

Ruth 4

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[0 : 00] Kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvest, about two months. And she lived with her mother-in-law. So beginning in the final verse of chapter 1 to the final verse of chapter 2, we see that God has provided.

He has been providential in his care for Naomi and Ruth. Now they have some temporal provision, but how long will this last? I have no idea how much grain she may have gleaned and how long that may have lasted, but it's finite.

It's not going to last forever. How are Naomi and Ruth, these two widows, to be cared for long term? Now, we don't tend to read the narrative this way, but original readers of it, and for many centuries beyond, would have been concerned what happens next for these two women who are without a livelihood because they have no husbands.

Chapter 3 begins with a plan hatched by Naomi to see Ruth married. She gives Ruth very careful instructions, and Ruth agrees to do exactly what she says.

And so we see a short little summary of that in Ruth chapter 3 and verse 7. When Boaz had eaten and drunk, he's at the threshing floor dealing with, processing the harvest.

[1 : 24] And his heart was merry. He went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. Now, a brief note at this point.

Last week, I stated that this was not a salacious act, is the word that I used, by which I meant that we should not think that anything suspect was happening here.

A problem that I find being an avid reader is that sometimes I write with words that I realize in the moment of saying them out loud may not be the clearest word.

This happens to me very often. I read a word and I go, oh, I could have used a better, simpler word in that place. So I seek to quickly insert a synonym to give the meaning. If you ever see me fumbling and like my brain is shutting down, it's because I'm Rolodexing through words that I want to insert into that spot instead.

I'm going, no, not that one. That's less clear. And finally, something comes out of my mouth, which is sometimes helpful and sometimes not. Last week, as I was searching for a word synonymous with salacious, I grabbed the word, hear me carefully, hinky with an H.

[2 : 34] Hinky from somewhere in the recesses of my mind. And it's a word that means suspect. And I think I picked it up from Scooby-Doo back in the days.

Fred used that word a lot in that cartoon. Some of you thought I said kinky with a K, which means sexually deviant.

So it sort of applies, but wasn't at all what I intended to communicate. I would never use that word in a sermon or perhaps ever, unless, of course, I am using it to tell you that I wouldn't use it.

Now, that said, if you know me well, you likely assumed I wouldn't use such an odd word in a sermon, if you know me well. If so, you may even know me better than my own wife, who did not hear me say hinky and thought it was a strange word choice.

So anyway, my apologies for the lack of clarity. I do want to use my words very, very carefully. So, hinky. It was not hinky.

[3 : 48] All right, back to our summary. So we see in chapter 3, verse 8, that Boaz wakes up. He's startled. I think the fair assumption is that his feet are cold.

So he pulls him underneath his blanket, and it startles him awake. And he turns over, and a woman is laying at his feet. And he says in verse 9, Who are you?

And she answered, I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer. She calls back to chapter 2, to that blessing that he had uttered over her.

She had come for the protection of the Lord under his wings, and she says to him, Spread your wings over me. Again, she's seeing that God's providence uses human agency, and she's bringing his own words to mind.

Boaz promises that she will be redeemed, but that he first must address a man that has a closer right to redemption, a closer relative to Naomi.

[4 : 52] The chapter concludes with Naomi's assurance that Boaz will settle the matter that very day, which is exactly what he will do in chapter 4.

So chapter 3 sets up the stage for the next scene in chapter 4. Rather than read the entirety of the chapter at once, and then make comments, I want to just walk through the text.

It has a really nice and clear, distinct outline to it, and kind of make notes. And I'm going to do that in the following outline. In chapter 4, we see four redeemers.

So this is the outline we'll follow. Number 1, the nearest redeemer. Number 2, Boaz the redeemer. Number 3, Obed the redeemer.

And number 4, I know you can't see my notes, but all capital letters, the redeemer. The redeemer. So let's begin chapter 4 in verse 1.

[5 : 57] Before I start to read, let me remind you, beloved, this is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good. So we all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

So the first point, nearest redeemer, verses 1 through 6. Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer of whom Boaz had spoken came by.

So Boaz said, Turn aside, friend, sit down here. And he turned aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, Sit down here. So they sat down.

Then he said to the redeemer, Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative, Elimelech. So I thought I would tell you of it and say, Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.

If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you. And he said, I will redeem it.

[7 : 04] Then Boaz said, The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.

Then the redeemer said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.

So the very first redeemer that we're looking at, the nearest redeemer, is a rather poor redeemer altogether. In fact, he doesn't do the work of a redeemer.

He seems to be juxtaposed against Boaz. Boaz is presented to us as an honorable man, and his character continues to be put on display in chapter 4.

First, we see him keeping his promise to Ruth. He told Ruth he was going to do something, and he did it immediately. He goes to the gate, and if that seems like a strange place for him to go and to have such a meeting, it was a common place that these types of affairs were transacted, because people came in and out.

