

THE LOVE STORY OF REDEMPTION – FROM BITTERNESS TO BLESSING – FROM EMPTINESS TO FULLNESS

COMMENTARY ON BOOK OF RUTH

THE KIND PROVIDENCE OF GOD SECURES REDEMPTION AND ESTABLISHES THE MESSIANIC HOPE EVEN FOR DESTITUTE GENTILES

Paul Apple (November 2012)

For each section:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

Ruth 4:14 “*Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today*”

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BACKGROUND NOTES

Malick: Purposes of the Book of Ruth:

- A. To provide a biographical sketch of the pious ancestors of David the King (which the books of Samuel do not provide)
- B. To contrast the reproach brought upon Bethlehem in Judges 17--21 with the account of the righteous in Bethlehem
- C. To emphasize the fulfillment of God's covenant promises through Judah at a time when the nation Israel had lost her first king--Saul from the line of Benjamin
- D. To demonstrate how YHWH supplies for the enormous needs of his people both individually and nationally in accordance with his covenant promises

Brian Bill: Many people have said that the Book of Ruth is the most beautiful short story ever written. It's an account of anxiety, fear, love, and commitment that inflames the imagination and soothes the soul. It begins with despair and ends with delight.

Biblical.com:

Redemption is a key concept throughout the account; the Hebrew word in its various forms occurs 23 times. The book is primarily a story of Naomi's transformation from despair to happiness through the selfless, God-blessed acts of Ruth and Boaz. She moves from emptiness to fullness (1:21; 3:17; see notes on 1:1,3,5-6,12,21-22; 3:17; 4:15), from destitution (1:1-5) to security and hope (4:13-17). Similarly, Israel was transformed from national desperation at the death of Eli (1Sa 4:18) to peace and prosperity in the early days of Solomon (1Ki 4:20-34; 5:4) through the selfless devotion of David, a true descendant of Ruth and Boaz. The author thus reminded Israel that the reign of the house of David, as the means of God's benevolent rule in Israel, held the prospect of God's promised peace and rest. But this rest would continue only so long as those who participated in the kingdom—prince and people alike—reflected in their daily lives the selfless love exemplified by Ruth and Boaz. In Jesus, the great "son of David" (Mt 1:1), and his redemptive work, the promised blessings of the kingdom of God find their fulfillment.

Outline:

- Introduction: Naomi Emptied (1:1-5)
- Naomi Returns from Moab (1:6-22)
 - Ruth Clings to Naomi (1:6-18)
 - Ruth and Naomi Return to Bethlehem (1:19-22)
- Ruth and Boaz Meet in the Harvest Fields (ch. 2)
 - Ruth Begins Work (2:1-7)
 - Boaz Shows Kindness to Ruth (2:8-16)
 - Ruth Returns to Naomi (2:17-23)

OUTLINE OF RUTH

THE LOVE STORY OF REDEMPTION – FROM BITTERNESS TO BLESSING – FROM EMPTINESS TO FULLNESS

BIG IDEA:

THE KIND PROVIDENCE OF GOD SECURES REDEMPTION AND ESTABLISHES THE MESSIANIC HOPE EVEN FOR DESTITUTE GENTILES

Overview of Ruth – Gospel Love Story

- Focuses on the Redemption of Ruth – inclusion of the Gentiles
- Focuses on the Redeemer – Boaz and the Royal Line leading to King David and the ultimate Son of David, the Messiah; **Matt. 1:5** – Obed then to Jesse then to David

I. Ruth's Background – Loyal Commitment as a Converted Gentile

II. Ruth's Backbreaking Labor – Learning Lessons about the Providence of God

III. Ruth's Boldness – Looking to Boaz for Redemption

IV. Ruth's Blessing – Love Consummated – Redemption and Marriage

I. (1:1-2) Difficult Trials Test the Loyalty of Our Commitment to God's Lovingkindness – 3 Approaches to the Difficult Trials God Brings Our Way

A. (:1-5) The Legacy of Elimelech –

Fleeing Trials – Trusting in the Flesh – Hitting Rock Bottom in Moab –
The Backdrop of the Sad Consequences of Sinful Choices

B. (:6-14a) The Lament of Naomi –

Grieving Trials – Limiting Your Vision to the Hopelessness of Your Present Circumstances –
The Burden of Guilt and Desperation

C. (:14b-22) The Loyal Devotion of Ruth –

Cleaving to Trials – Walking by Faith – Back to Bethlehem –

The Bravery of Ruth's Commitment vs the Bitterness of Naomi's Reaction to the Lord's Hand of Discipline

II. (2:1-23) The Kind Providence of God Surprises Us as We Act Diligently and Responsibly in Our Journey of Faith –

3 Surprising Blessings of the Kind Providence of God

A. (:1-7) The Kind Providence of God Directs Us Into Favorable Circumstances that are Divine Appointments –

We Need to **Take Initiative and Step Out in Faith**

B. (:8-16) The Kind Providence of God Provides For Our Needs and Protects Us as We Trust in God's Favor –

We Need to **Act Responsibly and Work Hard**

C. (:17-23) The Kind Providence of God Surpasses Our Expectations of Divine Blessing –

We Need to **Persevere and Give God the Glory** in Testifying to His Lovingkindness

III. (3:1-18) Because Our Redeemer is Not Only Willing and Able But Righteous, We Should Be Bold in Approaching Him For Rest and Security

A. (:1-5) Human Wisdom Can Lead to Compromising Situations When the Pathway of Expediency Trumps the Walk of Faith

B. (:6-13) Compromising Situations Can Be Successfully Navigated By Godly Men and Women of Integrity

C. (:14-18) Faith in the Kind Providence of God Means waiting on the Lord Instead of Rashly Pursuing the Path of Expediency

IV. (4:1-17) A Redeemer Who is Willing, Qualified and Capable Brings Abundant Blessing in Delivering Outcasts Who Were Desperate and Destitute

A. (:1-6) The Redeemer Must Be **Willing** –

Contrast Between Boaz and the Unnamed Closest Relative –

“Behold I have Come to Do Your Will, O God” (Heb. 10:7)

B. (:7-11a) The Redeemer Must Be **Qualified and Capable** –

Emphasis on the Legal Nature of the Transaction –

“It is Finished” (John 19:30)

C. (:11b-17) The Redeemer **Brings Abundant Blessing** –

(:18-22) EPILOGUE – Appreciating the Significance of Redemption

TEXT: Ruth 1:1-22

TITLE: RUTH'S BACKGROUND – LOYAL COMMITMENT AS A CONVERTED GENTILE

BIG IDEA:

DIFFICULT TRIALS TEST THE LOYALTY OF OUR COMMITMENT TO GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS

INTRODUCTION:

Jeremiah gave testimony to a deep commitment to the **Lord's lovingkindness:**

Lamentations 3:19-32

Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness. 20 Surely my soul remembers And is bowed down within me. 21 This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. 22 The LORD's loving kindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Thy faithfulness. 24 "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him." 25 The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the person who seeks Him. 26 It is good that he waits silently For the salvation of the LORD. 27 It is good for a man that he should bear The yoke in his youth. 28 Let him sit alone and be silent Since He has laid it on him. 29 Let him put his mouth in the dust, Perhaps there is hope. 30 Let him give his cheek to the smiter; Let him be filled with reproach. 31 For the Lord will not reject forever, 32 For if He causes grief, Then He will have compassion According to His abundant lovingkindness.

Roy Hession: "I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." -- The first chapter of the book of Ruth is a very important one. Every preacher knows, or should know, he has to begin by awakening a sense of need in his hearers. He cannot plunge in too quickly with the positive side of his message. He must first convince the people that they are in just that state of need which requires the provision he proposes to speak about. So it is, before we are introduced to the subject of redemption in the book of Ruth, we have brought before us a story of trouble and loss which occasions the need for one who can redeem.

Concept of a godly remnant in apostate and rebellious times

Overview of Ruth – Gospel Love Story

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I. Ruth's Background – Loyal Commitment as a Converted Gentile

II. Ruth's Backbreaking Labor – Learning Lessons About the Providence of God

III. Ruth's Boldness – Looking to Boaz for Redemption

IV. Ruth's Blessing – Love Consummated – Redemption and Marriage

DIFFICULT TRIALS TEST THE LOYALTY OF OUR COMMITMENT TO GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS

THREE APPROACHES TO THE DIFFICULT TRIALS GOD BRINGS OUR WAY

**I. (:1-5) THE LEGACY OF ELIMELECH –
FLEEING TRIALS – TRUSTING IN THE FLESH -- HITTING ROCK BOTTOM IN
MOAB –
THE BACKDROP OF THE SAD CONSEQUENCES OF SINFUL CHOICES**

A. Timestamp

“Now it came about in the days when the judges governed,”

We know what those days were like; this will be set in contrast to those sad tales

Probably during the time of Gideon’s judgeship

Delightful love story

Picture of Redemption – the gospel in OT foreshadowing

Story of Redemption must be set against the backdrop of sin and death and bankruptcy

Bridge to the time period of King David ... and ultimately the royal line of the Messiah

B. Trial

“that there was a famine in the land.”

Something is gravely wrong when there is a famine in the Promised Land

Cf. famine in days of Abraham (Gen. 12); Isaac (Gen. 26); Jacob (Gen. 46)

Lev. 26:18-20; Deut. 28:23-24 warn of God’s judgment via famine for idolatry and rebellion

C. (:1b-3) Transgression Followed by Tragedy – Failure of Faith

“And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there. Then Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.

Bethlehem = “house of bread” – in land given to tribe of Judah; later called city of David and birthplace of Jesus; 5 miles south of Jerusalem

Elimelech = “my God is King”

Naomi = “pleasant”

Mahlon = “sick”

Chilion = “pining” – frailty, mortality; coming to an end

Planned for just a temporary stay = *sojourn* – but ended up staying for ten years

Worship of Chemosh (Num. 21:29; 1 Kings 11:7, 33); encouraged human sacrifices (2 Kings 3:26-27); practiced immorality (Num. 25)

Description of Moabites: preceptaustin.org

Proud and arrogant -Isaiah 16:6; Jeremiah 48:29

Idolatrous -1Kings 11:7

Superstitious -Jeremiah 27:3,9

Rich and confident -Jeremiah 48:7
Prosperous and at ease -Jeremiah 48:11
Mighty men of war -Jeremiah 48:14

You can't run from your problems!

Oswald Chambers: The majority of us begin with the bigger problems outside and forget the one inside.

Wiersbe: How do you walk by faith? By claiming the promises of God and obeying the Word of God, in spite of what you see, how you feel, or what may happen. It means committing yourself to the Lord and relying wholly on Him to meet the need. When we live by faith, it glorifies God, witnesses to a lost world, and builds Christian character into our lives.

Watson: Elimelech, seeing his possessions melt away, has decided to leave Judah for a time so as to save what remains to him till the famine is over, and he chooses the nearest refuge, the watered field of Moab beyond the Salt Sea. It was not far; he could imagine himself returning soon to resume the accustomed life in the old home.

Block: It seems, however, that Elimelech designed his own solution instead of calling on God for mercy and repenting of the sins that plagued the nation during the dark days of the judges. How did the Israelites feel about the Moabites??

- 1) contemptible origins in the incestuous relationship of Lot and his daughter (Gen 19:30-38)
- 2) their resistance to Israelite passage through their territory when they came from Egypt (Numbers 22-24)
- 3) Moabite women's seduction of the Israelites and the latter's subsequent punishment (Num. 25:1-9)
- 4) Israel's constitutional exclusion of Moab from the assembly of the Lord (Deut. 23:3-6)
- 5) the recent oppression of the Israelites by Eglon the king of Moab (Judges 3:15-30)

Block: to be buried in an unclean foreign land was considered the ultimate punishment (Amos 7:17)

James 1 – important lessons about endurance

D. (:4-5) Transgression Followed by Tragedy – Failure of Obedience

“And they took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.”

