

WOULD THE TRUE REDEEMER PLEASE STAND UP? (PART II)

Ruth 4:13-22

*JESUS IS OUR KINSMAN-REDEEMER.
HE EXPECTS US TO BRING REDEMPTION INTO ONE ANOTHER'S LIVES.*

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WOULD THE TRUE KINSMAN REDEEMER PLEASE STAND UP? (PART II)

RUTH 4:13-22

This morning, we will finish up our study on the book of Ruth. We have emphasized a few major themes throughout our study.

First of all, even though God is sovereign and in complete control of history, we are completely free to make decisions in everyday life. We can either choose to be part of God's redemptive plan or remain outside of it. This brings us to next major theme, redemption. The book of Ruth gives us a nice way to understand the Gospel message.

In our natural state we find ourselves in the same shoes as Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah. We are lost in this world, and we are not in a place where we can be blessed by God. Naomi is like those of us who were raised in Christian homes, but for one reason or another, we find ourselves rebelling against God and living in disobedience. Then there were those of us who were raised in homes and cultures that never recognized or understood the love of God in Jesus Christ. Orpah had a chance to go to Israel and find God, but let Naomi discourage her. Many have been so blinded by culture and false religions that they just can't seem to understand the message of redemption. But there are those who transcended their culture, like Ruth, to search out the truth.

At the end of the story, we know that Ruth and Naomi found redemption. We never hear what happened to Orpah when she went back to Moabite culture.

The first part of the Gospel message is that God loves us and wants us to come to Him, but unfortunately we were born with a natural bent towards sin and rebellion. And because of this bent, we have all rebelled against God by hurting others and choosing to live by our own rules.

Since God is a perfect and holy God, He cannot be in a relationship with sinful people. We find ourselves as lost, hopeless and hurt as Ruth, Naomi, and Orpah. We are in need of a redeemer; someone who can buy us out of our slavery to fear, sin, death, Satan, and this world.

The kinsman-redeemer is the one who can gain our freedom and restoration for us. In the book of Ruth, this kinsman-redeemer is Boaz. He is related to Naomi and he rescues the women from their plight. He restores their land, their wealth, and their social standing.

For us, Jesus becomes our kinsman-redeemer. He took on human flesh and was baptized so that He could be related to us. Jesus, being fully God and fully man, put Himself in a position to redeem us. He suffered and died so that our debt to sin and death could be paid. And now, He has restored our relationship with God and all that is included with that.

Part of that standing is that we too become a part of God's redemption plan for the world. As we will see in today's text, all involved in the story become co-redeemers with God. In order for us to be effective in this role, we must be living lives that match our role. Otherwise, we can easily become ineffective because people come up with all sorts of excuses to not come to Christ.

Let me give you an example. When I was stationed in the military in New Jersey , many of the other chaplains and I used to get our regular haircuts at a local barbershop. The barber was an old Italian guy who was from the same region in Italy as my mother. One day, we went in there and it appeared that he was still a little hung over from a weekend of heavy drinking. I endured his shaking hand as he cut my hair.

But when he was shaving me, he nicked my ear. I thought it was the right time for a sermon. I said to him, "Look at this cut on my ear. I'm bleeding! And it's all due to too much whiskey!"

The barber replied, "You're right Chaplain. Drinking does make the skin very tender."

Let's remember that Christ is our redeemer, but He calls us to also become part of the redemption process.

I think all these themes that we have been looking at through our study come together in these last ten verses. Let me just state the main idea for us simply. **JESUS IS OUR KINSMAN-REDEEMER. HE EXPECTS US TO BRING REDEMPTION INTO ONE ANOTHER'S LIVES.** I think that one of the things I noticed this time through the book of Ruth is that Boaz is not the only kinsman-redeemer. As I have studied through this book in the past, I simply read it too simply. I equated myself with Ruth, and Boaz with Jesus. But the more I read this book the more I see that there is more than one redeemer. And further, I see that as one person is redeemed, they in turn become a kinsman-redeemer to others. I think this book reminds us that God is the primary redeemer. However, He expects that we become part of His redemptive process. You may think that you are too poor, or too uneducated, or not talented enough to participate in God's redemptive process. Keep in mind, Ruth had nothing and God used her as a redeemer.

I. BOAZ AND RUTH THE REDEEMERS

We Are Called To Love Others As Jesus Loves Us.

