

Ruth

Preached by Phil Kayser at DCC 2021-11-14

I. Introduction - reminders of Ruth's background from Naomi sermon

The story of Ruth is a story that is rich in instruction on issues of salvation, love, marriage, and family. You could spend weeks in this book. It gives us instruction on how we ought to oppose racial prejudice, wrong approaches to fixing poverty, and why religious views impact the well-being of a society. Though I won't get into it, the book, *When Helping Hurts*, written by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, could have gotten a lot of its lessons from the book of Ruth. The point is that we won't be able to cover every possible lesson from the life of Ruth, but hopefully what we do cover will be helpful.

When we looked at the story of Ruth's mother-in-law, Naomi, we saw that she was a genuine Christian who made some bad decisions and had some bad priorities and was in a mess. In-laws can positively or negatively impact your life. And when big mistakes happen, we need to be able to help such people get restored. The decisions that Naomi and her husband made in the first verses of chapter 1 may have looked good on the surface, but they were not led by the Lord. And those decisions had long-term negative results, some of which directly impacted Ruth.

The first bad decision was to sell the family farm when there was no need to sell the farm. The second bad decision Elimelech made was to move to Moab and to use his business connections there to prosper even further, not considering that absence from God's people could have negative repercussions in everyone's lives - including their children's. The third bad decision was to make political marriage connections for their children in order to further the family's economy. We did see that they technically conformed to God's law by requiring Orpah and Ruth to forsake their gods and to embrace the God of Israel. But we also saw that with Orpah it was simply an outward move of convenience, and when that convenience was over, verse 15 says that she returned to her gods. So her conversion was really just a technicality. She was OK with having Yehowah as the household God, but being OK with God is not conversion.

But Ruth's impassioned speech in verses 16-17 shows that *her* conversion was a genuine one. She rejected the gods of Moab (that's antithesis). She embraced the God of Israel (that's life-commitment). She resolved to stick close to God's people (that's covenant relationship). In verse 17 she was willing to die for her faith (and that shows sincerity). So in her case, God had used the mistakes, sins, and bad planning of Elimelech and Naomi to work together for good - including the eventual birth of Obed, the ancestor of David and Jesus.

II. Ruth's conversion

So let's take a couple of minutes to look at what Ruth was converted from. Five times in this book Ruth is called a Moabitess (1:22; 2:2,21; 4:5,10). What did it mean to be a former Moabitess? In verse 15 we see that Orpah (also a Moabitess) went back to her people and back to her gods. Even a brief sketch of those gods shows that Ruth was saved out of a pretty dark background. If the Jewish tradition is true that she was a daughter or granddaughter of King Eglon, the darkness would have been even more pronounced. The Moabites worshiped many gods, with Chemosh being their patron god. 2 Kings 3:27 tells us that Chemosh demanded child sacrifice, with the king of Moab offering up his eldest son as a sacrifice to that god. Well, that means that there was very little value for life. Anyone who aborts their babies or sacrifices their children has very little value for life, however much they may protest to the contrary.

And if you study their culture you realize that there was even less value for the lives of their females. This can be seen by the permissions given by another of Moab's gods, Baal of Peor. This god encouraged rampant promiscuity - much like our own culture does and like the government schools do. Women were encouraged to trade themselves for sexual favors. I'll just give you one hint. According to Numbers 31:16, it was this religious promiscuity of Baal of Peor that almost destroyed Israel in Numbers 25 when the Israelite men were seduced by the Moabite women (not just prostitutes - but the wives of Moabite men seduced the Israelite men) to commit fornication with them. Moab was a pretty loose country morally, and it was sad that Naomi would even recommend that her daughters-in-law go back to their family. It shows to me that Naomi was still in a somewhat backslidden condition. She had become numbed to the morals of the culture around her.

That's what happens when you get immersed in a culture. This is what is happening to the children of Christians today when they send their children to the government schools. These children are being discipled by the Moabites and the Christian children become numbed to things that should make them sick. Anyway, if Ruth's family was royalty, as ancient Jewish tradition insists, then going back to her kin guaranteed going back to the gods of Moab. And when push comes to shove, government educated Christian children are embracing the culture and eventually the gods of perverted American culture. Even back in 2013 32% of Practicing Protestants were supportive of LGBTQ-favoring laws, and 65% of *all* American's under the age of 40 were supportive. Last week a study said that 30% of Millennials identified as LGBTQ. That's stunning. But when you are educated by the LGBTQ-supporting Educational establishment, that should not be surprising. Eventually the Orpah's will go back to their gods. This is why it is so foolish that Christian parents and pastors in conservative denominations like the PCA still send their children to the government schools. It's more than foolish; it is suicidal for the church.