Block: Deut. 7:3-4 – took by abduction – negative connotation; illegitimate marriages; their barrenness further sign of God's judgment (Deut. 28:18)

Orpah = stubborn – turned her neck on her mother-in-law

Ruth = friendship, refreshment

Wiersbe: a family makes a bad decision and exchanges one famine for three funerals. Job 9:4
“Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered?”

II. (:6-14) THE LAMENT OF NAOMI – GRIEVING TRIALS – LIMITING YOUR VISION TO THE HOPELESSNESS OF YOUR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES -- THE BURDEN OF GUILT AND DESPERATION

A. (:6-7) Right Course of Action . . . Wrong Motivation

“Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD had visited His people in giving them food. So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.”

B. (:8-14) Crossroads of Tough Decision

Picture them at the banks of the Jordan River – making the decision whether to go back to Moab or continue on to Bethlehem

1. (:8-9) First Entreaty by Naomi – Find Security in Marriage in Your Homeland

*“And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, ‘Go, return each of you to her mother's house. **May the LORD deal kindly with you** as you have dealt with the dead and with me. **May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband.**”*

2. (:10) Response to First Entreaty – Loyal Devotion and Commitment

*Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.
And they said to her, ‘No, but we will surely return with you to your people.’*

3. (:11-13) Second Entreaty by Naomi – No Prospects with Naomi

*“But Naomi said, ‘Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons, would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, **for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me.**”*

4. (:14) Response to Second Entreaty – Contrasting Decisions

“And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her”

Importance of the motif of **dialogue** throughout this historical narrative

Now the story becomes all about Ruth

Naomi’s motivation seems more to go where there is food rather than to renew her worship and fellowship of the one true God in obedience to His revealed covenant with the nation Israel

MacArthur: The return of physical prosperity only shadowed the reality of a coming spiritual prosperity through the line of David in the person of Christ

Block: *hesed* is a covenant term, wrapping up in itself all the positive attributes of God: love, covenant faithfulness, mercy, grace kindness, loyalty. In short, it refers to acts of devotion and lovingkindness that go beyond the requirements of duty. Divine acts of *hesed* would bring the opposite of the pain and grief these women have all been experiencing for more than a decade. Specifically it could involve the application of the covenant blessings specified in Lev 26:3-13 and Deut 28:1-14.

III. (:14b-22) THE LOYAL DEVOTION OF RUTH – CLEAVING TO TRIALS – WALKING BY FAITH -- BACK TO BETHLEHEM – THE BRAVERY OF RUTH’S COMMITMENT VS THE BITTERNESS OF NAOMI’S REACTION TO THE LORD’S HAND OF DISCIPLINE

A. (:14b-18) The Bravery of Ruth’s Loyal Commitment

1. (:14b-16a) Committed to Leaving and Cleaving

“but Ruth clung to her. Then she said, ‘Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law.’ But Ruth said, ‘Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you;’”

2. (:16b) Committed to Going Where Naomi Goes

“for where you go, I will go,”

3. (:16c) Committed to Dwelling Where Naomi Makes Her Home

“and where you lodge, I will lodge.”

4. (:16d) Committed to Changing Nationalities

“Your people shall be my people,”

5. (:16e) Committed to Changing Gods

“and your God, my God.”

6. (:17-18) Committed on a Permanent Basis

“Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me.’ When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.”

- Until death
- Under the curse of God’s accountability
- End of discussion

Illustration: often used in wedding ceremonies as expression of commitment; studying the permanence view of marriage and divorce – controversial issue – note the words in the marriage vows: “Until death do us part” – do we really believe that?? Or is it just until our partner behaves in a way we do not approve and cannot tolerate??

Block: the center couplet is the most impressive of all. Using a mere four words she answers Naomi’s final plea to join Orpah in returning to the people and the god of Moab. With radical self-sacrifice she abandons every base of security that any person, let alone a poor widow, in that cultural context would have clung to: her native homeland, her own people, even her own gods.

Like any Near easterner of her time, she realized that if she would commit herself to Naomi and go home with her, she must also commit herself to Naomi's people (Israel) and to Naomi's God (Yahweh).

B. (:19-21) The Bitterness of Naomi's Reaction to the Lord's Hand of Discipline

1. (:19) Shocking State of Humiliation

"So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came about when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, 'Is this Naomi?'"

Not the type of homecoming that someone would wish for; imagine the gossip that spread through the city about this prominent woman – this blood relative of Boaz – about what had happened to her husband and two sons; the shame of returning with a Moabite daughter-in-law; the hardness of her face and features; you could see her bitterness in her countenance

2. (:20) Sad Change of Identity

"And she said to them, 'Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.'"

Tone of **Bitterness** pervades Naomi's outlook; but amazingly does not spill over to corrupt Ruth's spirit; Naomi continues to blame God rather than take responsibility for the sins of her family

Continues to subscribe to the Lord's sovereignty and yet fails to give Him credit for His mercy and compassion and wisdom and love and grace; she has much to learn about the hesed of her covenant God and about His amazing providential care

3. (:21) Somber Testimony of the Lord's Hand of Discipline

"I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

somber = dark and gloomy; melancholy

The gospel story of Ruth with its picture of Redemption will trace the path from **emptiness** back to **overflowing fullness** by the grace and mercy of God

C. (:22) Transition: Prospect for New Beginnings in the Promised Land of Blessing

1. Emphasis on Returning

"So Naomi returned,"

2. Emphasis on Gentile Inclusion

"and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab."

3. Emphasis on Bethlehem

"And they came to Bethlehem"

3. Emphasis on Harvest Time of Blessing
“at the beginning of barley harvest.”

MacArthur: Naomi’s outlook on life, although grounded in God’s sovereignty, was not hopeful

CONCLUSION:

How are we going to face the trials the Lord brings our way?

- Running away – like **Elimelech** – experiencing the sad consequences of sinful choices
- Becoming bitter – like **Naomi**
- Embracing them and using them as opportunities for new beginnings in experiencing God’s mercy and grace – beautiful love story of **Ruth** in the midst of the dark days of the judges

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When have we been tempted to flee from a trial that God brought our way? How did we resolve the tension?
- 2) When was the last time we had a pity party for ourselves and acted as if God was against us or oblivious to our problems?
- 3) How has God been gracious to grant us new beginnings and demonstrate that His lovingkindness is new every morning?
- 4) What do we learn about the nature of devotion and commitment from Ruth’s resolve here to stick with Naomi in their hard times?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Block: Ruth’s pledge involves four significant elements:

- 1) an appeal to resist all pressures to break the relationship
- 2) a commitment to the other person for life
- 3) the adoption of the other person’s family and faith as one’s own and the abandonment of prior allegiances [leaving and cleaving]
- 4) an awareness that God is a witness to all the promises we make

John Reed: Naomi thought she was returning empty-handed, but she had Ruth the Moabitess with her. And the harvest was ripe; there was hope.

Wiersbe: The Book of Ruth is a harvest story as well as a love story. During this dark time in Israel’s history, God was seeking a bride and reaping a harvest. . .

Five women in the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 4 – four of whom have very questionable credentials: Tamar committed incest with her father-in-law (Gen. 38:3); Rahab was a Gentile harlot (Josh. 2:5); Ruth was an outcast Gentile Moabitess (Ruth 1:5); and the wife of Uriah was an adulteress (2 Sam. 11:6) . . .

It was barley harvest when the two widows arrived in Bethlehem, a time when the community expressed joy and praise to God for His goodness. It was spring, a time of new life and new beginning.

Wilkinson, B, & Boa, K. Talk thru the Bible. Nashville: T. Nelson

RUTH	JUDGES
Spiritual light	Spiritual darkness
Purity	Immorality
Deciding for the One true God	Pursuing Idols who are no gods
Devotion	Disloyalty
Love	Lust
Peace	War
Kindness	Cruelty
Obedience brings blessing	Disobedience brings sorrow
Oasis of righteousness	Desert of rebellion
Faithfulness of a Gentile alien	Faithlessness of the "chosen people"

Preceptaustin.org: Levirate Marriage: Levirate is from the Latin "levir" which means a "husband's brother" (or "brother in law") and thus "levirate marriage" refers to the Jewish custom which dictated that when a husband died without leaving a surviving son, the dead man's brother (or nearest male relative) was allowed to receive (or purchase [cf Ru 4:5-note]) his deceased brother's (or relative's) property and manage it for the widow, thereby keeping the family property and possessions intact (cp Matt. 22:25; Mark 12:20; Luke 20:29). If the deceased brother left no male children, then the surviving brother was expected to take the deceased's widow in order to provide a male heir (something Judah refused until Tamar tricked him - see Ge 38:1, 2, 3, 4, 5,6, 7, 8, 9, 10). The firstborn male would be considered the heir of the dead brother's estate and was expected to continue the dead brother's name (Dt 25:5, 25:6-notes, Ru 4:10-note). If the brother (or the nearest relative) choose not to marry the widow, she subjected him to gross insult (Dt 25:7, 8, 9, 10). The purpose was the perpetuation of the dead brother's name, because if an Israelite died and left his widow without a son, there was the danger that his name might perish and his property pass out of the family.

Jeff Strite: Total Commitment – Illustration:

A college man walked into a photography studio with a framed picture of his girlfriend. He

wanted the picture duplicated. This involved removing it from the frame. In doing this, the studio owner noticed the inscription on the back of the photograph:

“My dearest Tom, I love you with all my heart. I love you more and more each day. I will love you forever and ever. I am yours for all eternity.”

It was signed "Helen," and it contained a P.S.: “If we ever break up, I want this picture back.”

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Victor Yap: It is Well With My Soul – Illustration:

A friend sent me an e-mail with the subject “An Everyday Survival Kit.” However, this survival kit does not have a flashlight, a blanket, food, or the normal emergency-preparedness stuff. Here are its contents:

- Toothpick - to remind you to pick out the good qualities in others...Matt. 7:1
- Rubber band - to remind you to be flexible, things might not always go the way you want, but it will work out...Rom. 8:28
- Band Aid - to remind you to heal hurt feelings, yours or someone else's...Col. 3:12-14
- Pencil - to remind you to list your blessings everyday...Eph. 1:3
- Erasor - to remind you that everyone makes mistakes, and it's okay...Gen. 50:15-21
- Chewing gum - to remind you to stick with it and you can accomplish anything...Phil. 4:13
- Mint - to remind you that you are worth a mint to your God...John 3:16-17
- Candy kiss - to remind you that everyone needs a kiss or a hug everyday...1 John 4:7
- Tea bag - to remind you to relax daily and go over that list of God's blessing's...1 Thess. 5:18

Darren Ethier: The Velcro Effect – Illustration:

In 1948, a Swiss mountaineer named George de Mestral was walking through the woods and was very frustrated by the burs that clung to his clothes. While picking them off, he realized that it may be possible to use this principle to make a fastener to compete with the zipper. (Taken from the Useless Information Site, "ZIPPERS & VELCRO")Velcro was inspired by the natural sticking properties of burrs. If you look at a velcro strip, you'll notice that it has two parts to it: a strip that has a web of tiny hooks; and a strip that has a web of tiny interwoven hoops. These two strips are a match for each other and when you join them together the hooks "catch" the loops and they become meshed together in a very strong bond.

The Velcro Effect is a term that I believe describes the relationship between God's Faithfulness to us and our need for Him. We can understand this concept better when we look at Ruth 1. Here we learn of God's covenant faithfulness, which still operates today in the life of believers.