Let's start with verse 13 and see how Boaz and Ruth function as redeemers. As we read this we need to remember that **WE ARE CALLED TO LOVE OTHERS AS JESUS LOVES US.** The story becomes really romantic at this point and it is the lead-in to, "And they lived happily ever after." This doesn't happen in the Bible too often nor does it happen like this in real life too often. So when it does, it is really something to celebrate. Boaz and Ruth got married; she got pregnant and gave birth to

a son. And lest we think this is just human beings acting freely and nature taking its course, let's not miss the phrase, "And Jehovah enabled her to conceive." Remember, Ruth had no children with her first husband. He died without getting her pregnant. While there was an agricultural drought in Israel, there was a baby drought in Moab. This is all God's plan and God's timing.

A. BOAZ

First of all, let's recap how Boaz has functioned as redeemer. When God brought judgment on the nation of Israel for worshiping false gods, instead of selling his land and moving to a different country like his cousin Elimelech, Boaz stuck it out in Israel and submitted to God's discipline. After a few years, God blessed Boaz and Boaz' business became very successful. In fact, we could say that Boaz became fairly wealthy. Boaz functioned as a redeemer to his workers by blessing them spiritually and financially. When presented with the plight of Ruth and Naomi, Boaz took this responsibility very seriously. He made sure that Ruth was able to make enough money while at the same time protecting her dignity. He also loved her and married her.

In this verse we see that a son is born to Ruth and Boaz. However, we must keep this in mind. Boaz has laid out a lot of money to buy back Naomi's land. This son does not legally belong to Boaz. He belongs to Naomi's dead husband Elimelech and Ruth's dead husband Mahlon. This boy will inherit the land for them and not for Boaz. Boaz loses a great deal financially. Even though this child is a blood relative to Boaz, legally and financially the child is closer to Naomi who has no blood connection to the boy.

Here is a principle that we must constantly keep in mind as we decide to work together with God's redemptive plan. It will cost us time, money, energy, and probably a lot of hurt as we work together with Christ. Before the book of Ruth, we studied through the book of Philippians. The Apostle Paul said that he wanted to know Christ more through sharing together in His sufferings. So many people come to church and get involved in Christianity because they want to be blessed. We are blessed, but not blessed according to worldly standards. Know this. If we want to be co-redeemers with Christ, we should not expect health or wealth. It will often cost us both as we work to serve others with the love of Jesus Christ.

B. RUTH

Ruth came to Bethlehem with nothing. She was a foreigner. She was a widow. She had no rights, no money, and no status. Even though she had all these things going against her, she didn't allow herself to fall into any "woe is me" thinking. She doesn't feel sorry for herself or wallow in any type of self-pity. She focuses on the task at hand, to care for her mother-in-law. Ruth was a risk taker. She went out into the fields to work. God saw to it that she ended up in the right field and that the people she came into contact with took a liking to her. As she worked and made money, she redeemed her mother-in-law from her depression and her self-pity. Through Ruth's faithfulness and hard work, she brought hope to Naomi. Really what she was doing was waking Naomi up to the fact that God had not abandoned her nor was He against her. Boaz received from God, Ruth received from Boaz, and Naomi received from Ruth. This is truly a description of God's trickle down effect.

C. THE COUPLE

Because of their integrity and courage, the couple becomes a source of redemption as well. Ruth pulled off a very risky and dangerous plan in which she asked Boaz to marry her. Boaz agreed but they had to get by one other relative first. They did. Boaz gave up a lot of his wealth in order to marry Ruth. The couple had a baby. As we will see later, this baby gives Naomi social status once again. And further as we will see, because of this couple's integrity and courage, King David is born from their line. King David redeems Israel by defeating all of their enemies and restoring true worship to the country. King David becomes their kinsman-redeemer. But as we know, from this line comes the ultimate kinsman-redeemer, Jesus.

I guess one of the main things that we get from this is that as we submit to God in obedience, and as we participate in His redemptive plan, we never know what kind of amazing results can come from it. Ruth and Boaz never knew what was going to happen through their faith, courage, integrity, and obedience to God, but we do.

For us, the message is simple. **WE ARE CALLED TO LOVE OTHERS AS JESUS LOVES US.** As we have seen, it really doesn't matter what we have or don't have. It really doesn't matter what we think we have or don't have. If we are

believers in Jesus Christ, then we have been redeemed, and if we have been redeemed, then we are expected to work with Jesus as He continues to redeem others.

