," and here's what I want to encourage you to underline, "...*and the Lord enabled her to conceive...*"(Ruth 4:13).

Now we've seen the Lord, Yahweh, in the background so to speak, on every verse of this book. But there are two times that the narrator intentionally brings the Lord to the foreground. Here, and then back, go back and look aback with me Ruth 1:6 underline it there. Two times when the Lord is explicitly in the foreground doing the action look at Ruth 1:6, "When she heard...," Naomi, "*heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them...*"(Ruth 1:6). The Lord did that. Yahweh did that. So the picture is Yahweh provided food. That's one of the needs in the book, right. The other need in the book is what? Family. The Lord enabled her to conceive. The narrator is very intentional to make sure that we know that it was Yahweh who was providing food and family. That it is Yahweh, brothers and sisters all across this room; it is Yahweh who alone is able to meet the deepest needs we have in our lives.

Clearly, Yahweh alone can do that. So he says, "...the LORD enabled her to conceive." And then you get to Verse 14 and basically you've got a birthday party going on and there's a lot of ladies partying. "*The women said to Naomi: 'Praise be to the LORD...'*" (Ruth 4:14). They know where the credit goes. Praise be to Yahweh, "...*who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer*" (Ruth 4:14).

Which is interesting right here. Here the ladies refer to the child as kinsman-redeemer. It's the only place in the Old Testament where someone who's not an adult is referred to as kinsman-redeemer. All the pronouns here are referring to the child and the picture is obviously not the same since that Boaz was the kinsman-redeemer but the child is going to be the one who's going to carry on the family line, the one who's going to sustain the family line, provide for Naomi's future, so to speak, even when she is gone.

"*May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you...*," listen to this phrase, "...*who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons...*"(Ruth 4:14-15)—seven, the number for

perfection or completion in the Old Testament. Think about it. This is Naomi who came back to Bethlehem with a Moabite daughter-in-law saying to the women of Bethlehem, I've got nothing. I've lost everything and now at the end of the book the women of Bethlehem are looking at Naomi saying you've got in her better than the best sons you could even fathom, better than seven sons. And they know she loves Naomi and has been committed to her, has given him birth.

Oh, this it's just drawing to a conclusion here and this is the point where we look at one another in the theater and we're like, that was an incredible story. That was moving. It was touching. It was all that I could have imagined and more. And the next verse says, "Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him."

This is, like, okay the screen is just about to go dark and you've got the grandmother holding the baby. Who could have imagined this from the beginning? Wow. You look at each other, feeling sentimental and then you look around and you say, okay, it's time to pack up our things and get out of here before everybody else does. And so you start picking up your things and you start heading out of the theater.

I don't know if you've ever been a movie where you did that, you started walking out then all of a sudden something happened on the screen to kind of stop you in your tracks, like, maybe the credits had started but all of a sudden something else comes on and so that's what I picture here. We – the story is complete. That's good, more than we ever could have imagined. So we're getting up, packing our stuff, walking out. Maybe you ever been a situation where you even kind of turn your back on the screen and you're walking back and then you hear something, maybe one of the characters pops back on the screen and so you kind of come running back in and say, "What was that?"

And so we're getting up to leave, this has been an incredible story, ready to walk away and then the narrator saves this for the end. Here's Shyamalan at work. Verse 17, "*The women living there said, 'Naomi has a son.' And they named him Obed*" (Ruth 4:17). Obed? Obed "...was the father of Jesse, the father of David" (Ruth 4:17). What? You realize this was more than just Ruth and Boaz and a little love story. This is how God, in the middle of one of the darkest times in our history, was providing the way for the greatest King in our history.

Ruth is David's great grandmother. Did you see that coming? This is shocking. What? God used a Moabite woman as a result of an Israelite who turned his back on the promised land to bring hope to an otherwise hopeless Israelite situation so that we would have the greatest King we know?