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TEXT: Ruth 2:1-23

TITLE: *THE SURPRISING BLESSINGS OF THE KIND PROVIDENCE OF GOD*

BIG IDEA:

THE KIND PROVIDENCE OF GOD SURPRISES US AS WE ACT DILIGENTLY AND RESPONSIBLY IN OUR JOURNEY OF FAITH

3 SURPRISING BLESSINGS OF THE KIND PROVIDENCE OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:

Once again in the **Providence of God** we come upon a topic that fits in perfectly with the circumstances of my life. Just last Saturday I spoke at the Memorial Service for my brother-in-law Mark Phebus. He was killed suddenly and unexpectedly by a falling tree on the Skyline Line as he was rounding a bend in the road at dusk with my sister Joanne in the passenger seat beside him. He was just moving on to the next overlook to take some pictures of the pretty sunset. [Among many points of interest is that their address was Falling Branch, TN – go figure!] No other explanation can be given other than the Lord had Mark's name and timestamp on that particular tree. But our comfort was drawn from the Lord's words that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without the knowledge and control of our loving heavenly Father. We are of far more value to God than mere sparrows. This was no chance accident from God's perspective. It was a divinely orchestrated providential event to usher Mark into the presence of his Lord and Savior.

So we come to chapter 2 in the book of Ruth and we are going to see the Providence of God play out in a favorable light. But we must recognize the loving hand of our heavenly Father in either good or bad outcomes – knowing that His perspective is eternal; His wisdom is ultimate; His plans are ultimately for the good of those that love God and are called according to His purposes.

It has been several weeks since we looked at the **Background of Ruth** in chapter 1 and the different reactions to trials and difficulties and pressures.

- Elimelech tried to flee his trials – ended up in the death of himself and his two sons in Moab
- Naomi simply grieved her trials – a pity party to lament the bitterness of her spirit; a poor testimony to the lessons God was trying to bring through this time of discipline
- But Ruth embraced her trials and demonstrated a spirit of faith and hope as she clung with loyal devotion and commitment to Naomi and the God of Israel

Remember that one of the pictures that the Lord is painting in this short story of **redemption** set in the time of the judges, is that of the Christ's love for His bride, the church. The ultimate Redeemer is going to be typified by the gracious kinsman redeemer Boaz while Ruth is going to be a type of the church in this account. We started out describing the desperate situation with its hopeless prospects to set in contrast the amazing grace and mercy of God in grafting the undeserving Gentiles into the covenant family of faith and blessing. Ruth is going to be **surprised** in chapter 2 at the amazing blessings of the Providence of God. But she is also going to be engaged in some **backbreaking labor** – God's blessings don't negate her responsibility to take initiative and work diligently.

Stedman: ancient proverb: "Providence assists not the idle."

We all like **pleasant surprises** and Ruth is no exception. Let's read Ruth 2 together as if we are hearing it for the first time and marveling at the surprising kindness and mercy and grace of God's Providence to this outsider, this woman from the land of Moab.

THE KIND PROVIDENCE OF GOD SURPRISES US AS WE ACT DILIGENTLY AND RESPONSIBLY IN OUR JOURNEY OF FAITH

3 SURPRISING BLESSINGS OF THE KIND PROVIDENCE OF GOD

I. (:1-7) THE KIND PROVIDENCE OF GOD DIRECTS US INTO FAVORABLE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ARE DIVINE APPOINTMENTS – WE NEED TO TAKE INITIATIVE AND STEP OUT IN FAITH

A. (:1) Divine Appointments Are Waiting in the Wings

“Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.”

Behind the scenes; next act of the play about to unfold; we get to peek behind the curtain and see a glimpse of what lies ahead – Introduced to a key character in this love story – this picture of the relationship of Jesus Christ, the redeemer, to His bride, the Church; introduced here for the reader's benefit – unknown as yet to Ruth

1) Identified as a relative – *“a kinsman of her husband”* – possibly a nephew of Elimelech

2) Identified as *“a man of great wealth”* -- *“a mighty man of valor”*, *“man of standing”* – Same words used of Gideon and Jephthah (Jud 6:12; 11:1); important man in the community; mover and shaker

Deffinbaugh: we see him not only as a wealthy and respected farmer, but also as a war hero.

Pfeiffer: the finest manly qualities

3) Identified as *“of the family of Elimelech”*

4) Identified by name -- *Boaz* = *“in him (Jehovah) is strength”* ???
Or *“speedy readiness”* – Keil & Del.

What person are we going to run into this week that God puts in our path for a specific purpose??

B. (:2) Divine Appointments Don't Negate Personal Initiative

“And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, ‘Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.’ And she said to her, ‘Go, my daughter.’”

Huey: The law expressly allowed the poor the right to glean in the fields (Lev 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut 24:19-21), but the owners of the fields were not always cooperative. A hard day's work under the hot sun frequently netted only a small amount of grain (cf. Isa 17:5-6).

Risky undertaking for a young and attractive widow with no male protection in a culture that was characterized by some of the depths of moral depravity that we saw at the end of the book of

judges; took courage and faith on her part; Why was not Naomi going out to glean as well??

Ruth has a **positive orientation** – looking for God to bless her by showing her **favor**
Not living in fear that things will continue to turn out badly for her

Role reversal here; now Ruth is the one taking the initiative; she has hope of being blessed by the Lord in her endeavors; note the emphasis every time Ruth is mentioned on her Moabite background; she is a foreigner – this story will be about God’s grace and about the inclusion of the Gentiles in His redemptive plans

C. (:3) Divine Appointments Seem So Random

“So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.”

Seems to be just a stroke of luck – she did not know whose field it was or even the significance of Boaz

But no accident – **Gen. 24:27** *“the Lord has guided me in the way to the house of my master’s brothers”* – finding Rebekah as a bride for Isaac

Providence of God brings her to the very field of a man who is both gracious and qualified to be a kinsman redeemer

Maybe you are looking for a job; maybe you are hoping that God will provide you with a suitable life companion; your needs are not very different from those of Ruth; take encouragement as you go about your daily tasks with a heart of faith, seeking to take responsibility and work hard; God can surprise you in the course of your daily routine with incredible kindness and compassion in the outworking of His providence

D. (:4) Divine Appointments Assume the Providential Favor of the Lord

“Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, ‘May the LORD be with you.’ And they said to him, ‘May the LORD bless you.’”

Boaz was a responsible owner – looking after his business interests; engaged in the business and overseeing it;

Here we have an owner who provides a positive work environment for his laborers; concerned for their welfare; interacts with them and knows them personally; no union contract needed to make sure that he properly looks after their welfare

Spiritual tone -- Speaking the language of faith – invoking the presence and blessing of God – not very common language in the context of day laborers; no compartmentalization for Boaz of the spiritual and the secular; he was the same person in the Sabbath worship service as he was during the week in the fields of labor; godly, pious man who understood that everything depends on the good favor and blessing of God

E. (:5-7) Divine Appointments Make Surprising Providential Connections

“Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, ‘Whose young woman

is this?’ And the servant in charge of the reapers answered and said, ‘She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab. And she said, Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves. Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while.’”

Politeness and Humility of Ruth – even though the law gave her rights to glean in the corners of the field, she still asked for permission; was not asking for any special favors or consideration

Emphasis on her diligence:

LXX “She has not rested (even) a little.

Vulgate: “She has not returned home (even) for a short time.”

Bruce Waltke – Finding the Will of God – one of the ways that God directs us is through His kind Providence – directing the circumstances of our lives;

We need to start with a biblical orientation – Charlie reminded us last week of our need to be in the Word of God – receive it humbly, act on it, and share it; we need to trust God to use the desires of our heart as we continue to grow closer to Him; we must seek godly counsel; we must respond to our circumstances – the outworking of divine providence (understanding that an open door does not always mean we should walk through it); use sound judgment

Application: Don’t forget this week to have your eyes open to those divine appointments that God brings your way – one of the surprising aspects of the Kind Providence of God

II. (:8-16) THE KIND PROVIDENCE OF GOD PROVIDES FOR OUR NEEDS AND PROTECTS US AS WE TRUST IN GOD’S FAVOR – WE NEED TO ACT RESPONSIBLY AND WORK HARD

A. (:8-9) Providential Provision and Protection -- Home field Advantage

“Then Boaz said to Ruth, ‘Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw.’”

“my daughter” – points to the difference in their ages; taking almost a paternal approach

“We will protect this house” – Under Armour slogan

B. (:10-13) Providential Grace -- Thankful Heart for Favor Shown to an Outsider

“Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, ‘Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?’ And Boaz answered and said to her, ‘All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.’ Then she said, ‘I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken

kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants.”

Huey: A vivid idiom describes her faith: “*under whose wings you have come to take refuge.*” It pictures a tiny bird snuggling under the wings of its mother (cf. Deut 32:11). The word for “*wing*” is also the word for the “*skirt*” or “*robe*” of a man (cf. 3:9, where it is so used). Figuratively the idiom symbolizes God as the Protector (Ps 36:7; 57:1; 91:4).

Boaz at this point did not know that God was going to use him to be the fulfillment of these prayers

Illustration: message from Voddie Baucham: 4 qualities of a suitor: Priest, Prophet, Provider, Protector

C. (:14-16) Providential Privileges and Provisions – The Dignity and Reward of Hard Work

“And at mealtime Boaz said to her, ‘Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.’ So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left. When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, ‘Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. And also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.”

Roasted grain = barley roasted on an iron plate over an open fire

Block: Obviously this verse is not simply about feeding the hungry. The narrator hereby shows how Boaz took an ordinary occasion and transformed it into a glorious demonstration of compassion, generosity, and acceptance – in short, the biblical understanding of *hesed*.

III. (:17-23) THE KIND PROVIDENCE OF GOD SURPASSES OUR EXPECTATIONS OF DIVINE BLESSING – WE NEED TO PERSEVERE AND GIVE GOD THE GLORY IN TESTIFYING TO HIS LOVINGKINDNESS

6 Keys to Enjoying God’s Overflowing Blessings:

A. (:17) Work Hard – and count your blessings

“So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.”

Huey: about one-half to two-thirds a bushel (also estimated as twenty-nine to fifty pounds). Such a quantity could not have been acquired in a day by an ordinary gleaner. It shows how Boaz’s instructions to his reapers aided Ruth and also how diligently Ruth had worked. Since the ratio of a male worker in ancient Mari was about one to two pounds of grain per day, Ruth probably gathered enough to last Naomi and her for several weeks.

Constable: The beauty of Ruth's character shines forth in verse 21. She did not view her relationship with Boaz as a way out of her own responsibility to provide for herself and her aged mother-in-law. Instead she rejoiced that she could continue to discharge her duty in safety.

B. (:18) Share Generously

“And she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took it out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied.”

Freely we have received; freely give

C. (:19-20a) Bless Your Benefactors

“Her mother-in-law then said to her, ‘Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed.’ So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, ‘The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz.’ And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, ‘May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead.’”

Wiersbe: It is encouraging to see the changes that have taken place in Naomi because of what Ruth did. God used Ruth to turn Naomi’s bitterness into gratitude, her unbelief into faith, and her despair into hope. One person, trusting the Lord and obeying His will, can change a situation from defeat to victory.

D. (:20b) Appreciate Divine Providence – Divine Networking

“Again Naomi said to her, ‘The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives.’”

Here we see the identification of Boaz driven home to Ruth so she can fully appreciate what the Lord has been doing in the details of her situation

E. (:21-23a) Persevere in Your Labors – Work Smart

“Then Ruth the Moabitess said, ‘Furthermore, he said to me, You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.’ And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, ‘It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, lest others fall upon you in another field.’ So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest.”

Huey: The two harvest seasons would have lasted for about seven weeks (cf. Deut 16:9), normally from late April to early June.

Barley – March to April; Wheat – May to June or July

Tension – how would the women be provided for after the harvest season was over?

F. (:23b) Keep Your Relationship Commitments

“And she lived with her mother-in-law.”