II. OBED THE REDEEMER

Love is the Foundation of Redemption.

If we doubt that in any way, think about this. Verses 14-17 introduce us to Obed the redeemer. He is a newborn baby. How could he be so influential? The message in this section for us is this. **LOVE IS THE FOUNDATION OF REDEMPTION.** We know that God is love and part of the expression of that love is redemption. God passionately loves us and wants to be in a relationship with us. Human love reminds us of God's love. As we experience authentic love between one another, between parents and children, we are reminded of God's love.

A. A REMINDER OF HUMAN LOVE (14-15)

Verses 14-15 present us with a reminder of human love. Let's start from the human perspective. This little boy has given Naomi status within the Hebrew culture and has restored her faith in God and her hope for a future. I would like you to note that all the words come from Naomi's female friends. They can see God at work and they lay out all the blessings for Naomi. At the beginning of the story, because of Naomi's pain, she couldn't see God's blessings. Now she is so overwhelmed with joy, it takes someone else to put into words what she is feeling. The women state that God's hands have been all over this situation and continue to be on Naomi. They say, "Praise be to Jehovah." I think that is one good thing we tend to do as a church family. We continue to thank and praise God for His care of one another. I sense a real partnership when God blesses one of us. I don't sense jealousy in any way. The family of God rejoices for the good fortune of others.

Look what they praise God for. First of all, God did not leave Naomi as a marginalized person. He gave her a kinsman-redeemer. And by the rest of the verse, this does not refer to Boaz; it refers to the newborn child. I'm sure they don't know how prophetic they are when they say that he will become famous throughout Israel .

Actually he becomes famous throughout all of human history for all time through the lives of King David and Jesus.

Next, again, they mean this to refer to the baby, but actually it applies to David and Jesus as well. God did not leave Israel without a kinsman-redeemer. David rescued Israel and put her on the map forever as the nation of God. God did not leave the human race without a redeemer. Jesus came to die for the sins of the whole world. Naomi would be sustained in her old age. Believers in Jesus Christ will be sustained not only in old age, but through the grave, to Heaven.

Next, Jesus said that His mother, brothers and sisters were those who do the will of God. Naomi had a husband and two sons, all who were powerless to care for her. A woman, a foreign woman at that, turned out to be Naomi's true kinsman-redeemer. Ruth was not a daughter-in-law to Naomi. She was a daughter to Naomi and because of her integrity, courage, and love, she turned out to be more powerful than seven sons. Naomi was truly blessed. Keep this in mind. Boaz is no blood relation to Naomi. Ruth is no blood relation to Naomi. This newborn baby is no blood relation to Naomi. But yet, they are better than blood relatives. They are kinsman-redeemers.

If we are going to understand authentic Christianity, then we need to understand that how we were born into this world doesn't really matter and who our earthly parents are doesn't really matter. What matters is this. God is our Father, our One and Only True Father. If you believe in Jesus, then we are blood relatives. We are related to one another by the bond of the blood of Jesus Christ. That's what we celebrate when we take communion or when someone is baptized. We are declaring that we are family through the blood of Jesus Christ.

God wants us to be whole. God wants us to find peace, joy, and contentment. God wants to redeem every part of our lives. And the way He chooses to do it is through one another.

B. A REMINDER OF PARENTS' LOVE (16)

In verse 16, this newborn baby reminds us of parents' love. As the women were praising God, Naomi took the baby in her hands, laid him in her lap, and cared for him. The Hebrew is much more intimate. It says that she nursed him. I'm sure this

doesn't mean that she wet-nursed him. It was just a way to say that she became a mother to him. Again let me remind us that this boy is no blood relative to her in any way. Yet she cares for him as her own.

C. A REMINDER OF CHILDREN'S LOVE (17)

As Naomi cares for this baby, we are reminded that the baby will someday care for her. In fact this little one is her redeemer. Verse 17 is a reminder of children's love. Mary held Jesus, nursed Jesus, and cared for Him as He grew up. But in reality, Jesus would be Mary's deliverer. He would be Mary's savior. Naomi cared for this baby, but the baby would someday care for Naomi. The women again recognize what's going on and they take the initiative to name this baby "Servant." *Obed* can mean servant, or in this case, a rescuer. And then the author interjects the point that Obed became the grandfather of King David.

