

## Ruth 4: Redemption David Bassett | Senior Minister

*There is a redeemer, Jesus God's own Son. Precious Lamb of God, messiah. Holy One. Eternal truths. And great lyrics of the song by Keith Green.*

There is a redeemer. Our hearts should leap for joy at this news, like John the Baptist leaping within the womb of Elizabeth when Mary, pregnant with Jesus went to meet her. (Luke 1:41)

Is your heart filled with the joy of the Lord? Does your heart leap with joy at the hearing of the gospel? Does your heart leap for joy at the rehearsing of the great truths of redemption and salvation and of hope and promise and joy? Or do you need reminding of how great our need was of being redeemed and saved? Do you need reminding that your redemption was an act of sacrificial love? Do you need to remember the state of poverty you were in before your redeemer gave you everything?

As Keith Green sang – *thank you O my Father for giving us your son!*

If you want to recapture the joy of your redemption. If you want to see it with fresh eyes. If you want to feel it deeply. Put yourself in Ruth and Naomi's sandals. Enter yourself into this amazing story.

As we pick up the story here in chapter 4, you'll remember that Naomi and Ruth are broken, widowed, grieving, poor and in great need. Naomi has returned to Bethlehem, her town of birth and Ruth the Moabite has come with her. They were in such need they had to become scavengers, seeking the scraps after the harvesters. But, God who is rich in mercy, led Ruth to the field of Boaz, a kinsman, a close relative, a possible redeemer. And Naomi's eyes were opened to the steadfast love of the Lord and his providential care. And Boaz's heart was set aflame for Ruth and in his righteousness, and moved with great love, he worked for her good.

Righteous Boaz seeks to redeem Naomi and Ruth. The chapter opens the morning after. The morning after Ruth had slept at Boaz's feet. The morning after Boaz had praised her for her faithfulness to Naomi. The morning after he gave her a token of his pledge to help by filling her coat with grain. The morning after he promised to see if the closer relative would redeem. The morning after he promised to take action. And that next morning, righteous Boaz goes to the city gate and, again by God's providence, the other kinsman comes by.

Did you notice that he is not named? Did you notice that his ears pricked up when he first thought he could make a profit out of Elimelech's property? But did you pick up how quickly he ran when there was commitment? When he was told he would have to take on the responsibility of Ruth and Naomi? Did you see his character? Here is someone doing only what was right in his own eyes!

This story is rich with customs and practices that we find so strange. The idea of acquiring Ruth does not sit well with us today, but the idea of taking responsibility, of ensuring someone else's security and their belonging and their care – that sits very well.

And we see that Naomi had property but no means to operate it – she was what we would now say was asset rich and cash poor. The fate of many of our farmers in times of drought.

But there was hope. There was the possibility of redemption. There was a law set out by God for this very purpose, for the care of his people. And righteous Boaz, with the exchange of a sandal – go figure – becomes the kinsman redeemer for Naomi and takes Ruth to be his wife. Boaz redeems the land of Elimelech not to enlarge his portfolio, but for the descendants of Elimelech, the descendants that will come through his union with Ruth. And the elders of the city see the righteousness of Boaz and pray a blessing upon them, seeking Yahweh's grace upon them, seeking fruitfulness and seeking a blessing that goes beyond the immediate household. It really is a prophetic blessing in verse 11 and 12.

*Then all the people who were at the gate, along with the elders, said, "We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you produce children in Ephrathah and bestow a name in Bethlehem; and, through the children that the Lord will give you by this young woman, may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah."*

In a time where everyone did what was right in their own eyes. In a time where it was all about me. What an example of righteousness and grace we see in Boaz. In a situation that seemed helpless and where there was grief and pain beyond bearing. What a story of redemption we see in Naomi and Ruth. Who, without this redemption they would have continued in their poverty, left to the elements and without hope. Now they have security and plenty. Now they are full. Oh God you are so, so good.

But that's not the end of our story is it? There is the postscript. From verse 13

*So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the Lord made her conceive, and she bore a son. Oh God, you are so, so good.*

But there is more – for as Shane pointed out last week, this really could be called the book of Naomi. Listen to verse 14.

*Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin (without a redeemer); and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him."*

Here is the goodness of God. Providing for Naomi through faithful Ruth. Providing for Naomi future generations even though she has carried the pain of being a widow and seeing her sons die.

Knowing that even in those dark days, God has been faithful. So, verse 16: *Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.*

Yes, we can sing of God, All our days you have been faithful. All our days you have been so, so good.

In this chapter we meet 4 redeemers. The first is the relative who says I can't. It costs too much. The second is Boaz. Such a contrast to the first. Motivated by love for others. Motivated by his love of God. The third is Obed, the son born to Ruth and Boaz. We could miss it in our translation because it called him a next of kin – it's the word redeemer again. This baby born in Bethlehem of Judea. A redeemer of Naomi and Ruth. A restorer of life.

But this opens up for a fourth redeemer. A great redeemer. Also to be born as a babe in Bethlehem. One who will bring life and hope to many. Indeed the true restorer of life and indeed eternal life. One who comes from righteousness and is indeed the goodness of God, for he shall be called Jesus for he will save, he will redeem his people from their sins.

*For Boaz fathered Obed, who fathered Jesse, who fathered David.* The book ends. But Matthew picks this up at the start of his gospel and fills in the next part and it ends with another baby born in Bethlehem, with Jesus. Indeed, there is a redeemer, Jesus God's own Son. There is my redeemer! There is your redeemer! God never forgetting his promise to save and show grace. God always working his purposes out. Even though I would suggest while in Moab Naomi could not see this. God continuing to be so, so good, even though clouded by the immediate.

And our God is the same yesterday, today and forever, he is the God who does not change. So he continues to be so, so good. He continues to offer grace and to save all who call on him. He continues to be faithful to his promises, even if our circumstances might cloud it. He is forever faithful.

As I asked at the beginning - Is your heart filled with the joy of the Lord? Does your heart leap with joy at the hearing of the gospel? At the rehearsing of the great truths of redemption and salvation and hope and promise and joy? This is why we are filled with the joy of the Lord. Because our God is forever faithful. This is why our hearts are filled with praise because he has sent us a redeemer. This is why we tell others.

*Thank you, O our Father, for sending us your Son. And leaving your Spirit till your work on earth is done.*

*"There is a redeemer! That is the message Ruth leaves us. It's a wonder to marvel at, something to sing about, and a truth never to be forgotten" (Webb)*

It has been my privilege over these last 12 years to preach this gospel. To declare this truth. It has been my joy to see this gospel work in your lives. It's been my delight to see the salvation of God come close and to see the power of God's redeeming love work in you, even and especially when life has appeared overwhelming, God's forever faithful hand has kept us strong.

So, my friends, my dear brothers and sisters, hold firm to these truths. Rehearse them to one another, tell them to everyone, and let them cause your heart to sing with joy and your lives bear righteous fruit for the glory of God.

Let me finish with the benediction from the end of Jude

*Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*