Don’t change who you are; loyal devotion and commitment were Ruth’s marks of integrity

CONCLUSION:

Deffinbaugh: What advice do I believe Ruth or Boaz would give to those who are single and hoping for marriage? Let me suggest several things.

*First, the decisions you make before marriage will make all the difference in who you do marry. Ruth decided that **following God** was the most important decision she could ever make. She was*

not willing to marry a Moabite man, for he would undoubtedly worship the Moabite gods. Her decision to accompany Naomi to Israel, and to embrace Israel's God as her own, paved the way for her to meet (and later to marry) Boaz.

Second, an unhealthy obsession to get married will get you into trouble; a decision to follow after God will save you from much trouble. I believe that Ruth assumed that in order to serve Naomi she would need to stay single. In the light of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 7:29-35, she might have been right, except that God had other purposes in mind that Ruth did not know about at that moment in time. Setting your heart on serving God as a priority will help keep you from a sense of desperation concerning marriage. It will keep you content with being single, if need be for a lifetime. But it will also free you to serve others, and it may just be that in the midst of serving that you are led to someone who has a similar passion for serving God and others. I do not promise that serving God first and foremost will produce a life's mate, but I am convinced that it will never keep you from the mate God has chosen for you.

Third, beware of shallow, superficial compatibility, and seek for the deepest levels of spiritual compatibility. Strive for godly character in God's strength and then look for it in others. Seek to associate with those who share your passion for service. [Note: compatibility matching services such as eHarmony can never accomplish this adequately.]

Fourth, in those times when it may appear that there may never be a godly mate for you, dwell on the providential care which God has for His people. Naomi had given up all hope, but God was at work behind the scenes preparing great blessings for her.

Fifth, forsake the "it's all about me" mindset, and recognize that it is all about God and the fulfillment of His purposes and promises. When we dwell on ourselves, we are destined for despair. When we dwell on God and on His purposes, we can be assured that He will do what He has promised.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Describe some of the surprising instances of the kind Providence of God at work in your life. What lessons have we learned from those special occasions?
- 2) Why didn't Boaz simply give Ruth and Naomi a gift of material provision since he could afford it?
- 3) Would we treat people any differently if we viewed them as divine appointments?
- 4) How do we demonstrate God's heart of compassion and kindness towards others?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Wiersbe: Bible students have seen in Boaz a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ in His relationship to His bride, the church. Like Ruth, the lost sinner is outside the covenant family of God,

bankrupt, with no claim on God's mercy. But God took the initiative and provided a way for us to enter His family through faith in Jesus Christ. (See Eph. 2:10-22.)

Constable: THE PLAN TO OBTAIN FOOD CH. 2

Chapter 2 has its own chiasmic structure:

A Ruth and Naomi (2:2-3)

 B Boaz and the reapers (2:4-7)

 C Boaz and Ruth (2:8-14)

 B' Boaz and the reapers (2:15-16)

A' Naomi and Ruth (2:17-22)

Deffinbaugh: Can eHarmony Beat This?

There is no romance to be found here. We are very much inclined to read the story of Ruth and Boaz (and their eventual marriage) in the light of our own culture. And so we are tempted to think that Boaz saw a good looking woman in his field and, with a gleam in his eye, set out to win her as his wife. We in America always put romance ahead of marriage, but in many parts of the world, marriage comes first. I believe that was the case in Bethlehem. In our text, Boaz speaks to Ruth as his daughter, not some good looking babe. What he highly regards about Ruth is her character and her trust in God, not her good looks. His motives are pure, and it seems clear that he never imagined that she would consider him as a possible husband (3:10). When Ruth chose to accompany Naomi and to immigrate to Israel, it seems that she was giving up any chance of marrying again and bearing children. Naomi certainly saw it this way. . .

Nothing is more encouraging to the suffering saint than knowing his affliction has ultimately come from the hand of a loving God, a God who is absolutely sovereign (all powerful), who is also merciful and compassionate, and whose dealings are both for His glory and for the believer's good . . .

God's way of providing for the poor:

God provides food for the needy, not money.

God provides food for those who are willing to work for it.

God provides equally for all in need (orphans, widows, needy, foreigners).

God provides for those in need in a way that preserves and promotes human dignity.

Recipients (gleaners) and donors (farmers) benefit from God's blessings due to obedience, just as they both suffer when God punishes His people for their disobedience.

God's provision for Israel's spiritual leaders was linked to Israel's care of the poor.

Boaz's care for the poor included not only provisions for their physical needs (food), but also protection from those who might do harm to those who were rendered vulnerable by their poverty.

God did not forcibly take from the rich (those who had something to give) and redistribute it to the poor; He instructed those with means to care for the poor, and left the matter of generosity somewhat undefined, so that the Israelites were encouraged to give generously from the heart.

Mark Dever: Compassion

Labor Day message – quote from Mark Twain about the futility of man’s labor; 1882 first labor parade in New York City; became an annual affair; 1887 supported by President Cleveland; work is not a result of the Fall; Gen. 2:15 – work is a part of the blessing of Creation as we get to participate with God; part of His ongoing kindness towards us; all of our work is in some sense an imitation of His work; sometimes we have trouble finding work that will pay us;

Big Idea: It is only the compassion of another that will finally save you or me – not our works

1) **The Compassion of Ruth** – she takes initiative

She does not try to get someone else to do the work for her; she also seeks to provide for her mother-in-law to meet both of their needs; impoverished; but a hard worker; already getting a reputation for being compassionate in a remarkable way despite the strikes against her as a foreigner; even the unsaved do good works as an expression of the image of God even if they don’t acknowledge it; rejoice in the compassionate good works of the unsaved

2) **The Compassion of Boaz** – seems to be a pious man; Ps. 129 blessing and greeting; he is a man of prayer; tenderness of his protection; notice the vulnerable and take care of them; initiate compassion

3) **The Compassion of Israel** – vs. 2 look at what the whole society was charged to show towards widows and poor and aliens; difference between gleaning and reaping; a work-fare provision (different than our concept of welfare); kinsman had right and responsibilities to destitute relations – restoring family property (Lev. 25); theologians think that we should adopt Israel’s laws today – but we want to embrace the principles; Christopher Wright has written on these subjects;

4) **The Compassion of God** – note God’s sovereignty and providence throughout this section; good things we enjoy in this life are from the kindnesses of God – not an evidence of His approval;

5) **The Compassion of the Christian** – points of application

Alistair Begg: Favor to the Humble

1 Thess. 4:11-12 – practical exhortation by Paul; Ruth is a good example of this; a widower; a foreigner; does not wait for someone else to care for her; seizes the opportunity afforded to her by the gracious provision in the law; going into the fields to find favor; Boaz marked by integrity and social status and influence; he walked with God and his walk was not compartmentalized from the daily routine of his life; no distinction between Sabbath and secular in how he lived; lived his whole life before the face of God; sense of the immediacy of God; Boaz arrives with a blessing on his lips; may God’s presence and favor satisfy your souls; the name of God is profaned when it is employed in a flippant fashion; no glibness or superficiality; seek God’s blessing in every circumstance of life; the blessing of the Lord is what gave significance to Boaz; how can we cultivate the presence of God throughout the day in all of our daily tasks; learn of Ruth’s humility and responsibility; Boaz speaks to her in a paternal fashion; takes her around the office and shows her where the water cooler is; cf. Jesus telling Samaritan woman about a drink of water; she has found the favor she was seeking; my first day on the job – surprised you are even speaking to me; warm sense of gratitude; humility and thankfulness sleep in the same bed; Heb. 6:10; may I continue to find favor; Boaz was a man of standing; Ruth testifies that she has no standing;

1) I go to the fields to find favor

2) Why have I found favor

3) Let me continue to find favor

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?subsetitem=Alistair%20Begg&subsetcat=speaker&keyword=Ruth&BibleOnly=true&currSection=sermons bible&chapter=2&verse=0&includekeywords=>

Alistair Begg: Family Ties

Kindness lives on in the recollection of men and women long after eloquence and men's wisdom have been forgotten; prospect of being able to go home at the end of the day and share with your loved ones your good fortune;

Outline based around 3 phrases:

1) (:14-16) *all that she wanted and more* – law of God displays His character; Ruth discovers the heart of God in the hands of Boaz; not operating on basis of grudging legalism; but overflowing generosity; how does the invisible God become visible? Through the acts of love and kindness of His people; even had some left over for a doggie bag; ate all she wanted and had some left over; invitation was gracious and generous and crossed economic and social and racial lines; you are part of us now; come and join with us; cf. history of segregation on basis of color of someone's skin – you don't get that from the bible; Ruth realized blessing in the course of fulfilling her work responsibility

2) (:17-20) *non-stop kindness* – on her way home with a super abundance; mother-in-law amazed at what she brought back; Boaz is a man of continual kindness – the *hesed* kindness of God; he is also a close relative;

3) (:21-23) *she said he said* – this was not a one day wonder; I have a long standing job; importance of following counsel of parents; Ruth stuck with the job and stuck with Naomi

David Asch: Getting the Lucky Breaks

1. Recognize God's hand in your life
2. Request God's Favor
3. Remain Faithful
4. Return Thanks

www.sermoncentral.com

Tom Shepard: God Cares For You – Illustration:

Did you know that on 9-11 the New York State Lottery's evening number game, popped up the numbers: 9-1-1?

Did you know that a news paper in Oregon on June 28, 2000 printed the pick 4 winning numbers in advance of the drawing? Actually, the news paper's computers had crashed. In a scramble to re-create a news page, the copyeditor accidentally included Virginia's Pick 4 numbers, which turned out to be the exact numbers that Oregon was about to draw.

Here is a really odd one. Did you know that in Psalm 46 of the King James Bible was published in the same year that Shakespeare turned 46 and that the 46th word from the beginning of the chapter is "shake". But that's not all the 46th word from the end of the chapter is "spear"? Is that an accident, luck or some odd coincidence? (What amazes me about the 46th Psalm is that someone should even notice that.)

Odd things happen in our world all the time. Strange occurrences happen every day. These types of events make me question: “What drives our world? Are we in a world that is nothing more than random circumstances? Or are we in a world that has a plan and a purpose – a destination and a goal?”

Eric Bain: Character in the Crucible

Let me ask you...

- Have you ever found yourself at a point in life where you just hate what you’re doing?
- Maybe you even wonder how you ever got there...
- You think... I’m better than this!
- And you find yourself asking... Why God?
 - o Why are you letting me waste my life doing this? (Whatever it is...)
 - o Especially if you’ve been trying to follow him!

You see, I think you might have something in common with Ruth....

Like I said, I have two comments...

#1... What we’re seeing in this story of Ruth, Chapter 2, is that God has given Ruth the gift of Suffering!

- And she doesn’t complain... she embraces it!
- And through embracing it... it develops her Character.

• Question: How is God giving us that gift?

• Character is important to God!!!

Rejoice in your suffering...

The Second Comment I have is... Notice this...

That Character development only occurs if we persevere!

- You see, if we experience suffering... and we run from our suffering (like Elimelech)... then we may be lucky enough to come to the other side of that suffering... but it will be for what?... Nothing!
- One of the biggest challenges that high-functioning Christians have – people like you and me...
 - o People with degrees...
 - o People with resources...
 - o People with connections......is that it’s awful easy for us... to run from suffering.
- But character is built in the crucible of suffering... and we must persevere.