Who would have thought that this was what was going to happen and just to make sure the narrator gets his point across he ends with a genealogy, 10 generations. You think about it. Even the symbolism in that, 10 years of death and barrenness in Moab. The law that said no Moabite may enter into the assembly to the tenth generation.

And he closes with, "*This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David*" (Ruth 4:18-22).

This book that began in the days when the Judges ruled, ends with the introduction of the most famous king in Israel's history and we realize this whole story has been about something much, much greater than we could have imagined.

Boaz in Redemptive History...

How about them apples? Like that is – that is an incredible story. So why, why has God chosen for this story to be preserved for thousands of years? Why has God chosen for this story to be told amongst the people of God in this room assembled today? Is it just for our entertainment? It is for a much, much deeper reason.

I want us to see how this story relates to the much bigger story of how God is redeeming a people for Himself. The word redeem means to buy, to purchase or to set free by paying a price and the history of humanity is the story of how, since the fall of man in Genesis 3, God has been about the business of setting a people free from sin by the paying of a price. It's the whole story of the Bible.

And I want us to see how Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer, even Obed referred to as the kinsman-redeemer, fits into this picture and understand in a greater way how Christ and we fit into this picture. We'll start with Boaz.

What does Boaz teach us? Now don't forget we need to be careful not to equate any one character with God; Boaz equals God or Obed or anybody else equals God. Now, God is revealing His character through the characters of the story but there's not direct correlation here but we do learn some things.

One must have the right to redeem.

What do we learn about redemptive history from Boaz? We see a picture of a redeemer and what it involves, what it takes to be a kinsman-redeemer. Number one, in order to redeem, one must have the right to redeem. He must have the right to redeem. He must be a near kinsman, a near relative in order to have the right to do it. So the whole picture revolves around who's got the right? Mr. So and So's got the right first, then Boaz. He's got to have the right to redeem.

One must have the resources to redeem.

Second, one must have the resources to redeem. The kinsman had to be able to pay the redemption price. The kinsman had to have the resources to buy property, to purchase land, whatever it may be to take in family.

One must have the resolve to redeem.

One must have the right and the resources to redeem and then third, one must have the resolve to redeem. It's either one or both of these last two that are missing in Mr. What's His Name because the picture is he's got the right. Either he doesn't have the resources, which he probably does, and doesn't have the resolve. Because it – it's not an advantageous thing for him to take in this proposition, for him to take in this family that he'd have to care for, that he would not be providing for his family, so to speak.

And Boaz, it's not an advantageous proposition for him to take in from the outside but it's the whole picture of "hesed"—loving kindness—that we talked about last week, a love that takes risks. A love that sacrifices. A love that looks beyond oneself and that's the picture we're seeing in Boaz. He has the right and the resources and he, most definitely, has the resolve and that's why he's the redeemer in Ruth. And Mr. No Name is left off the pages of Scripture because he did not have the resolve, because he did what was natural in the world around.

Obed in Redemptive History...

Boaz and redemptive history. One must have the right, the resources and the resolve to redeem. What about Obed, mentioned in the end as kinsman-redeemer? It's interesting, did you notice at the end here how Ruth is hardly anywhere in the picture? Like there's a party with all these ladies and they're talking but who's holding the baby? Like, Ruth can't get the baby back. Naomi is just holding on to the baby. This is what grandmothers do. Right? And the whole spotlight, it's not on Boaz or Ruth. The whole spotlight is on Naomi and Obed. Why?

Don't miss it. There is a picture. The narrator wants to put in our minds at the end of this book based on the picture he gave us at the beginning of this book. Compare Ruth 1 with Ruth 4, particularly when it comes to Naomi where the spotlight is here and think about what Obed, in her arms, is showing us about God in Naomi's life.

God brings His people from death to life.