Naomi left Bethlehem with worldly wealth, worldly power, and worldly prestige. She came back to Bethlehem empty, broken, destitute, and humiliated. She lost everything of worldly value. But now at the end of the story, she is rich, but not with worldly riches. She is now rich with spiritual blessings. Ruth came to work in Boaz' field as the lowest form of servant. Today she is the matron of the estate.

We are so confused by what is valuable in this world that oftentimes we have to lose everything worldly to find out what is of real value in life. True love, love based on Jesus Christ is what is valuable. If we want to live up to our calling as co-redeemers of this lost and broken world, then we have to understand that **LOVE IS THE FOUNDATION OF REDEMPTION.**

III. GOD THE REDEEMER

God Has Provided Us with the Redeemer: Jesus Christ Our Lord.

This last section is very interesting because it is a good corrective to those of us who only focus on our own immediate story. We tend to forget that God has worked, is working, and will continue to work throughout all of human history. Verses 18-22 remind us that God is the redeemer. He is the One Who has redeemed us and will

continue to redeem people and creation until all things are perfectly restored. Let us never forget that **GOD HAS PROVIDED US WITH THE REDEEMER: JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.**

It is our natural inclination to read over genealogies very quickly but there is some real meaning to them. Verse 18 tells the past story of redemption. Of course, right after the fall, God promised Adam and Eve that He would send a redeemer to pay for their sins and who would destroy evil once and for all. Abraham became the father of the Hebrew nation. Isaac was his son and Isaac fathered Jacob, who later became known as Israel . Through Jacob, the 12 tribes of Israel came to be and his son Judah became the tribe that the promised Messiah would come from. So the line of Judah was singled out as the tribe who would produce the Messiah.

A. THE PAST STORY OF REDEMPTION (18)

Here is where we pick up verse 18. Judah 's oldest son, Er, married a foreign woman named Tamar. She was not a Hebrew. She was a Canaanite. Er was a wicked young man so God killed him. Er had a brother and as we have seen from the story of Ruth, Er's brother Onan was required to marry Tamar, impregnate her until she produced a male heir. But Onan realized what the unnamed kinsman-redeemer realized in Ruth. It would be costly to do this and Onan didn't want to do it. Every time he had sex with Tamar, he would pull before he ejaculated so as not to get her pregnant. God was very angry at Onan's selfishness and He killed him as well.

Now Judah told his daughter-in-law to go home to her parents and wait for his youngest son, Shelah, to grow up and marry her. She did, but Judah never had any intention of giving her Shelah because he was afraid he would die too.

Time passed. Tamar faithfully waited for Judah to keep his promise. It was sheep shearing time, and Judah 's wife had just died. Do you see the comparisons to our story? Tamar came up with a very risky and very dangerous plan. She put a veil over her face, and when Judah passed by, she approached him as a prostitute. Judah had sex with her, and since he didn't have his wallet with him, he left an identification stamp and his walking stick as a pledge of payment.

Now the Lord is involved in all of this, helping Tamar get pregnant. Meanwhile, Judah

got the payment together, gave it to his servant, and sent him to pay the prostitute and get his walking stick and I.D. back. The only problem is that they couldn't find her. So three months passed. Tamar was starting to show, and word reached Judah that his daughter-in-law had become pregnant as a result of prostitution. Judah was enraged. Bring that whore to me and we will have her burned at the stake.

Tamar calmly says, "Bring this I.D. and this walking stick to Judah . Tell him that the man who owns them is the father of this baby." Needless to say, Judah recognizes them and also recognizes that he has not provided her with a kinsman-redeemer.

She goes on to have twins. They struggled in the womb. One sticks his hand out so they mark the hand, but the other baby pulls him back and is born first. His name is Perez. His name means breach. Judah breached his responsibilities to Tamar but God made sure she was taken care of. It is from this son, whom the Messianic promise is fulfilled through. That was the beginning or defining what a kinsman-redeemer would do. Isn't it interesting that there are a lot of similarities between these two stories?

God has planned our redemption from the very beginning of time. And isn't interesting that He chose two women of integrity and courage outside the community of faith to accomplish His purpose? I think that sometimes we can be so self-righteous as believers that we miss what God is all about. Sometimes we are so filled with hate and indignation that we forget God calls us primarily to be loving in our approach to life. Too many times we look for ways to condemn people rather than looking for creative ways to redeem them. The story of redemption is an old, old, story.