TEXT: Ruth 3:1-18

TITLE: *THE RIGHTEOUS CHARACTER OF OUR REDEEMER*

BIG IDEA:

BECAUSE OUR REDEEMER IS NOT ONLY WILLING AND ABLE BUT RIGHTEOUS, WE SHOULD BE BOLD IN APPROACHING HIM FOR REST AND SECURITY

INTRODUCTION:

This is a surprising and perplexing passage to say the least. For those mothers who long with Naomi to see their single daughters find that husband who will provide companionship and security and provision and protection ... this is definitely not a “**Matchmaker Manual**.” I would not recommend Naomi’s scheme to anybody. However, as we have already seen in Chapter 2 there are many lessons about **God’s Kind Providence** that have direct application to how God makes provision for our needs. So that begs the question of what are we to make of this tale?

I think we need to start at the basic, core level and that would be the **integrity** of Boaz and of Ruth. Any interpretation that compromises their character would seem to be out of bounds for me. This is important because much of the language and conduct in chapter 3 has at least strong hints of an illicit sexual relationship there in the dark night on the threshing floor. When we met Ruth in chapter 1, we were struck with her loving devotion and high level of commitment to both Naomi and the God of Israel whom she came to embrace as her own God. In just a short time she gained an impeccable reputation among the people of Bethlehem. Boaz himself praised her in chapter 2 and took great pains to see that both her person and reputation would be protected. In Chapter 3 Boaz characterizes Ruth as an “excellent woman” using the language of Proverbs 31. He even is concerned that the closer relative have the first opportunity to fulfill the kinsman redeemer obligation – so he would never have taken advantage of Ruth in this awkward situation. He has a heart to obey God’s law and do everything properly in a righteous fashion. So I think we are safe on the grounds that nothing illicit happened in this encounter.

However, when it comes to the **motives and methodology of Naomi** I don’t think we see the same track record. She came back to her homeland as a broken woman – bitter in spirit without any testimony of repentance or reference to the abundant lovingkindness of her God. She seems to be in the process of being impacted by the godly character and conduct of her daughter-in-law. But it is safe to say that she has a long road to go on the pathway to spiritual maturity. To read this account as if it is a normal sequence of events in light of Israelite customs of the day seems incredible to me. [I have to say I was greatly impacted by the commentary of Bob Deffinbaugh of bible.org on this passage. He had some very helpful insights in this regard that I have incorporated.]

Deffinbaugh: I take the text at face value. I do not believe that there is some unique cultural interpretation here. Folks, when a woman bathes, puts on perfume and dons her best dress, and then secretively climbs under the covers with a man who has had his fill of food and wine, I don’t think anyone in any culture would read this in any way but what we all assume.

I think we can agree that Naomi was not above resorting to **expediency** to try to achieve her good intentions for Ruth. She might have wanted to speed up the process of waiting upon the

working of the Providence of God. That makes it difficult for us to know how to make application of what we read here. In one sense, we could make a lot out of her example of **Boldness** in approaching the Redeemer. Never forget the legitimate typology of Boaz = the kinsman redeemer and Ruth = the Gentile church that God so graciously grafts in to the family of faith. Naomi came up with a **Bold Plan** (the Redeemer is accessible and we should search Him out); Ruth faithfully **Executed that Plan** (the Redeemer is kind and accessible to our approach so we should ask to be delivered); and we see the blessing of God in the **Results of that Plan** (the Redeemer takes care of everything so we should wait to be delivered). That was my first read on the passage. But once I became convinced that Naomi's intentions and proposed scheme were somewhat suspect, I had to re-orient my thinking in terms of application.

Remember the dark moral and religious backdrop of the times of the judges – when there was no righteous king reigning and every man did that which was right in his own eyes. We saw the depths of that depravity in the last few chapters of judges. But here by contrast we see the **righteous character of Boaz the Redeemer highlighted**. He is going to protect and provide for Ruth in the most difficult of circumstances.

BECAUSE OUR REDEEMER IS NOT ONLY WILLING AND ABLE BUT RIGHTEOUS, WE SHOULD BE BOLD IN APPROACHING HIM FOR REST AND SECURITY

I. (:1-5) HUMAN WISDOM CAN LEAD TO COMPROMISING SITUATIONS WHEN THE PATHWAY OF EXPEDIENCY TRUMPS THE WALK OF FAITH

A. (:1) Well-Intentioned Goal – Rhetorical Question #1

“Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, ‘My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?’”

Ruth has been gleaning in the fields of Boaz who has been treating her with kindness. But as the harvest season draws to a close, there still has been no permanent solution for the plight of Ruth and Naomi. Once again a sense of desperation is creeping into their outlook on the future.

Block: place of rest; speaks of the security and tranquility that a woman in Israel longed for and expected to find in the home of a loving husband

Part of the longing to have a husband was for the blessing of children – a major unspoken thread in this book that establishes the line that produced the Messiah – remember how the book ends – tracing the generations that lead up to King David – the Righteous Branch who typifies the ultimate Righteous King.

Ruth had already been married but had not been blessed with children. Her womb had not been opened by the Lord. So the hope of Naomi “that it may be well” involves both finding an appropriate husband and being blessed with offspring to continue the family line

Paul wrote that he wanted "younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach." (1Ti 5:14)

Ultimately we need to come to the Redeemer for our rest: **Matt. 11:28-30** *“Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”*

B. (:2) Questionable Opportunity – Rhetorical Question #2

“And now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight.”

How long can we wait for Boaz to take action and initiate something here?? There are other maids in the picture as well – speaks to the competition for his affections. Naomi’s patience has worn thin. She has come up with a plan.

The picture of redemption in the Scriptures always starts with the initiative of God ... not that we can get every detail to mesh when we speak in terms of spiritual analogies, etc. – but we at least have some reason to suspect that Naomi may be jumping the gun here.

Block: The best threshing floors involved rock outcrops on hilltops. The hard surface was needed to keep the grain free of dirt and to facilitate sweeping up the grains at the end of the day. The hilltop location was required to take advantage of the wind that would blow away the chaff when the threshed grain was tossed in the air with a fork, allowing the separated heavier kernels of grain to fall to the floor. . . Boaz chose to do his winnowing at night, presumably because the night breezes were more desirable than the gusty winds of the daytime.

PreceptAustin.org: The responsibilities of the kinsman redeemer or go’el mentioned in Scripture are...

- 1). Avenging the death of a murdered relative (Nu 35:19)
- 2). Marrying a childless widow of a deceased brother (Dt 25:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10),
- 3). Buying back family land that had been sold (Lv 25:25),
- 4). Buying a family member who had been sold as a slave (Lv 25:47, 48, 49),
- 5). Looking after needy and helpless members of the family (Lv 25:35).

C. (:3-4) Risky Counsel

“Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. And it shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do.”

These actions on the part of Ruth could be interpreted in a number of ways by a man waking up in the middle of the night in a groggy state – required a lot of courage and faith to trust in God’s providence for a good outcome here

Puts her at risk on so many levels – were there not other contexts that would not have been so perilous where Boaz could have been approached on this matter of assuming the role of a kinsman redeemer??

Was Naomi hoping that Boaz would have had too much to drink and his judgment would be clouded?

Was she hoping for some type of sexual relationship on the threshing floor that would seal the deal and help there to be no point of return other than continuing on in marriage?

On the other hand, Naomi seems to express confidence in the judgment of Boaz who at this point

after the encounter has been joined will then take the lead in directing what steps should be taken next.

The words used here parallel those used in **Ezek. 16:8-14** where God speaks of Israel as His bride

PreceptAustin.org: Apart from legal texts *sakab* is used in narrative sections that describe incidents of inappropriate behavior.

- The daughters of Lot made their father drunk and then ‘slept’ with him (Gen 19:32, 33).
- One of Abimelech’s subjects almost inadvertently committed adultery with Rebekah (Gen 26:10).
- The verb is used to describe the rape of Dinah, Jacob’s daughter, by Shechem (Gen 34:2, 7).
- Reuben “slept” with his father’s concubine Bilhah while Jacob was absent (Gen 35:22).
- The sons of Eli engaged in amorous pursuits in their free time (1Sa 2:22).
- Amnon violated his half-sister Tamar (2Sa 13:11, 14), emulating, no doubt, the activities of his own father with Bathsheba (2Sa 11:4).

D. (:5) Submissive Spirit

“And she said to her, ‘All that you say I will do.’”

This statement presents the greatest difficulty to the path of interpretation I have chosen. It seems as if Ruth is subscribing completely to the motives and methodology of Naomi. However, one could argue that she already has the godly insight to understand that she can follow through on the external actions of approaching Boaz while still trusting in Boaz’s integrity to protect her in the situation and not take advantage of her.

II. (:6-13) COMPROMISING SITUATIONS CAN BE SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATED BY GODLY MEN AND WOMEN OF INTEGRITY

A. (:6) Faithful Follow Through

“So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her.”

B. (:7-9) Forward Proposal

“When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down. And it happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. And he said, ‘Who are you?’ And she answered, ‘I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative.’”

She does this at great risk to her own well-being:

- her personal safety
- her personal reputation

Deffinbaugh: Let us not forget Noah’s nakedness after his consumption of wine in Genesis 9, or the way in which Lot’s daughters employed wine to seduce their father so that he would

impregnate them.⁴ Then there was Absalom's use of wine in 2 Samuel 13:28 to dull Amnon's senses so that he could be assassinated. No wonder King Lemuel was warned about the dangers of wine: Prov. 31:3-9

Wiersbe: To spread one's mantle over a person meant to claim that person for yourself (Ezek. 16:8; 1 Kings 19:19), particularly in marriage. The word translated "skirt" also means "wing." Ruth had come under the wings of Jehovah God (Ruth 2:12); and now she would be under the wings of Boaz, her beloved husband. What a beautiful picture of marriage!

Constable: Why did Boaz not initiate a proposal of marriage? Evidently for two reasons: he assumed Ruth wanted to marry a younger man, someone closer to her own age (v. 10), and he was not the closest eligible male relative (v. 12).

Deffinbaugh: I must admit that I am puzzled why so many of the translations would render the same Hebrew word "wings" in Ruth 2:12 and something different in 3:9. I believe that when Boaz commended Ruth for seeking God's protection (under His wings) in chapter 2, Ruth seized on his words when seeking his protection in chapter 3. In other words, Ruth is asking Boaz to be God's answer to her prayers by redeeming her. I believe this was the noblest request ever made of Boaz, and he immediately regarded it as such.

C. (:10-13) Favorable Response from the Righteous Redeemer

1. The Commendation

"Then he said, 'May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich.'"

2. The Compliance

"And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence."

Prov. 31:10 – this is the highest praise you could give a woman

3. The Complication

"And now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I."

4. The Commitment

"Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning."

Deffinbaugh: Naomi's proposition (as she coached Ruth to carry out her plan) did not appeal to one's moral high ground. It did not encourage Boaz to do the right thing in the right way. It urged Ruth to seek a husband in a questionable and compromising manner. Fortunately, Boaz was committed to doing the right thing the right way. And this is why he refuses to become intimate with Ruth that night, and why he gave the nearest kin the opportunity to do the right thing the next day.

III. (:14-18) FAITH IN THE KIND PROVIDENCE OF GOD MEANS WAITING ON THE LORD INSTEAD OF RASHLY PURSUING THE PATH OF EXPEDIENCY

A. (:14) Boaz Respecting Ruth's Reputation

“So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, ‘Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.’”

B. (:15) Ruth Receiving A Generous Gift from Boaz

“Again he said, ‘Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it.’ So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her.”

Maybe about 60 pounds; a very generous gift – intended for both Ruth and Naomi; symbolic of the abundant provision that comes from the gracious hand of the Redeemer

C. (:16-17) Ruth Reporting the Details to Naomi

“Then she went into the city. And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, ‘How did it go, my daughter?’ And she told her all that the man had done for her. And she said, ‘These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”

Wiersbe: Hebrew text reads “Who are you, my daughter?” In other words, “Are you still Ruth the Moabitess, or are you the prospective Mrs. Boaz?”