[8 : 11] It was a place you would run into people, and this kind of thing could take place. So he does it. He does the very thing he said he would do. Naomi's confidence at the end of chapter 3 in him is not unfounded.

Secondly, we see him following the law and customs of the Israelites. This nearest redeemer, right? This unnamed man.

He's not even given a name in the text. He's just simply called friend, right? He doesn't take up the right, the privilege, I would suggest, the thing that he was meant to do, but rather passes it on to Boaz.

At first, he is glad to have the benefit of Elimelech's land. But when Boaz informs him of the further obligation to Ruth, he is unwilling to be financially sacrificial for the sake of these two widows.

Now, I am no expert on all of these laws, and a lot of commentators have different ideas. Most of them say, we're not exactly sure what's happening here. So it's helpful not to get bogged down in the details of exactly what's going on.

[9 : 21] But what's probable is that this would have been a temporary redeeming, so it would have gone back into the ownership of the family, and that if he were to have a son with Ruth, then that son would have been entitled to the land.

So he would have spent something of his estate to gain some temporary benefit of this land, but then that land would have left him. And so he doesn't want to put that in jeopardy.

He is entirely financially driven, right? Not willing to be sacrificial for the sake of these two women, as Boaz has expressed that he is, right?

So a few things about these redemption laws, as well as, we can read about those in Leviticus 25, as well as some laws about levirate marriage, which is a Latin word which means brother marriage. It had to do with when somebody was widowed, the brother was obligated to marry the widow to keep the line of his brother going on. I want to just read a quick little short summary.

[10:24] I read this to you last week, but again, it's helpful to us. Some things that we can understand about this. Firstly, when an Israelite family became very poor and had to sell their land to survive, the nearest male relative, called the kinsman redeemer, had the responsibility of rescuing them from poverty by buying their land back and restoring it to the family.

And this was called the redemption of property. If they become so poor that they've had to sell themselves into slavery, a rich relative had to rescue them by buying their freedom.

This is the main thing we think about when we think about redemption, the redemption of Christ, because it's called that also in Leviticus chapter 25. Also, which I just mentioned, if a man died leaving his widow without children, which is where we found Ruth and Naomi, their nearest male relative had to step in and marry his widow and enable her to have children so they could inherit their father's property and keep it in the family.

Also, this was called redemption. But nowhere in the Old Testament are the redemption property laws connected to the Levirate laws.

So it had either become customary or, and this is the explanation I most like, because it just feeds the story well, Boaz was extending the spirit of both laws to ensure the care of Ruth and Naomi.

[11:59] I just imagine there's a bit of tone, and hear me clearly, this is imagination, but a bit of tone in his response when this Redeemer is willing to take the land, and he says, yeah, but you're also going to be obligated to take Ruth as your wife.

And the Redeemer says, oh, well then, well then, I won't. But perhaps it was baked into their custom of the day. Boaz very, very masterfully, right, leads this negotiation to the result that he's looking for.

He doesn't desire for this Redeemer to redeem the land and to marry Ruth. He desires to do this. He is finding himself loving this woman, Ruth.

So it brings us to our second Redeemer, Boaz. We see this in verses 7 down through the first part of 13. So remember, the initial Redeemer, the nearest Redeemer, has refused to redeem, and has said, take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.

Now, this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging. To confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel.

[13:19] So when the Redeemer said to Boaz, buy it for yourself, he drew off his sandal. Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, you are witnesses this day that I have brought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Malon.

Also Ruth, the Moabite, the widow of Malon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place.

You are witnesses this day. So in their day, this was the legal transaction, right? The paper is drawn up and it is signed, is what we're seeing happen here.

Verse 11 says, Then all the people who were at the gate and 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 act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem. And may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah because of the offspring of the Lord will give you by this young woman.

[14:31] So they utter blessing, right? That there would be a family that would come from this marriage. And the first part of verse 13 says, So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife.

Now, Boaz, I believe, should be understood typologically to teach us something of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So whenever you hear us use this kind of language, typology is the looking at things in the Old Testament that prefigure, that give us shadows, some reflection, some hints of the antitype, which is the fulfillment.

So there's type and antitype. The type is the, the antitype is the fulfillment of the type. It wants to show us something of Christ. Now, many preachers make this the entire point of the book of Ruth, and I don't think that it is.

The entire point. As I have said, I believe that God means for us to carefully consider his providence as the major theme of this book. But we should not miss what the inspired author is doing with Boaz.

[15:43] Remember, this author, we're not sure who he is, but this narrator is sitting down and under the inspiration of the Spirit is carefully recording some interesting facts about the life of Boaz.

Typology can be a bit tricky, and it should be done carefully. While all roads in the Bible lead to Christ, we want to be careful not to find him where he is not found.

