

Redemption
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Happy Labor Day weekend!

Ruth 3:8-13; 4:13-17

Opening Review: This is part two of our two-part study in Ruth. For some context before the text, let's review what we learned two weeks ago. Who was Naomi? Who was Ruth, and what was her relationship to Naomi? What tragedy had happened to Naomi and Ruth? What remarkable commitment did Ruth make when Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem? How did Ruth provide for herself and Naomi once they arrived in Bethlehem? Who was Boaz, and what did we learn about his character? What was Boaz's impression of Ruth's character? What would Ruth have sensed about Boaz's character?

Part one taught us that even in our darkest moments, we can trust that God is at work.

The Point: Faith means doing the next right thing, then trusting God with what happens next. He will always act for our good and His glory.

On the surface, the book of Ruth is a human love story; but it points us toward the ultimate love story: God's love for mankind in sending Jesus as our Redeemer.

So, Ruth had made a great impression on Boaz, and he had responded with admiration and generosity. If ever a single woman qualified as "Miss Right" it was this young widow, Ruth. But what about "Mr. Right"? Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi had some ideas.

(NLT) — 1 One day Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, it's time that I found a permanent home for you, so that you will be provided for. **2** Boaz is a close relative of ours, and he's been very kind by letting you gather grain with his young women. Tonight he will be winnowing barley at the threshing floor. **3** Now do as I tell you—take a bath and put on perfume and dress in your nicest clothes. Then go to the threshing floor, but don't let Boaz see you until he has finished eating and drinking. **4** Be sure to notice where he lies down; then go and uncover his feet and lie down there. He will tell you what to do." **5** "I will do everything you say," Ruth replied. **6** So she went down to the threshing floor that night and followed the instructions of her mother-in-law. **7** After Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he lay down at the far end of the pile of grain and went to sleep. Then Ruth came quietly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

- Verse 2: When Naomi described Boaz as a "close relative," she was referring to the Hebrew law of the "Kinsman Redeemer." In short, a close male relative could step in to protect a family in crisis—redeeming family property and, in the case of a childless widow, preserving the family line through marriage.
- Naomi's plan seemed normal at first: Clean up. Dress nicely. Put on perfume.

- Then it got strange: Secretly find Boaz. Lie down at his feet and uncover them.
- Was lying at Boaz's feet demeaning to Ruth? In that culture being at someone's feet was a recognized posture of humility and respect. Ruth was not declaring herself inferior or allowing Boaz to demean her. She was humbly placing herself in his care and asking him to act on her behalf as her kinsman-redeemer.
- Why do you think Naomi told Ruth to "uncover his feet?"

8 Around midnight Boaz suddenly woke up and turned over. He was surprised to find a woman lying at his feet! **9** "Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she replied. "Spread the corner of your covering over me, for you are my family redeemer."

- I know the wording is odd, but what was Ruth saying to Boaz?
- Why was Ruth willing to take such a bold step?
- Why didn't she wait for HIM to propose? Here is the answer:

10 "The Lord bless you, my daughter!" Boaz exclaimed. "You are showing even more family loyalty now than you did before, for you have not gone after a younger man, whether rich or poor. **11** Now don't worry about a thing, my daughter. I will do what is necessary, for everyone in town knows you are a virtuous woman. **12** But while it's true that I am one of your family redeemers, there is another man who is more closely related to you than I am. **13** Stay here tonight, and in the morning I will talk to him. If he is willing to redeem you, very well. Let him marry you. But if he is not willing, then as surely as the Lord lives, I will redeem you myself! Now lie down here until morning."