D. (:18) Ruth and Naomi Resting in God's Providence

“Then she said, ‘Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today.’”

Block: With this statement the curtain falls on Act 3. All the characters have played their roles perfectly. Naomi has taken the initiative and gotten the ball rolling. Ruth has carried out her delicate and daring scheme, and Boaz has responded right on cue. The reader as witness to the drama waits with Ruth to see “how the matter will fall.”

Dr Joel Beeke: Sitting Still (3:18)

We live in a busy age with all of our modern conveniences; we are a society that consumes and produces and is active – even on vacations we keep busy from morning till night; we don't know how to sit still and meditate on our direction; life of dependency on God; Ruth had to wait for someone else to save her from her misery

I. Sitting Still is Needed

II. Experienced

III. Blessed

Constable: Likewise, Christians wait now until our Redeemer brings our redemption to completion when we shall rest finally and fully in His presence. Many writers have noted the parallels between Ruth and the church, the bride of Christ, and Boaz and Christ.

CONCLUSION:

This is how I feel about Online Matchmaking Services – yes, God can work through them and you can find all sorts of examples of good Christian unions that have resulted. But is this really the way the kind Providence of God should operate? Isn't this much closer to adopting the expedient methodology of the world instead of a pathway of faith where we put our focus on serving the Lord in our situation? I don't want to be dogmatic here – more of a personal preference than a solid biblical conviction – but this is a passage that I think plays into that discussion.

Through Boaz's words and actions God is showing us, his people, that all who come to Christ seeking refuge under his wings will not be turned away. Any who come in hope and faith to boldly claim what God offers through our redeemer will be received and become the bride of Christ. Our Redeemer is the Righteous One who alone is able to offer us the Righteousness we so desperately need to stand in right relationship with a holy God.

Remember the message of the **book of Romans** – where the Apostle Paul lays out for us the message of the **Righteousness of God**.

Rom. 1:17 – in the gospel *the righteousness of God is revealed*

Rom. 3 – the sad condemnation of all men – because “*there is none righteous, not even one*”

Rom. 3:21-26 God's righteousness only comes to us through faith in the Redeemer

Rom. 10:4 “*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes*”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When have we been tempted to take shortcuts – to take matters into our own hands with plans of expediency – rather than patiently walking by faith?
- 2) What type of access do we have to our Redeemer?
- 3) Do our lives reflect the righteousness and integrity of our Redeemer?
- 4) How does our Redeemer continue to provide for us and protect us today?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Block: "Here is a servant demanding that the boss marry her, a Moabite making the demand of an Israelite, a woman making the demand of a man, a poor person making the demand of a rich man. Was this an act of foreigner naïveté, or a daughter-in-law's devotion to her mother-in-law, or another sign of the hidden hand of God? From a natural perspective the scheme was doomed from the beginning as a hopeless gamble, and the responsibility Naomi placed on Ruth was quite unreasonable. But it worked!"

Voddie Baucham: Caring for God's People

Some people see improprieties here; we don't want to get bogged down in the ambiguities of language; picture of God as deliverer and protector of the widow, the poor and the foreigner;

Boaz is a type of Christ; God intervenes on behalf of those who cannot deliver themselves; only category Ruth does not fall into is the orphan; Parallel to way God deals with His new covenant people; must understand cultural and legal nuance of kinsman redeemer; significant to us only because it is a representative example of who Christ is as our kinsman redeemer; He becomes one of us in order to redeem us; takes on flesh; not just any flesh but Hebrew flesh; He becomes an Israelite in order to redeem Israel; “*the church is the Israel of God*”; His view is covenantal and non-dispensational

I. God uses the family to protect the weak (:1-5)

Her family of origin shepherds a woman into a marriage relationship = family of choice by way of marriage; Naomi takes the role of a Father to protect and shepherd Ruth in this process; God can use imperfect, dysfunctional families in protecting the weak (Ruth’s father and husband both dead); all families are dysfunctional to some degree; 1 Tim. 5:3; the church must not take care of needs in a family that can be met by members of that family; church should teach the members of that family to take care of person according to their responsibility; church only takes over when that is not possible; man must take care of his widowed mother

II. God uses civil law to protect the weak (:6-13)

Israel is a theocracy; not a one-to-one correlation between civil law operating in their culture and in ours today; God gave them a civil law based on the moral law; our laws must be contingent on the same moral law that comes from God; Deut. 14:29; 16:11; the Levite needs to be cared for; 26:12-13; the gleaning laws in operation here; Levirate marriage law = a way a widow is cared for within confines of her own family; people want to separate Christianity from our civil law = “you can’t legislate morality” – but you had better legislate morality; everything you do has a moral foundation;

- Ruth and Naomi were cared for but not to the extent that they thought marriage was unimportant
- Had to have a relationship with those providing for them; eliminates sense of entitlement; makes them have a heart of gratitude towards those helping

Correlation in NT: Matt. 25:31ff – “*I was hungry and you gave me food . . .*” -- “*my brothers*” – Israel takes care of the needy “within her gates” – not those in Egypt or Moab; someone first has to come and unite themselves with the covenant people; we are not responsible for every needy person; we owe the gospel to all; the church does not exist to eliminate poverty but to proclaim the gospel and to live as a gospel community; Ruth experiencing the great benefits of the covenant community

III. God uses godly people to protect the weak – Naomi and Boaz

Get rid of idea of romanticism that has overwhelmed us; Ruth is loved by Boaz because He says I will redeem you but do it lawfully; Not “I love you and must have you no matter what.” Love is other oriented; I want you to experience God’s best; I will do what is biblical and proper; I will first give the closer redeemer the opportunity to step in here; I will be pleased if God meets your needs; What would this look like in the here and now? Not be unequally yoked to unbeliever – you need to make receiving the gospel your priority; What if I want to be married to you but your parents say “No” or “Not now.” Don’t ignore this counsel and just run away; What bride does Christ come to redeem? The bride His father sent Him to redeem; Boaz does what is right and proper

IV. God intervenes directly to the weak as the Redeemer (:11)

Makes it plain that there was no inappropriate sexual encounter here; Boaz does not even want

her reputation to be tarnished ... much less take advantage of her; Bible is not shy about giving details of inappropriate relationships; Boaz does not sleep with her and then suggest that she be taken by a closer redeemer; there is one who will redeem a Gentile outsider; when we were yet sinners Christ died for us; we become the Bride of Christ; that is the end of our redemption;

Conclusion:

Don't look for romance of Romeo and Juliet in this passage; what you find is far more significant than just an emotional relationship; our standard of what love is happens to be a story that ends in a suicide; Bible ends in life and redemption; you don't know how good looking Boaz is or Ruth is; they get old and their form changes; but Boaz cares for Ruth

(:14-18) – it's a barley harvest but it is about the bread of life – our material needs are just barley; God meets people's real needs which are beyond barley through redemption; where you find families you find almost no poverty; civil laws are helpful for the downtrodden – but still just dealing with barley

Man does not live by barley alone!

Gil Rugh: The Way of Blessing

Ruth takes the initiative at the instigation of her mother Naomi to ask Boaz to marry her. Much about this strikes us as strange – even though within the bounds of Israelite law.

A kinsman-redeemer = a relative who is in the position to redeem a person and their property. Uncertainty each day will bring – easy for us to read it with the end in sight; we learn the encouragement of Shaddai; He is the Almighty; some tragedies seem overwhelming and pointless but we know God is in charge and does what is right.

I. (:1-5) The Plan of Naomi

Naomi is concerned for Ruth; she wants to provide for the security and well-being of Ruth; concept of “rest” from chap. 1; she sees an opportunity to make provision; Get yourself all fixed up and look your best and smell your best; threshing was a time of celebration and festivity; God has blessed the harvest after time of recent famine; not necessarily a drunken festival; she stays in the background; observing as the celebration winds down; watch where he lays down; put part of his robe over your feet; She could have said, “Don't you think this is a little forward; a little pushy?”

II. (:6-13) Ruth Carries Out the Plan

Nothing immoral implied here; a ceremonial significance that Boaz will recognize immediately; he is not drunk; he has clarity of understanding; it's dark so he doesn't recognize Ruth; take me as your wife; put me under your protection and care; **Ezek. 16:8ff** God's marriage relationship to Israel; same picture of spreading my garment over you; assume responsibility for me; law made provision – **Lev. 25:23ff**; land belongs to God but He has delegated it to families in Israel; if he marries Ruth he will also have to buy back the land and taking care of debts on the property; **Deut. 25:5ff**; raising up offspring that will be considered his brother's son who will ultimately have the property; draining my resources for benefit of another; **Gen. 38:8**; this may seem brazen to us; but Naomi understands the provisions that God has made; Ruth has not sought personal satisfaction = a well to do young man that is good looking; acting within the provision of the law that will also benefit Naomi; Boaz is sensitive to the fact that this took some courage on Ruth's part; I respect you for what you have done; I will try to honor your request; what a testimony Ruth had; 2:1 this same word translated “excellence” here; why no expressions of emotional attachment here? True love is an act of the will, not a feeling of the heart; this story is not driven by passion but by the readiness to do the will of God;

III. (:14-18)

Gives her a sizeable gift – about 60 pounds; put it on her head to carry it home; a sign of respect; imagine the sleepless night of Naomi – wondering what was transpiring at the threshing floor; Lord beginning to fill up her emptiness; all we do now is wait to see how it turns out = probably the hardest part

Lessons: Everything is part of God’s plan – took a long time – to get Ruth into the line of the Messiah;

- Obedience is the way of blessing; following the instructions
- Faithfulness is to be the pattern of life; vs. 10
- Godly virtue puts the well-being of others first; “Jesus and others and you ... what a wonderful way to spell JOY”;
- Godly virtue makes an impact on others
- There are obstacles in the walk of faith – trusting God when you don’t see the outcome
- God gives both emptiness and fullness
- Wait for God to give the results

Tim Challies: A Dangerous Proposal

1. A Bold Plan
2. A Dangerous Encounter
3. A Generous Promise

David Silversides: The Willing Redeemer

1. Seeking the Redeemer (:1-9)

Place of rest – dove found no rest after being released from ark; Ruth settling into the security and protection of a good husband; 1:9 the Lord can provide in ways we do not expect; seeking out Boaz secretly and at night; procedure followed was largely according to custom even though it seems strange to us; redeemer = the one who buys back and frees; a right and obligation that belongs to next of kin

2. Boaz’ Willingness (:10-13)

- Admiration for Ruth’s covenant faithfulness (:10) – don’t import great deal of romance into the text; we are not told their feelings; not the main focus of attention; faithfulness in the covenant of God stands out; fruit will flow from that faith; holiness; love for the Lord

- Boaz himself faithful to the covenant (:11) – submission to the Word and Providence of the Lord; if he found Ruth unattractive, his willingness was impressive; if he found Ruth attractive his willingness to abide by the one who had first claim was impressive; the Word of God and the Providence of God are reliable

3. Waiting Upon the Lord (:14-18)

Boaz will not leave the matter hanging;

4. The Great Redeemer

Ex. 6:6 “*I will redeem you with a stretched out arm*”; Is. 59:20 “*and the Redeemer shall come to Zion*” – quoted in Rom. 11:26-27; Rom. 8:3; as near to being like us as sinlessness would allow; *Christ is the firstborn among many brethren*; Heb. 2:16 “*made like unto His brethren*”

The Need for a Redeemer

The Willingness of the Redeemer

Dr. David Seifert: Opening the Door To A Brand New Tomorrow

1. The Advice Naomi gave—a Time for Action had come. -1-4
 - Ruth had a Problem. -1
 - Naomi had a Prayer. Cf. 1:8-9
 - God had a Provision. -2 “kinsman-redeemer”
 - 1) For a family’s Land. Cf. Lev. 25:23-24
 - 2) For a family’s Lineage. Cf. Deut. 25:5-9
 - Naomi had a Plan. -2-4

2. The Attitude Ruth displayed --a Testimony to her own faith. -5-9
 “I will do whatever you say,”
 - The Obedience we see in Ruth – 5-6
 - The Opportunity that was given to Boaz. -7-9
 - “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman redeemer.”