First showing us... See that God brings His people from death to life. Think of the transformation that this happened. The book of Ruth opens with three funerals. It ends with a wedding and a baby. Death/life, and to use Naomi's words from Ruth 1, the Almighty is sovereign over both. Almighty sovereign over death and life. He brings His people from death to life. Life triumphs over death. The end of the book.

God brings His people from curse to blessing.

Second, God brings His people from cursed to blessing. Chapter 1 she had the curse of all curses in ancient Israel. No heir to carry on her line. At the end she's getting prayed blessing after blessing after blessing over her. God moves His people from curse to blessing.

God brings His people from bitterness to happiness.

Third, God brings His people from bitterness to happiness. Can you just imagine the smile on Naomi's face at the end of this book as she looks down at her grandchild? Don't call me bitter. Call me ecstatic. She is overjoyed. She has been brought from bitterness to happiness.

God brings His people from emptiness to fullness.

God brings His people, next, from emptiness to fullness. You remember, end of Chapter 1, what we've got is Naomi with her hands empty saying to the women in Bethlehem, I've got nothing. I have nothing. The Lord has brought me back empty and yet next to her stands Ruth, the Moabite daughter-in-law, such that through her at the end of the book she's holding, not hands empty, she's holding a baby in her arms as a result of Ruth the Moabite daughter-in-law next to her. From emptiness to fullness. And the women of Bethlehem now are saying you have everything, more than you ever could have had with seven sons.

God brings His people from despair to hope.

And then finally from death to life, curse to blessing, bitterness to happiness, emptiness to fullness and God brings His people from despair to hope. And this book ends, not with a look back at an unbearable past, but to look forward ten generations into an unbelievable, unimaginable future. The future of where this line is going to go, to King David. And this is where we are reminded that Ruth 4:22 is actually not the end of the story.

I want to invite you to fast-forward with me to Matthew 1. Matthew 1. I wish the Old Testament saints could have seen where this deal was going. Like, they'd a had to stick around for a really long time in the theater to wait for this credit to roll right here but this

was going to change everything. This story, hidden away in the pages of the Old Testament history, is pointing us to the grand story on the front page of redemptive history. Matthew 1. Let me show you Boaz and Ruth again in Scripture. Verse 5. "*Salmon the father of Boaz...*" circle in there, "*whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David*" (Matthew 1:5-6).

That's where Ruth 4:18-22 stops. And yet Matthew 1 keeps going. "*David was the father of Solomon...*" (Matthew 1:5-6), and so on and so on all the way down to Verse 16; "*and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ*" (Matthew 1:16). There is a much greater king being pointed to in Ruth 4 than King David. This line is going to go all the way to King Jesus.

Christ in Redemptive History...

And you think about, now, the purpose of Boaz and Obed in redemptive history have not been just to give us a nice love story to entertain us. Boaz and Obed are on the pages of human history where they are to point us to Christ on the pages of redemptive history, to point us to the day when God, in all of His supreme glory, by His grace, took on a robe of human flesh and became like us. He was born among us, like us in every way, yet without sin. Like us. Near to us. Akin to us. Kinsmen. And as a result, He has the right, having become like us, to redeem us.

Does He have the resources to be our redeemer? Absolutely He does. This is the one who has all authority in heaven and on earth that is coming as a baby. This is the one who will come with all authority over sin and death, suffering and the grave. This is the one who will come and tell the wind and the waves to be still, the one who will come and tell the sick to be healed and the blind to see and the lame to walk and demons to flee. He'll tell the dead to rise. He undoubtedly has the resources to redeem. He has the right, resources.

Does He have the resolve? Does He have the resolve? He takes up a wooden cross, not because He has to, not because He is obligated to, but because He desires obedience to the Father more than He desires His own life and He takes up – not even just a wooden cross. He takes up your sin and my sin and the payment, the inheritance due all of us in our sin, the eternity and damnation separated from a wrathful God towards sin. He takes up the inheritance that all of us in this room deserve, brings it upon Himself and He endures the wrath of God on our behalf. Praise God.

