



river west church

Ruth's Redemption and Ours

Ruth 4:1-22

Pastor Adam McMurray

03.25.2012

Today we come to the final chapter in the Book of Ruth. Chapter 4 offers a fitting climax to a marvelous story. Today we will learn how it all ends. Today we will discover the fate of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz. Most importantly, today we will relish in one of the central themes not only of the Book of Ruth, but the entire Bible. The theme is redemption.

Redemption Costs

Chapter 3 ends with something of a cliffhanger. Following Naomi's risky advice, Ruth went down to the threshing floor after dark to seek the favor of the worthy man, Boaz. Boaz is a close relative of Naomi and Ruth, a kinsman-redeemer. Ruth's action was more than just a marriage proposal. It was a plea for redemption. "Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer". Boaz responds swiftly and nobly. "I will do all that you ask". But, there is a twist to this story. Boaz informs Ruth that there is another relative: another redeemer who is nearer than Boaz. There is another man!

Chapter 4 opens with Boaz at the city gate, preparing to negotiate with this other kinsman for the opportunity to redeem Ruth. The scene is full of suspense and intrigue, but at the heart of it all is a lesson that we must not miss. Redemption is costly.

To serve as a kinsman-redeemer required a person to put forth part of his own inheritance for the sake of the relative in need. The nearer relative (we never learn his name) declines the opportunity to serve as a redeemer because the cost is too steep. "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance" (Ruth 4:6). Redemption was costly. It involved personal sacrifice. For "Mr. No Name", the cost was simply too great.

All of this becomes more significant when we realize that Boaz was not obligated to take this action. Boaz did not have to redeem Ruth; he wanted to. He was willing to pay the cost. His redeeming work, which would come at great personal cost and sacrifice, was motivated by love and kindness.

Redemption Frees

"Then Boaz said...I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech...also Ruth the Moabite...I have bought to be my wife" (Ruth 4:9 & 10).

Redemption in the Old Testament referred to the release of people and property from bondage through outside help. The kinsman-redeemer (Hebrew 'go el') would assist a relative in financial hardship by buying back their mortgaged property or buying them out of slavery. The goal of redemption is freedom.

On this particular day at the gate, Boaz freed Ruth and Naomi from the bondage of their hardship and poverty. How did he accomplish this freedom? He bought them. A transaction was made. Boaz made a personal sacrifice to redeem Naomi's land, and more importantly to redeem Ruth as his wife! What a beautiful picture of redemption.

Redemption, and the freedom it brings, finds its roots theologically in the Exodus event. In the book of Exodus, the LORD freed His people from their bondage in Egypt. From that point on, the nation of Israel

referred to God in worship and prayer as 'goel', their redeemer (Psalm 19:14; Isaiah 49:26). As we study the end of Ruth's story today, we are going to learn about the freedom that is only found in the LORD.

Redemption Reverses

The most striking feature of the closing verses of Ruth is the transformation that has occurred in the lives of the characters, particularly Naomi. Remember, Naomi was the woman who returned from Moab a childless widow. She insisted that her neighbors no longer call her Naomi, but Mara, which means bitter. In Naomi's own words, "I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty". Now, as the book comes to a close, the bitterness has faded. The Lord has brought fullness back into Naomi's (and Ruth's) life. All the bitterness, all the emptiness, all the hopelessness, has been radically reversed. Naomi and Ruth have been redeemed, and the child that Naomi holds is the visible expression of the blessing and redemption that God has brought into her life.

This morning we are going to rejoice in redemption, with the Book of Ruth as our guide. We are going to enter the story. We are going to celebrate, and respond. This morning we will see how the themes of redemption in the Book of Ruth find their ultimate expression and fulfillment in Jesus Christ, God's Messiah, and our Redeemer. The cost of redemption, the freedom from bondage, the radical reversal of the effects of a fallen world; all of these themes meet in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection to new life! Let's open our hearts together to Jesus our great Redeemer.