3. The Acceptance Boaz offered- The Task He would willingly embrace. 10-15
 - His Reception was positive.-10 “The LORD bless you, my daughter,”
 - His Reassurance was personal.-11-13 ...don’t be afraid. I will do for you all you ask.
 - Her Reputation was protected. -14-15

4. The Anticipation Everyone felt—The Test of waiting on the Lord. -16-18
 - Involved Telling what God was doing. Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her...
 - Involved Trusting what God would do. Wait...until you find out what happens.
 - Have you put Yourself at the Master’s feet?
 - Do you Trust Him to work in Your Behalf?
 - Are you

Deffinbaugh: Cutting Corners – Ruth’s Undercover Operation

Godly Conduct in a Compromising Situation --

In my opinion, the plan which Naomi proposed to Ruth in our text was a shortcut, but by the grace of God, the two principle characters – Ruth and Boaz – remained sterling examples of godly conduct. You will find that some scholars and Bible teachers tap dance all around the threshing floor, fervently trying to sanctify Naomi’s actions. In my opinion, it is a futile effort. But it is not difficult to see the godly manner in which Ruth and Boaz handled the risky situation into which they had been placed. . .

When it comes to our text, some interpreters wish to persuade the reader that there was a common cultural practice underlying the actions which Naomi directed and Ruth carried out. But the reality is that we see no such practice in the Bible – anywhere! Thus, I take the text at face value. I do not believe that there is some unique cultural interpretation here. . .

Naomi’s plan seeks to appeal to the baser instincts and impulses of Boaz, not his higher sense of duty. Why else would there need to be wine, the dark of night, and an “under cover” encounter? Naomi would have done well in modern day advertising, for she seeks to “sell” Ruth to Boaz the way Madison Avenue sells toothpaste or lingerie. That’s what the bathing, the perfume, and the clothing is all about, not to mention climbing into bed with Boaz after his heart has been made merry with wine...

Stated in a different way, Naomi's proposition (as she coached Ruth to carry out her plan) did not appeal to one's moral high ground. It did not encourage Boaz to do the right thing in the right way. It urged Ruth to seek a husband in a questionable and compromising manner. Fortunately, Boaz was committed to doing the right thing the right way. And this is why he refuses to become intimate with Ruth that night, and why he gave the nearest kin the opportunity to do the right thing the next day. . .

Naomi's plan seems to deliberately bypass and exclude the nearest kin, giving preference to Boaz instead. It is inconceivable that Naomi would not have known who the nearest kin was.⁸ In addition to this, the word Naomi used in Ruth 3:2 to describe Boaz as a relative was not the term she should have used for the closest relative. I have no doubt that Naomi knew who the nearest kin was. Not surprisingly, Naomi preferred Boaz, and after all he was at the threshing floor, soon to be merry with good food and wine.

TEXT: Ruth 4:1-22

TITLE: *THANKSGIVING FOR THE BLESSINGS OF REDEMPTION*

BIG IDEA:

A REDEEMER WHO IS WILLING, QUALIFIED AND CAPABLE BRINGS ABUNDANT BLESSING IN DELIVERING OUTCASTS WHO WERE DESPERATE AND DESTITUTE

INTRODUCTION:

We have very quickly arrived at the conclusion of this short story of Naomi and Ruth and Boaz. It is appropriate on this Sunday before Thanksgiving, that we note how the Lord has brought Naomi full cycle – from a life of hopelessness and bitterness and a testimony of how the Lord has rendered her empty – to now this state of fullness where she is thankful for the blessings associated with the Lord’s provision of a husband for Ruth and a son to carry on the family name – a son who will eventually yield King David and ultimately the Messiah Himself.

What is so important about God blessing Ruth with a son?

- Someone to take away the shame and stigma of being without a male descendent
- Someone to rescue the family financially (connection to the ownership of land and the passing along of the inheritance from generation to generation)
- Someone to carry on the family name
- Someone to rise to an important role of leadership in the nation = in God’s kingdom program

God’s people were characterized in the times of the judges as those who living in a state of anarchy with no righteous king to govern them so that everyone did what was right in his own eyes. We saw at the end of the book of Judges how this was a disaster – both in a religious and moral sense. But Ruth communicates hope for the future as we see God’s provision of the coming Righteous Ruler. God takes someone who is a nobody – a Moabite immigrant with no status – and makes them a significant player in the line of the Messiah – Incredible!

Of course the picture of the marriage relationship between the Kinsman Redeemer Boaz and the Moabite bride Ruth is that of Christ our Redeemer and His bride the Church. So as we gather together today as the people of God we want to be reminded of the blessings that we enjoy in connection with the Redemption the Lord Jesus has accomplished on our behalf. We have much to be thankful for that goes way beyond our physical circumstances and the abundance of food on our plates.

Remember the earlier chapters we have already studied:

- 1) Loyal Commitment – Background of Ruth
- 2) Kind Providence of God – Backbreaking Labor of Ruth
- 3) Righteous Character of our Redeemer – Boldness of Ruth
- 4) Blessings of Redemption

Redeemer: 3 Requirements

- Must be Willing to Redeem – Count the cost
- Must be Qualified -- Have to be a near kinsman – this was the problem for Boaz
- Must be Capable -- Have to be able to pay the price

A REDEEMER WHO IS WILLING, QUALIFIED AND CAPABLE BRINGS ABUNDANT BLESSING IN DELIVERING OUTCASTS WHO WERE DESPERATE AND DESTITUTE

I. (:1-6) THE REDEEMER MUST BE WILLING – CONTRAST BETWEEN BOAZ AND THE UNNAMED CLOSEST RELATIVE – “BEHOLD I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD” (Heb. 10:7)

A. (:1-2) Staging the Legal Transaction

1. Boaz Sits Down

“Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there,”

Boaz wasted no time after his encounter the evening before with Ruth in the middle of the night on the threshing floor when he was startled awake to discover a woman lying at his feet.

This was the “*fullness of time*” for Boaz to act –

Gal. 4:4-7 “*But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ Therefore you are not longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.*”

Significance of events taking place at the **gate of the city** – disputes settled and judgments rendered; business conducted; you could expect the wise elders of the city to be present “*Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.*” (**Pr 31:23**)

Significance of sitting down – **Heb. 10:11-14** “*Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.*”

Boaz is preparing to make a great sacrifice and accomplish the work of redemption in typical fashion – so we want to be alert to the parallels in his experience and that of Our Redeemer – recognizing that the Reality goes way beyond the Type.

2. Unnamed Closest Relative Sits Down

“and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, ‘Turn aside, friend, sit down here.’ And he turned aside and sat down.”

Matthew Henry: Providence favored Boaz in ordering it so that this kinsman should come by thus opportunely, just when the matter was ready to be proposed to him. Great affairs are sometimes much furthered by small circumstances, which facilitate and expedite them.

PreceptAustin.org: *Friend* is a Hebrew idiom (used two other times in OT = “*such and such*” = 2Ki 6:8YLT, 1Sa 21:2YLT) which translates the rhyming expression *peloni almoni* which means “a certain unnamed person or place”. The words “my friend” became a catch phrase in Israel. Rabbinic writings used the designation for an unknown “John Doe.”

The idea in Hebrew is “Mr. So-and-so” or “Mr. No-Name” either whose name is not known (unlikely in this case) or who is not worth mentioning. How ironic that the very one who was so

anxious for the preservation of his own inheritance, is now not even known by name! . . .

This unnamed individual is presented as a foil so we can contrast his unwillingness with the gracious willingness of Boaz; the way in which he is addressed is intended to diminish our respect for him – understand that Boaz is making a significant sacrifice for the benefit of Ruth and Naomi

3. Ten Elders of the City Sit Down

“And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, ‘Sit down here.’ So they sat down.”

PreceptAustin.org: Centuries later 10 became the number necessary for a Jewish marriage benediction or a quorum for a synagogue meeting. For an official prayer meeting in modern Judaism 10 men are required. The point is that this was a time in history when few written records were kept, and attestation by a number of witnesses was the most efficient way to be certain that a transaction was made legally secure.

B. (:3-4a) Stressing the Urgency and Exclusivity of Redemption

“Then he said to the closest relative, ‘Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. So I thought to inform you, saying, Buy it before those who are sitting here, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am after you.’”

Not just anyone could be the kinsman redeemer

With respect to our salvation: Acts 4:12 *“there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”*

Any so-called gospel preacher who does not take a stand on the exclusivity of the Christian gospel is preaching another gospel – you cannot waffle and say as Joel Osteen likes to when questioned on whether Jews or Muslims are going to heaven .. “I just can’t say ... I leave those types of judgments up to God” – God has made the judgment and revealed it to us in Acts 4:12. The message could not be clearer – there is only one Redeemer.

C. (:4b-6) Clarifying the Cost of Redemption

Emphasis in this passage is on the **Willingness of Boaz** to make the necessary unselfish sacrifice and perform the function of kinsman redeemer

1. (:4b) Initial Superficial Willingness to Assume the Obligations

“And he said, ‘I will redeem it.’”

As long as you don’t ask me to do too much or make too big of a sacrifice, no problem; it is a no brainer; did not take days to ponder the matter; gave a very quick and therefore superficial response -- not counting the cost and fully understanding the nature of the obligation

Cf. how superficially many people respond to the Gospel – to the command to repent and put their faith in Christ – “free ticket to heaven – sure, I will take that; pray to have Jesus enter my heart and become my Savior? No problem” – that is why Christ had to call out the rich young

ruler who came to Him asking the works oriented question: “*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*” “*sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.*” (**Luke 18:18-27** – an impossible passage for the easy believism camp to deal with) – understand what you are doing when you are transferring your allegiance to a new Lord of your life – are you really willing to give up your autonomy and submit to my rule?? No way said the rich young ruler

2. (:5) Explanation of the Extent of the Overall Obligations

“Then Boaz said, ‘On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance.’”

Remember the despised outcast position of the Gentiles:

“remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” **Ephes. 2:12**

3. (:6) Selfish Rejection of the Obligations of Redemption

“And the closest relative said, ‘I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it.’”

Deffinbaugh: the obligation to raise up offspring to a deceased brother was a part of the culture of Judah’s day, long before the Law of Moses was given, and this became one’s duty under the Law. This is why Judah directed his second son to take Tamar as his wife, and why he should have done likewise with his third son, Shelah. (Deut. 25:5-10) . . .

The nearest kin was willing to redeem the land when that would be to his advantage, but he was not willing to marry Ruth because it appeared to require a significant sacrifice on his part. If Elimelech and Naomi had no heirs, then the closest kin would inherit the property. But if old “so and so” married Ruth and produced a son, that son would inherit the land. The nearest kin would not gain the property permanently and he would assume whatever expenses were associated with raising the son he produced. (Would this son also inherit some of this man’s property? I’m not sure.) The nearest kin had quickly calculated a “profit and loss statement,” and marrying Ruth seemed to promise a loss, and so he declined.

What type of **Unselfishness** did Our Redeemer display?

- Fully aware of the cost of Redemption –
- Set aside the manifestation and enjoyment of His heavenly glory
- Humbled Himself and impoverished Himself to take on humanity
- Love and compassion to benefit even Gentile rebels – the enemies of God’s kingdom
- Suffered the greatest shame and indignity imaginable
- Obedient to lay down His life willingly on the cross

“Alas and did my Savior bleed and did my Sovereign die”

II. (:7-11a) THE REDEEMER MUST BE QUALIFIED AND CAPABLE – EMPHASIS ON THE LEGAL NATURE OF THE TRANSACTION – “IT IS FINISHED” (John 19:30)

“Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the

exchange of land to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel. So the closest relative said to Boaz, 'Buy it for yourself.' And he removed his sandal. Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, 'You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased may not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his birth place; you are witnesses today.' And all the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, 'We are witnesses.'"