Jesus alone is able to pay the price for our salvation.

He undoubtedly has the right, the resources and the resolve to redeem us and Jesus alone has paid the price for our salvation. He has redeemed us. 1 Peter 1, "...not with perishable things like silver or gold...but with the precious blood..." (1 Pet. 1:18-19) that He shed on a cross. Ephesians 1, "In him we have redemption....the forgiveness of our sins..." the grace of God "...has lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding" (Eph. 1:7-8).

Now, don't miss this. Don't miss this. This is not a picture of you and I—a beautiful Ruth in the field to just catch the eye of Jesus and He is attracted to us, that He is drawn to us. The reality is everything in us repels a holy Savior. There's nothing in us to draw holy God to us. We have turned against Him. We have turned our backs on Him. We want nothing to do with Him and yet – and yet He pursues us.

You think about it. Here in Matthew 1, apart from Mary, there are four women mentioned in Matthew 1 and none of them deserve and to be in the genealogy of Jesus Christ, think about it. Up in verse 3, "*Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar...*" (Matt. 1:3). Tamar who committed incest with her father-in-law in the line of Jesus?

Then you get down to verse 5, "*Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab...*" (Matt. 1:5)—Rahab the gentile prostitute? And Ruth the gentile Moabite and then you get down halfway through Verse 6, "*...David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife...*" (Matt. 1:6)—the adulteress, the one who committed adultery with King David? What in the world are these four women doing in the genealogical line that leads us to the Son of God?

Brothers and sisters, they are there for the exact same reason that you and I find ourselves in this room today, not because they or we have earned it, not because they or we have done anything to deserve it. We are there only because the grace of a Christ who came to save the worst of sinners. And He came to take away our sins, the dirtiest, the most despised, the most undeserving. That's how we get into this line, by the grace of Christ. We were in the field deserving no attention from Him and He pursued us. He protected us. He provided for us and He has changed our status. We are no longer slaves and strangers. We are sons and daughters of the living God.

Jesus alone is able to guarantee the promise of our restoration.

Jesus alone was able to do that. No one else in all history can do that, can provide that kind of redemption, the right, the resources and the resolve. Jesus alone is able to pay the price for our salvation and Jesus alone is able to guarantee the promise of our restoration. He alone is able to guarantee the promise of our restoration.

Now we saw, end of Ruth, this picture of Naomi going from bitterness to blessedness and we have seen the women pray over Ruth and Boaz and Naomi and Obed and may His name, may your line bring fame to Bethlehem. And it just so happens that in the very next chapter, Matthew 2, it just so happens that the Roman Empire declares a census that everyone return to his hometown. And it just so happens that Joseph and his fiancé, Mary, return to his hometown. And it just so happens that his hometown, because he's from the family and the clan of Boaz, is in Bethlehem. And it just so happens that here, in Matthew 2, in the city that Ruth 1 began as a land of famine and judgment against the people of God, now becomes the land of blessing that brings the Son of God into the earth.

Here's the deal. Don't miss this. When God writes the last chapter of your story it always ends well. People of God. People of God who trust in Him, this is for the people of God who trust in Him, when God writes the last chapter of your story it will be very, very good. Jesus guarantees that. We know that. If you don't trust in God, continue in sin, then don't know that. Don't hold on to that. You trust in God, trust in Christ as your redeemer and He alone is able to guarantee the promise of your restoration.

The Church in Redemptive History...

So how does this relate to us? How do our stories in this room overlap with the story of Ruth and Boaz in redemptive history? This is where it is startling. It is humbling, mind-boggling to realize. Do we realize this? The same God who is working in Ruth's life and Boaz's life and Naomi's life, the same God is at work in your life, today. That God is at work in your life, personally at work in your life where this brings this story right to your seat.

So where do we fit into this picture? What can we walk away from this picture knowing about this God in my life, in this seat?