Some critics of typology will say that we should only understand something typologically when the New Testament writers do so, and there's many cases of this. These instances, without a doubt, are the clearest, but I do think we can reasonably draw additional typological connections.

I think we see one here. Boaz serves as a shadow of the ultimate Redeemer for a handful of reasons.

Just think together. First, he is from the tribe of Judah, just as Jesus is. He is from Bethlehem, just as Jesus is.

[16:57] He is honorable. Now, we know, to be sure, that Boaz was not a perfect man. He didn't keep the law perfectly. Only Jesus Christ has ever kept the law perfectly.

But he's presented in this text as an honorable man. We don't see any of his failures in the text, and I think that's by design. Not that we would think of him as perfect, but that our gaze would go to the perfect one.

Not only is he keeper of the law, he's also gracious in his provision. He not only keeps it, but he goes beyond it. He's abundant in the way that he cares for Ruth and Naomi.

He rescues Naomi and Ruth from certain destitution. They would have found themselves as slaves of some sort just to survive.

And at his own expense, he keeps them from that. And then lastly, he makes for himself. He says, also, Ruth the Moabite.

[18:01] He calls her that, and he's clear about it. The narrator shows us this, and I think we're meant to see that connection. Now, we have the clearer picture of Christ.

So, how does a faint picture serve us? What are we to do with this information? Well, as we admire a man like Boaz, and I think we have reason to admire a man like Boaz, we should, in higher measure, set our affections on Jesus Christ.

As we think about, oh, this man, Boaz, who is so very generous, and does this rescuing, this redeeming work on behalf of Naomi and of Ruth.

We have a greater redeemer, which we'll think about together in just a few moments. I think this is what it's meant to do for us as we are warmed by this kind of activity.

It's supposed to then turn red hot in affection for Jesus Christ. So, that's Boaz, the redeemer. Thirdly, we see Obed, the redeemer.

[19:16] The last part of verse 13 and into verse 17. After Boaz has taken Ruth as his wife, verse 13 says, and he went into her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.

Then the women said to Naomi, Blessed be the Lord who has not left you this day 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 given birth to him.

Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, A son has been born to Naomi. They named him Obed. This narrative does not make much of the fact that Ruth and Malon had been married for ten years, about ten years, the text says, before his death, and they had no children.

Perhaps he was unable to impregnate her, his name means sickly, after all, or perhaps she was unable to conceive his original audience.

[20 : 32] That would have been an oddity to them as they read it. Many couples in our day decide not to have children. That's just a decision that they make.

They're not going to have kids, but this was not so in Ruth's day. Ruth and Malon would have been trying to have children, progeny, from the very first days of their betrothal, and yet they had none. And it would have been assumed that Ruth was unable to conceive, that she was barren. So, Obed's conception is meant to be seen as especially blessed.

In a long line of barren women conceiving children that play a very important part in God's redemptive plan, God here clearly intervened in this child's birth.

In fact, the narrator says there in verse 13, and the Lord gave her conception. We also see that Boaz and Ruth do not name Obed, but rather the women of Bethlehem name him.

[21 : 45] It highlights the significance of this little boy and God's work in the life of this little family for the sake of his people.

So how is it that he's a redeemer? We're not reading that into the text. It says it right there. The women say that Naomi has not been left without a redeemer.

Obed is a redeemer to her. He's rescuing her from that emptiness that she declares to have when she shows up in chapter 1. Her family had all.

Her family carries on. And she's now a grandmother. And we see this beautiful little picture of affection, the child being laid in her lap and her caring for him.

This little boy is significant and we're going to see why the narrator takes us right to why his name means worshiper or servant of God.

[22 : 44] The women of Bethlehem name him. So that's the third redeemer in the text. Obed, the redeemer. And now we arrive at the most important redeemer.

So number four, the, all caps, redeemer. Beginning in verse 17 and to the end of the chapter we see this kind of double announcement.

He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. Obed is the grandfather of King David.

And then again, it launches back into it. Verse 18 and expanded a ten person genealogy. Now these are the generations of Perez.

Perez fathered Hezron. Hezron fathered Ram. Ram fathered Amenadab. Amenadab fathered Nashon. Nashon fathered Salmon. Salmon fathered Boaz.

[23 : 39] Boaz fathered Obed. Obed fathered Jesse. And Jesse fathered David. And the book ends at that point.

This is not the only genealogy in the Old Testament, but it's the only book in the Old Testament that ends with the genealogy. And it's leaving us hanging there at that point.

We know why. That's a wonderful thing. I'm so glad that we know why. Early readers of this, pre-Christ readers of this would have seen the significance end with King David.

Oh, Obed is the grandfather of King David. Naomi, poor Naomi, taken off with her husband and two sons, widowed, returns with her daughter-in-law.