Just going to touch on this section – not the emphasis of the chapter

The custom of the day involved the giving of the sandal – symbolizing putting your foot down on the property that was now yours and taking possession of the land – you have the other man's sandal so you have rightful possession of the land that you have acquired

This other man never buys into the unselfish nature of the transaction – he says “But it for yourself” – but the motivation of Boaz was to buy it for Ruth and Naomi and their household – he was not concerned with what he was acquiring for himself ... even though there was joy on his part associated with the anticipated marriage relationship to Ruth – just as Christ willingly went to the cross and endured the shame and suffering “*for the joy that was set before Him*” – **Heb. 12:2**

Boaz has witnesses to testify that he is **qualified** to be the unique kinsman redeemer. Christ was born of a woman – taking on human flesh – and lived under the law to accomplish all righteousness so that He would be qualified as the perfect lamb without blemish to offer Himself up as a sacrifice for our sins.

Only Christ is **qualified** as the perfect God-Man to be the one Mediator between God and man.

Boaz also is **capable** to pay the sufficient price to accomplish the redemption – he doesn't have to take out any loans or get any other principals involved to raise some venture capital; he pays the full and sufficient price and accomplishes the transaction so the matter is finished

PreceptAustin.org: this matter of redemption was a **forensic** or legal matter, indeed paralleling the truth that the believer's redemption in the NT is a forensic matter, whereby the guilty sinner as if standing in a court of law is declared in right standing with God on the basis of our Greater Goel's eternal work of redemption accomplished at Calvary.

The Apostle Paul in the **book of Romans** presented the legal argument for how a holy God could remain just and holy while still declaring righteous those who had no righteousness of their own to offer. Justification is a legal transaction where God takes the righteousness of the second Adam and applies it graciously to undeserving sinners because Christ has Himself paid the price – bearing the punishment of death as our substitute on the Cross for our sins. So He is capable to pay the price to redeem us and cause us to be born again into the family of God.

Rom. 3:21-26

Is He the God of the Gentiles also?? Yes, of the Gentiles also

III. (:11b-17) THE REDEEMER BRINGS ABUNDANT BLESSING

A. (:11b-12) The Anticipated Blessing of Kingdom Fruitfulness

1. Parallel with Rachel and Leah

“May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel;”

Deffinbaugh: Why do the townspeople pronounce a blessing on Ruth that would make her like Rachel and Leah? There is the sense which we have just noted – namely that these two women (with their handmaids) produced the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel. But I believe that there is also a more subtle blessing here – that of being enabled to conceive. First Rachel (Genesis 30:1), and then Leah (Genesis 30:9-13), were unable to conceive. In both instances, God (see Genesis 30:14-24) opened their wombs and enabled them to conceive. We know from the earlier chapters of Ruth that she had borne no children, and in Ruth 4:13, we are told that God “enabled her to conceive.” Thus, this blessing may have assumed that God would open Ruth’s womb so that she could bear children and thus build up the house of Israel.

Twelve tribes of Israel came from the union of Jacob with the two daughters of Laban. The Lord providentially provided those wives as well.

2. Prosperity and Fame in the Midst of the Kingdom

“and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem.”

Boaz was already wealthy and somewhat famous in the city gates – but these blessings would be multiplied in terms of what the Messiah would eventually enjoy

3. Parallel with House of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah

“Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD shall give you by this young woman.”

B. (:13a) The Blessing of Marriage Union

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her.”

So obviously there had been no previous illegitimate sexual encounter on the threshing floor

C. (:13b) The Blessing of Fruit of the Womb – Particularly a Son

“And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.”

Ten years of infertility in Moab, but one night of quick fertility in her marriage to Boaz

D. (:14-15) The Blessing of Replacing Emptiness and Bitterness with Fullness and Joy

“Then the women said to Naomi, ‘Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.’”

Note that the focus switches back to Naomi so that we can contrast her journey from Bitterness to Blessing

E. (:16) The Blessing of Nurturing and Growth

“Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse.”

Look at the **path that Naomi has travelled** in this short book – from Bitterness to Blessing; from a nobody who returned in shame to her home base of Bethlehem to the significant matriarch of the Davidic line that would eventually bless the world through the coming of the Messiah

F. (:17) The Blessing of a Significant Legacy

“And the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, ‘A son has been born to Naomi!’ So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.”

Worshiper or Servant

(:18-22) EPILOGUE – APPRECIATING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF REDEMPTION

“Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron, and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab, and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon, and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.”

Remember where we **started out** in Ruth chapter 1 – time of the Judges; situation in Israel seems hopeless; spirit of anarchy; no righteous deliverer to rescue them from their desperation; disciplined by the Lord with a severe famine ...

Look at where we **end up** in the last verse – flashing forward to the glorious days of King David who speaks to us of the ultimate Righteous Branch who will arise to redeem God’s people

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are we quick to resolve sticky situations or do we procrastinate?
- 2) What are some key verses that express the willingness of our Redeemer to go to the cross for us?
- 3) How should God’s blessing on us cause those around us to be amazed at the goodness of God?
- 4) In what sense is Obed referred to as a redeemer as well?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Thomas Brooks: Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Their mourning shall last but till morning. God will turn their winter's night into a summer's day, their

sighing into singing, their grief into gladness, their mourning into music, their bitter into sweet, their wilderness into a paradise. The life of a Christian is filled up with interchanges of sickness and health, weakness and strength, want and wealth, disgrace and honor, crosses, and comforts, miseries and mercies, joys and sorrows, mirth and mourning; all honey would harm us, all wormwood would undo us; a composition of both is the best way in the world to keep our souls in a healthy constitution. It is best and most for the health of the soul that the south wind of mercy, and the north wind of adversity, do both blow upon it; and though every wind that blows shall blow good to the saints, yet certainly their sins die most, and their graces thrive best, when they are under the drying, nipping north wind of calamity, as well as under the warm, cherishing south wind of mercy and prosperity.

Bible Background Commentary: Since Yahweh has granted the land to the Israelites as tenants, they cannot sell it, and if they mortgage a portion of it to pay debts, it is the obligation of their kinsman to "redeem" the land by paying off the mortgage. This demonstrates both the sense of obligation and the solidarity that are the hallmarks of ancient Israel's communally based society. Evidence of this legislation's being put into practice is found in Jeremiah's redeeming of his kinsman's land during the siege of Jerusalem (Jer 32:6-15) and in the legal background to Ruth 4:1-12. In this way the land remained within the extended family as a sign of their membership in the covenantal community. The importance of this inalienable right to land can be seen in Naboth's refusal to relinquish the "inheritance of my fathers" when King Ahab offers to buy his vineyard (1Kings 21:2, 3).

Voddie Baucham: What's More Important Than a Wedding?

What's missing in Ruth 4?? This is a beautiful love story, but where is the wedding?? We have had our thinking shaped by our culture; we think the highest movement would resolve itself in a wedding; There is no wedding here! Average wedding cost in U.S. is \$30,000; look at all the interest in royal wedding; We love weddings! In our culture young women want a wedding but not a marriage and responsibilities of wife and mother; weddings point to things that are more significant

1. The Picture of Redemption that Marriage Paints

Wedding should be filled with symbols of such redemption; picture of Christ who is our Redeemer;

- He wants what is best for others; not what is best for himself –
 - o for the other kinsman; Boaz allows for possibility that he will not end up with Ruth; instead of mentality: "I will have what I want;"
 - o for Naomi – not taking Ruth and leaving Naomi in the lurch; the redemption is about Naomi
 - o what is best for Ruth – caring for and providing for her
 - o what is best for his fallen kinsman Elimelech, to perpetuate his name; concerned that his brother's name and inheritance not be cut off; Ephes. 5 it is not all about you but about redemption

2. The Source of Comfort, Aid and Protection that Marriage Provides

Marriage is a good thing; Boaz brings all of these things to Ruth and Naomi and to the community at large; importance of the covenant church community; people slow to find a church home but quick to find a church for the wedding; not just about these two individuals

3. The Offspring that Marriage Produces is more important than a wedding

Vs. 5, 10ff – today culture says: “I sure hope God gives you a long time to enjoy one another before children pop up to destroy your happiness” – children kill your freedom is not the biblical view;

- if you are not ready to have kids you are not ready to be married – “We can’t afford children right now” – but you just spent \$30,000 on the wedding! Where are your priorities?
- We must reject homosexuality because it is a categorical denial of one of the very purposes of marriage
- We must show compassion to those who struggle with infertility – look at how God gave Naomi a son – not through her own womb but through Ruth; people ask: “Do you feel the same way about our adopted children?” This is a gift that God has given to me; infertile for 10 years in Moab but only takes her 1 verse to get pregnant; God is the author of life; life begins at conception

4. God’s Redemptive Purpose

How does the book end? Look at the low ebb in Israel’s history at the beginning of the book; no hope; no real leader; no real direction; ends with David – answers the question: Does God care and will He send us the Deliverer? Yes and Yes! And Yes a third time – David is really not the deliverer you need; there is one who is greater still who will deliver in a way that David cannot; Christ is our Hope, our Redeemer, our Rock; the lover of our souls; our brother as we have been adopted into the family of the Father; our Shepherd King who guides us and directs us where human kings cannot; That is more important than a wedding; not to say that weddings are unimportant; Jesus chose a wedding to perform His first miracle

William Rushing: A Kinsman Redeemer

Reasons for Redemption

i. A Relative Sold into Slavery (Lev. 25:47-49)

ii. Preserve the family lineage of a deceased male by marrying his widow and providing an heir (Deut. 25:56)

iii. Land a relative had sold outside of the Family (Lev. 25:25)

Qualifications for Redemption

i. Must be a blood relative.

1. Christ Was – John 1:14 “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

ii. Must be able to redeem.

1. Christ was Able – 1 Peter 1:18-19, “knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, {the blood} of Christ.

iii. Must be willing to redeem.

1. Christ Was – Hebrews 9:12, “and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”

Benefits of Redemption

I. Redemption Restores Life (Ruth 4:6-8)

- a. Boaz restored the Life of Ruth and Naomi
- b. Christ Restored our life –1 John 5:11-13

II. Redemption Gives Witness (Ruth 4:9-12)

- a. There were those who witnessed the Redemption of Ruth.
- b. We are to be witnesses of Christ Redemption – Acts 1:8 - but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

III. Redemption Gives new Life (Ruth 4:13-15)

- a. Ruth had a new life with Boaz.
- b. We have a New Life with Christ – 2 Corinthians 5:17, Rom 6:4 - Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Steve Malone: The Times of Naomi – Illustration:

We must never underestimate the power of a woman especially in the church. There would be a tremendous list of things in the kingdom that just wouldn't get done if it were not for women. A CEO of a large company in the Eastern United states was on a vacation with his wife traveling through New England. And they pulled up to a small gas station. The Attendant filled up the tank and the Ceo went inside to pay the cashier. When he was inside he looked out the window and saw that his wife had gotten out of the car and was talking to the attendant. The conversation was very animate, they were laughing and smiling. When the Ceo returned she talked about a minute longer and then she got into the car.

And he asked her did you know that man? She replied , "its the strangest thing I used to date that guy when we were in college, we even got engaged." The CEO gulped not to excited about that answer and said O really." But then he smile and said , "gee dear did you ever think that you were almost married to a gas station attendant and not to an important CEO like me." She said, "no dear you don't understand, if he would have married me he would have been the CEO."

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