God is committed to sovereignly providing for His people.

Two truths. One, God is committed to sovereignly providing for His people. Know this; God is committed to sovereignly providing for His people. Ruth 1, He is the almighty who is sovereign over everything. Never lose sight of the fact that God is sovereign. Ruth is a story of setback after setback after setback and God is sovereign over them all. Retreat to Moab, death of a husband, death of two sons, return empty and bitter to Bethlehem, a day in the fields of Boaz, a night at the threshing floor, a near kinsman who might steal this whole plan away, a baby born – every single detail under the sovereignty of God. Not one thing happening in the Book of Ruth that is outside of His control.

And the picture is, this is the point at the end of the Book of Ruth when the author takes it and brings it into this much bigger picture about King David because the reality is what God was doing in Ruth's life and Naomi's life and Boaz's life was much bigger than Ruth and Naomi and Boaz. He was sovereignly providing for His entire people, for a King who would lead His people and point His people to Himself. That's what God is doing, sovereignly providing for His people. And the implication of that for us in this room is great and you've got it there in your notes. This means, brothers and sisters, that we can trust Him in the worst of times. We can trust Him in the worst of times.

Even when we may not understand, we may wonder why, we may wonder how things are ever going to be resolved. It may look, in your life, like the end of Ruth 1, like there is little to no hope on the horizon. But know this, in every setback we face God is plotting for the good of His people. Even in our pain, God is plotting for our good. You say, what about sin that I bring upon myself? This is the beauty of the gospel, it's sin that starts this whole picture in Ruth 1, leaving the land of promise, going to the land of compromise and God uses the sin of a Elimelech to bring about this picture of salvation among His people.

Here's the reality. Because of Christ, this is only possible because of Christ... But because of Christ sin, brothers and sisters, sin from your past does not dispel hope for your future. Sin from your past does not dispel hope for your future because He redeems sin. And then in suffering, in times that seem unwarranted, it doesn't make sense why is this happening, didn't do anything to bring this on, why is this happening? When we walk through suffering like this, we can rest confident that in the middle of that God is plotting in our pain, even, for our good.

I had the blessing last night of going to a celebration of two members of this faith family who, around 30 years ago, walked into some of the most unforeseen, unimaginable darkness that they could have thought of. One husband named A.T. who watched his wife go with a bout through cancer and pass away. The other a wife, Lois, who saw her husband tragically killed in a car accident. And last night I had the incredible privilege, with brothers and sisters in this faith family, to gather around A.T. and Lois Scott and celebrate 25 years of marriage. Who could have imagined around 30 years ago the joy that would be celebrated and experienced in that room last night?

Now obviously, the road is not easy. And obviously, we know, all across this room, that the road God leads us on is not always smooth and it is not always straight. But brothers and sisters, in the end it is always satisfying. Always satisfying and I don't even say that just to... I can't make the promise that stories like the one last night and the stories across this room are all going to end up that nice and joyful in this world but I can guarantee this,

based on the authority of Jesus Christ, I can guarantee that this world is not our home and there is coming a day when God Himself will wipe every tear from your eyes and there will be no more mourning and no more crying and no more pain because the old will be gone and the new will come, and you and I will be with Him. This is what Job cried out in Job 19, *"I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him...I and not another. How my heart yearns within me"* (Job 19:25-27).

This is the confidence we can have. God is committed to sovereignly providing for His people. We can trust Him in the worst of times. How do we know that? Because we know, as the people of God, the best of times are yet to come. We can trust Him in the worst of times because the best of times are yet to come. This is the gospel.

God is committed to radically pursuing all peoples.

God is sovereignly committed to providing for His people and not just that. The point of the Book of Ruth, step further, another... Second truth, God is committed not just to sovereignly providing for His people but to radically pursuing all peoples.