B. THE ONGOING STORY OF REDEMPTION (19-21)

But as verses 19-21 remind us, redemption is an ongoing story. Verses 19-21 are a selected genealogy of rather common people. They do some notable things, but basically they are people like you and me. Let me encourage us that this is the way God does many things. Let me explain. Judah and Joseph were sons of Jacob. Joseph was the oldest son born to his favorite wife Rachel. Judah was very unremarkable. He was the fourth son born to Jacob's unloved wife, Leah. The whole last portion of the book of Genesis is focused on Joseph, his mighty works, and how he rose to the second in command and saved the entire nation of Israel . Judah goes

unnoticed in the background, yet he is the ancestor of the promised Messiah.

David was the youngest son of Jesse. Nobody would have picked him since he had older brothers who were strong and noble. Yet God picked David.

God chooses and uses ordinary people like you and me. We must be faithful and obedient wherever we find ourselves. Maybe we think we should be in a more prestigious place. Maybe we think we should have a higher position. Or maybe we think because we are not very talented, don't have many resources, or are not very important, we have no role.

God places us in particular places at particular times. We are required to grow and prosper where we are. God uses ordinary people to accomplish His purposes. Tamar was a poor woman who everybody forgot. Ruth was a poor foreigner who had no rights. Yet both of these women stand in a direct bloodline to Jesus Christ.

Just keep this in mind. God doesn't often let us see the final results of our work on earth. We will have to wait for heaven. We may befriend one person who because of our act of kindness may go on to be the next Billy Graham. Think about that as you look at all the little ones in our church. We may help someone in need who becomes the next great preacher of our time. Part of God's redemptive plan is to withhold the knowledge of the results of our faithfulness. Perhaps He does that so we won't become proud or because we may focus on those people while neglecting others. The problem would be that we may neglect someone who themselves may not stand in a direct line, but they may go on to influence someone who is. We need to remember that one of the themes in this book was that God is working sovereignly through our free will. It is not for us to know the end result. It is simply for us to love with courage and integrity.

C. THE FUTURE STORY OF REDEMPTION (22)

And as verse 22 nicely points out there is also a future story of redemption. Naomi, the women of Bethlehem, Ruth and Boaz had no concept of this larger redemption story. Ruth and Boaz would give birth to Obed. Obed became a real blessing to Naomi. It was a great occasion for celebration. It showed the faithfulness of God as men and women of courage and integrity lived godly lives of love. God's incredible

loving-kindness was unleashed in this family and in this city.

But they didn't have a clue that Obed would become Jesse's father and Jesse would become the father of the most famous King in all of Hebrew history, King David. Obed became one woman's redeemer. King David became the entire nation's redeemer. And another ancestor of King David, Jesus, became the redeemer of all humankind. **GOD INDEED HAS PROVIDED US WITH A REDEEMER: JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.**

IV. EPILOGUE

I have really enjoyed reading, studying and preaching the book of Ruth. It has been a good reminder to me that God is at work in the world, in my life, in your life, and in the life of this church. What we do really matters because **JESUS IS OUR KINSMAN-REDEEMER. HE EXPECTS US TO BRING REDEMPTION INTO ONE ANOTHER'S LIVES.**

I am struck by the fact that faithfulness, love, courage, integrity, and redemption have results that go beyond what we will ever see or know. Listen to this great story published in a magazine called *The Cross and the Flag*:

Max Jukes lived in New York State ; he was an unbeliever. Jukes married a girl of like character and training. From this union came 1,029 descendants.

300 died prematurely. Of the ones that lived, 100 were sent to the penitentiary for an average of 13 years each. 190 were public prostitutes, 100 were alcoholics. The family cost the state \$1,200,000. They made no contribution to society.

Jonathan Edwards lived in the same state. He believed in God and Christian training; he married a girl of like character. From this union, 729 descendants were traced.

300 became preachers, 65 college professors, 13 presidents of

universities, 60 became authors, 3 were elected to congress, and one became vice president of the United States .

The story of Ruth reminds us that God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son Jesus to redeem it. When you and I put our faith in Jesus Christ, we were redeemed. And now He calls you and me to become part of His redemption plan in redeeming others.

However it must be done His way, the way of loving-kindness. We must be men and women of integrity, courage, and love. We will only know the results of our faithfulness when we get to Heaven.