

Sole Mates in Bethlehem - Ruth 4 **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

Notes from the Sermon

Who doesn't love a story with a good cliff-hanger? When we last saw our heroes in chapter three, Ruth had essentially proposed to Boaz. She asked him to take her under the shelter of his wings and thus fulfilling his own prayer for her from chapter two. Boaz is flattered but mentions there is a closer kinsman-redeemer in the family that gets first dibs. Will the budding romance between Boaz and Ruth continue to flourish or will the closer kinsman-redeemer choose to fill the roll? Boaz determines to get an answer either later that same day and thus secure Ruth's future.

That's where we pick up our story in chapter four. Boaz heads to the city gate. The city gate served as a town hall and courthouse. Elders witnessed transactions and decided cases. He waits for the closer redeemer to make an appearance. Boaz flags him down and ten elders. Boaz then presents the opportunity to redeem the land owned by Elimelech. The closer redeemer jumps at the chance seeing it as a way to invest in his and his family's future. But wait there's more... when the close redeemer redeems the land he will also be required to redeem Ruth, Mahlon's widow, and sire a male descendant to continue Mahlon's line. Once he hears about this additional requirement, the ROI (return on investment) becomes pretty terrible. He will have to put out the money to redeem the land and when the son he raises in Mahlon's name gets old enough, that child would inherit the land. A lot of money going out and little coming back to him.

The closer redeemer bows out of the deal. By doing so, that allows Boaz to not only redeem the land, but also redeem Ruth, which was his main concern. To seal the deal, the closer relative takes off his sandal and gives it to Boaz in front of the ten elders. This custom may have been based off of Joshua 1:3, "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you." Boaz then declares to the elders and other witnesses his intentions of redeeming the land and taking Ruth as his wife and to perpetuate Mahlon's name. Boaz shows his faithfulness by not thinking twice about stepping up to do what was right, even though it would cost him financially in the long run. Because the closer relative chose not to do what was right, we don't even know his name.

God, in turn, shows his faithfulness. Boaz and Ruth get married and God gives Ruth conception. Ruth had been barren for ten plus years. God also shows his faithfulness to Naomi though the same baby. This baby would grow up to be a nourisher of her old age. Not only does God show his faithfulness to Ruth and Naomi, God also shows his faithfulness to the nation of Israel. During this time there "was no king" so God is graciously orchestrating things so that little baby Obed would grow up to be the grandfather of King David.

Not unlike Boaz taking the responsibility and offering redemption to Ruth, God offers us redemption. However, unlike Ruth, our situation is much more dire. Ephesians chapter 2 tells us that apart from Jesus, we are dead in our trespasses and sins and that we have no hope and without God in the world. Also unlike Ruth, we are not of noble character that would make us attractive to God. Isaiah 64 tells us that all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. The end result is that, apart from Jesus, there is a coming day of judgment and the end result will worse than the first. Through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, we are offered redemption. You are dead but you can be made alive. You are hopeless and without God but you can have hope and access to God. You are aliens and strangers but can become saints in the family of God. Not by working harder, but by repenting of your old ways of trying to good enough and put your trust in Jesus, the only One who was good enough.

Not only does God offer us redemption, but He also allows us to be part of his bigger story. The book of Esther from the Old Testament tells the story of a girl born "for such a time as this" that would be the one to save her people from extermination. From Ruth, we see God orchestrating things in such a way so as to provide for her and for the nation. From the story

of Joseph, we see how Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, but God orchestrates everything so that Joseph ultimately becomes the 2nd in command in all of Egypt to save his family from a famine. Joseph even tells his brothers, "it was not you who sent me here, but God."

This doesn't mean that everything will always turn out rosy. God is not a genie so that as long as you follow God, he will always make things turn out the way you want them to. Romans 8:28 tells us that all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose. God is good and God is faithful, even when we can't see it. That is one of the reasons why He redeems us into a people, a family. When those storms of life hit, we need them to lean on and to remind us of His goodness and faithfulness. We, in turn, must do the same for them.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Psalm 61	Psalm 62	Psalm 63	Psalm 64	Psalm 65	Psalm 66	Psalm 67

Reading from this past week: Ruth 4

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Hebrews 13

Family Worship

Song - *Light of the World (Sing Hallelujah)*

<https://youtu.be/YfBiJeeCIYY?si=x0EvhK3TfgmHCLoB>

Gospel Project

Unit: The Church Begins

Story: Jesus gave His followers a mission

Big Picture Question: How does the Holy Spirit help Christians?

Answer: The Holy Spirit comforts us, shows us our sin, and guides us as we live for God's glory

Scripture: Acts 1

New City Catechism

Question #1: What is our only hope in life and death?

Answer: That we are not our own but belong to God.

Verse: Romans 14:7-8

Scripture

Ruth 4

- This part of the story is weird. How do the Laws that led to this event reveal God's call for justice and care for the marginalized? How do Boaz's actions point us to God's love for His people?
- What does the birth of Obed represent in the story of Ruth? What does his birth represent in the larger story of redemption?
- What about the story of Ruth has most blessed and captivated you?
- How has the story of Ruth grown your appreciation for the love and character of your Redeemer? How can this change the way we live?

Prayer

*Give thanks for God's blessings in 2023, and pray for God's glory to be shown to us in the coming year.

*Pray that we would continue to see ourselves as part of God's great story.