And this is part of the point of the Book of Ruth that we cannot miss. Ruth 4, as this Moabite woman is grafted into the family of God is the fulfillment of promise to Abraham back in Genesis 12:1-3. God is going to bless His people so that His blessing would extend to who? To all peoples on the earth. And the picture is God welcoming in the foreigner in Ruth.

It's the same picture we see at other distinct points in the Old Testament of a God who is radically pursuing all peoples, a relationship with Him that is not determined by outside ethnic heritage but inner condition of the heart. This commitment that we see from Ruth in the very beginning of that book brings her into the people of Israel. And this is the reality to every individual in this room, every man in this room, every woman in this room, every student, every child in this room. The God of the Universe is a pursuing God and He desires your redemption. He desires to cover over your sin.

You say my sin is too great. It is not too great for His blood to cover over your sin. And if you have never opened up your heart to the pursuing God and He has brought you sovereignly to this point, in this seat, at this moment this morning, I urge you in your heart for the first time to open up, come to the end of yourself and say, "Yes. Write your story of love on my heart. Cover over my sins."

This is not a religious game this is reality that affects all eternity. Trust in Him. Turn from your sins and trust in the only one who has the right, resources and resolve to redeem you and let your story be joined up into this grand story of redemptive history, today.

And then once that happens, brothers and sisters who have been redeemed, then go to the outcast, go to the needy, and go to the hurting—the dirty and the despised and the helpless. Go to them. We have the story of redemption. And there are people all across Birmingham who do not know it. Go to them and tell them this story. And don't stop there. There are hundreds of millions of people who don't even know that Jesus exists and they have no clue why He would come and you and I have the story, the grand story of redemption to take to them so let's not waste our lives on ourselves. Let's pursue them.

Let's run after the nations with this gospel. It is too good to keep to ourselves. There is no amount of money we can make, no pursuit we can live for in a 280 Birmingham culture that is greater than making this story known among all the peoples of the earth that God desires

to bring to Himself. We have the right. Christ has saved us. We have the resources. He has put His very presence in us.

The question is, Church at Brooke Hills, do we have the resolve? Do we have the resolve to look beyond ourselves and not look to what is most advantages for us to be successful in our culture, but do we have the resolve to lay down our rights and to give our lives, to spend them to the end for the sake of making this story known among all peoples?

God may it be so. God may it be so. This is why we're here. Not just to sit back and bask in a love story but to abandon everything to proclaim a love story to the ends of the earth.

Do you realize this picture? You have these individuals, Boaz and Ruth and Naomi, they have no clue that what is going on amidst them will be talked about thousands of years later to point them to Christ. They had no idea the impact their small ordinary lives at a time when the Judges would have on all of redemptive history. And I want to propose to you this morning that you have no idea people of God, what God desires to do in your life on the grand scheme of redemptive history.

You say what do you mean? I mean, Holly, one member of this faith family, a wife, a mom who goes to Guatemala, shares the story of redemption and Domingo comes to Christ. Catch that! In that one moment. Do you realize this is greater than an impact on that day or for the next day or for the next week or for the next ten years? That has an impact on Domingo's eternal life, forever, singing the praises of Christ. As a result of what God has done through one ordinary wife and mom in this faith family.

So what happens when that is multiplied all throughout this faith family? This is the reality. We are part of something much greater than ourselves. God help us. God help us to look beyond the trivial and the temporal and the affections that compete for our minds and our hearts in this life. God help us to raise our eyes and realize we're created for something much greater than football and 401k's, we're created to be a part of a grand redemptive scheme where God is making His glory by His grace known in all nations. That is unbelievable that we are a part of that.

So this is the truth. Let it sink into your hearts. God is using ordinary people to accomplish an extraordinary purpose. May this be the case in this faith family. May God use us, ordinary church filled with ordinary believers, to accomplish an extraordinary purpose for His Kingdom.

God may it be so. May it be so. This is the story of redemption and I want to invite us this morning to respond to it.

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