- Verse 10: How does Boaz's reaction explain why Ruth popped the question?
- Let's deal with the "elephant in the room." Was this very intimate situation a sexual encounter or completely innocent and appropriate? Scholars debate this.
- The fact: The narrator left us hanging. My take: 1) Naomi was so protective of Ruth, she must have trusted Boaz's integrity. 2) In verse 11, Boaz describes Ruth as a "virtuous woman." 3) The Bible can be quite blunt about sexual misconduct elsewhere; if it had happened, why wouldn't it be in the text?
- Verses 12–13: There was one complication—another relative was first in line to be the kinsman-redeemer. Boaz promised Ruth he would settle the matter.
- The "CliffsNotes" of what happened next: Boaz gave the other man first opportunity. He was interested in redeeming the land—but when he learned Ruth came with the deal and he would need to preserve the family line, he backed out.
- Boaz was more than willing to redeem the property and marry Ruth.

Ruth 4:13–17 (NLT) — **13** So Boaz took Ruth into his home, and she became his wife. When he slept with her, the Lord enabled her to become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son. **14** Then the women of the town said to Naomi, "Praise the Lord, who has now provided a redeemer for your family! May this child be famous in Israel. **15** May he restore your youth and care for you in your old age. For he is the son of your daughter-in-law who loves you and has been better to you than seven sons!" **16** Naomi took the baby and cuddled him to her breast. And she cared for him as if he were her own. **17**

The neighbor women said, “Now at last Naomi has a son again!” And they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David.

- That last sentence is significant. Boaz and Ruth became ancestors of Israel’s greatest king, David—and ultimately, ancestors of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.
- As I studied this passage I thought of some potentially fun titles:
 - The Matchmaking Mother-in-Law
 - “Miss Right” Pops the Question
 - “Mr. Right” Got Cold Feet but Married “Miss Right” Anyway
- Kidding aside, this text is about faithfulness, integrity, providence, redemption, and ultimately about God’s much larger redemptive plan for mankind.
- **Faithfulness and integrity** – Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz all did the next right thing.
- This text displays a tension that exists for God’s people: When do we wait for God to act, and when do we act? The text gives us the answer:
 - Naomi used the wisdom and knowledge she had.
 - Ruth courageously acted on Naomi’s counsel.
 - Boaz did what integrity and God’s law required.
 - Each of them did the right thing and left the outcome in God’s hands.
 - After the proposal, Naomi told Ruth, “*Wait until we hear what happens.*”ⁱ
 - In summary: We act where God has given us responsibility; we wait where only God can determine the outcome.
- **Providence** – Even when we cannot see it, God is at work for His people, accomplishing His purposes for our ultimate good and His glory. His plans may not be the plans we would have chosen, but we can trust Him with the outcome.
- **Redemption** – Boaz (the kinsman redeemer) points us to Christ, our Redeemer.
 - In Ruth’s proposal, we see that she recognized her need and came to her kinsman redeemer (Boaz) in faith and then trusted him to accomplish what she could not accomplish for herself. That is a beautiful picture of how we are to come to Christ, our Redeemer.
 - Ruth needed a redeemer. So do we. Sin has left us with a need we cannot solve ourselves.
 - Ruth could not redeem herself. Neither can we. Redemption required someone qualified and willing to act on her behalf.
 - Boaz was willing and able to redeem Ruth. Jesus was willing and able to redeem us—and He paid the price.

Colossians 1:13–14 (NLT) — 13 For he [God the Father] has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, **14** who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Even when we cannot see what God is doing, He is at work behind the scenes.
- Faith means doing the next right thing, then trusting God with what happens next. He will always act for our good and His glory.
- Faith is not passive. Like Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz, we should faithfully do the next right thing even when we don’t know how things will turn out.

- There is a tension in trusting God. Sometimes the next right thing is to act. Sometimes the next right thing is to wait. We should always act where God has given us responsibility and wait where only God can determine the outcome.
- Doing the right thing doesn't guarantee the outcome we want. We must trust that God's plans are better than ours and He is working for our good and His glory.
- The book of Ruth is a love story; love of family, romantic love, and ultimately a picture that God loved mankind so much He provided Christ, our Redeemer.
- Like Ruth, we need a Redeemer and cannot redeem ourselves. Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves—He paid the price for our freedom and forgiveness.

ⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ru 3:18). Tyndale House Publishers.