The story unfolds, this love story that we see, and oh, look at this. She gets to be the great-grandmother of King David.

[24 : 41] But there's something so much more significant going on here that we have the privilege of understanding. You see, in 2 Samuel chapter 7, in verse 16, just to keep it brief, there's much to be read there, and I encourage you to do so.

Nathan, the prophet, says to King David, on behalf of God, your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me.

Your throne shall be established forever. And we understand that the Davidic covenant is fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

One that came from King David would be the ruler that would rule forever and ever and ever. That one is King Jesus who sits on a throne now ruling over all things.

It's what we call his session. Seated at the right hand of the Father and nothing escapes his attention or control. All things. I think we're singing a couple of songs this morning about that.

[25 : 50] He reigns even now. So we see the Redeemer at the end of chapter four. And the redemption that he brings to us is not just a temporal redemption, although God is caring for us as well.

In his providence, he cares for every detail of our days. But it's a much grander, much more important redemption that's being accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul says in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 7, in Jesus we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace.

We are delivered from slavery, from destitution, from lostness in sin, from being utterly cut off from the blessings of God.

This picture of these two widows not knowing where their next meal may come from, the possibility that they become slaves is only a little tiny picture of the reality of who we are apart from the redemption of Jesus Christ.

[27 : 03] Christ. We needed him to offer up himself to pay that eternal debt that we owed because of our sin.

Paul says here in Ephesians 1 7 that we have the forgiveness of our trespasses, that debt taken away. By faith in Christ, the church is wed to Christ.

We are delivered from our spiritual destitution and final destruction. We are cared for spiritually and temporally. The book of Ruth reminds us to look to the loving kindness of our God in the person and work of Jesus Christ, regardless of the circumstances that we walk in.

He loves you, and he is working providentially for you. Now, at the beginning of our study of Ruth, I did something so shocking, so many of you said, by having a visual image.

I pulled out of the front of my Bible a little origami sparrow. I promise I'm not going to become this guy. There will be no multimedia presentations.

[28 : 24] This is as fancy as it gets for me. But I have this little origami sparrow in the front of my Bible, which reminds me, I told you, and I'll tell you again, to look at the birds of the air in the Sermon on the Mount.

You can see in this creased paper the form of a sparrow, assuming that you can see it from where you are. It's formish, the best form I could make of a sparrow.

But how it takes this form is not quite clear. Some of the folds just don't make sense as you're making them. It comes off odd, some of these folds, but then they become more and more clear, and it becomes the shape of a sparrow.

If you were to take it and carefully unfold it and fold it back again, you would begin to understand how it is that it comes to take this shape.

how we understand providence is a bit like this. We don't often understand how God is working in the circumstances of our life, but often, not always, but often, we are allowed glimpses of how all that he does is for our good and his glory.

[29 : 46] When we don't get to see those glimpses for ourselves, we get the benefit of seeing them in the lives of others like Naomi and Ruth and Boaz and the lineage that follows.

So just for the comfort of your own soul, we think about providence being unfolded. I want to take you to two texts, just a brief closing. So if you will please join me in Matthew chapter 10.

I want to show you something rather astounding in parallel recordings of what I want to assume is the same teaching, but it could be that Jesus taught this way multiple times and in multiple ways and therefore it's recorded that way, but any way you want to slice it, these are inspired texts and so we can know that it's recorded this way on purpose.

Let me show you this. He says in Matthew chapter 10 beginning in verse 29, this is Jesus speaking, are not two sparrows sold for a penny? This would have been for sacrifice in the temple.

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? The least of all of the sacrifices that could be bought. There was an allowance for this for the poorest of people. They could buy two sparrows for a penny.

[31 : 23] And not one of them, Jesus says, will fall to the ground apart from your father, his providence, his control. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

Fear not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. So this cheap bird that's being sold is cared for by the father.

We are much more than that is what Jesus is teaching us here. Now, Matthew 10, keep your hand marked there and turn to Luke chapter 12.

The record here is almost identical so I won't read it in its entirety, but there's one very notable difference. Remember Matthew 10, 29 says, are not two sparrows sold for a penny?

Luke 12, 6 says, are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? So we have in the one case, two sparrows for a penny, in the other case, five sparrows for two pennies.

[32 : 42] And so, if you do the grocery shopping in your home, you already know, there's a free sparrow. There's one thrown in. Two for one, or five for two.

There's an odd sparrow. Even that sparrow, right, the God providentially cares for.
Do you ever feel like the odd sparrow? I do. I do. The story of the book of Ruth is a glimpse of God's providence for even the odd sparrow unfolded.
May we remember it, recognize its grand significance, and take great courage from it. I hope it's been good for your soul as it has been for mine.
Let's pray together. here.