We don't have any background on the business dealings that Elimelech and his sons had with the king of Moab, but rather than having his sons convert to Chemosh worship, Naomi's family insisted that these two women convert to the worship of Yehowah. So Elimelech and his family did at least have *some* principles that they refused to violate. They insisted on Yehowah being the Lord of their home - sort of. They insisted on one-man being married to one-wife. And the change Ruth would have experienced going from her Moabite

household into this Israelite household would have been quite the cultural change. The morals would have been quite different. The faithfulness to one wife would have been quite different. The respect for life would have been very different. It would have been a refreshing change for one who was truly converted. But it might have been less so for Orpah, whose heart was not regenerate. One commentator suggests, “The gods of Moab pleased the flesh and that was her [that is, Orpah’s] desire.”¹ Whether true or not, Hebrews and 2 Peter show that Orpah’s latter state was worse than her first state. But for Ruth, the change was deep and transformational. Her whole life was turned upside down. Her marriage to Mahlon, the eldest son, was the beginning of a lifetime commitment to the one true God of Israel. So she stands as a paradigm for true conversion. What does that look like? Look to Ruth, who had changes in Lordship, values, disciplines, orientation, antithesis, focus, and commitment.

III. Ruth’s devastation

But shortly after being married, Ruth lost her father-in-law, brother-in-law, and husband. It would have been easy to conclude that the God of Israel was not worth following - and that might have factored into Orpah’s apostasy from God. She might have thought, “If Yehowah really is who He says He is, why would He allow us to lose everything? Things were better back when I worshiped Chemosh.” But where pain, loss, and trials turn false believers away from God, those same painful events can drive true believers to press into God all the more tightly.

IV. Ruth’s response to her trials was to cling to God

Even after Naomi sought to push her girls away, Ruth refused to abandon the only other believer she knew and for sure refused to abandon the true God. Come what may, she stood firm by Yehowah. Reading chapter 1:16-17.

Ruth 1:16 But Ruth said: “Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. 17 Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me.”

From a human perspective it would have been a lot easier to fail this test of her faith and go back to her family. After all, her family was royalty and had wealth; Naomi had lost all their wealth. Her family was a known factor; Naomi’s were strangers. She would be able to get remarried in Moab; perhaps would never be able to get remarried in Israel. She was a citizen of Moab; in Israel she would be a foreigner. Staying had its risks, but think of the enormous risks of going to Israel - especially two single women traveling alone on what Judges 5:5-6 calls dangerous roads that had been abandoned because of predatory bandits.

¹ Chris Benfield, “Three Widows in Moab #2,” in Pulpit Pages: Old Testament Sermons (Mount Airy, NC: Chris Benfield, 2015), 187.

It was not a safe trip to go on. And the trip would take 7-10 days of walking and camping. All of these things were tests of the genuineness of her faith in God. She did not go with Naomi for personal gain (that's for sure), and she did not embrace Yehowah for personal gain. She did it because she belonged to God, lock, stock, and barrel no matter what the risks. Her decision shows sacrifice, love, faithfulness, and a total commitment to God - come what may. In her testimony she is even willing to face death in order to follow God.

Do you have times when you feel like throwing in the towel and quitting? We need to realize that God sovereignly allows tests in our lives, and if we pass those tests He blesses us with more stewardship. And sometimes those tests come from the very ones that we love - like Naomi. When tempted, let the life of Ruth inspire you and encourage you to be faithful. When you pass your test, God can usher you into the next stage of growth.

V. Committed to faithful but boring living (Ruth 2)

Her faithfulness is also shown in chapter 2 in that she was committed to being faithful even though her work was ultra boring. You could not get much more boring work than gleaning. It amounted to bending over and picking up bits of barley that had fallen here and there in the dirt, and dusting those kernels of grain off and putting them into a basket or into a cloth pouch. And when Boaz asks who she is, the servant in charge tells him in verse 6, and then in verse 7 says,

And she said, "Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves." So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house."

Wow! What a work ethic! Persevering in boring work can be a test from God as to whether our work ethic is really from Him. And the reason I say that, is because a boring regimen sometimes turns people away from the path of faithfulness. In verse 2 she asks her mother-in-law if she can go glean. This is likely a division of labor, with Naomi doing work from home to help pay for their small apartment in town and Ruth volunteering for the backbreaking work of gleaning since she was younger. Gleaning is as inglorious as dumpster diving, but much harder - much harder than dumpster diving. You are bent over most of the day picking up bits of grain that have fallen from the reapers. It was not a glamorous or easy job by a long shot.

But verse 7 (which I just read) highlights the fact that Ruth had a fantastic work ethic. She hardly took a break, working diligently to gather as much grain as she possibly could. The expression, "Make hay while the sun is shining" means that we need to take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves. She worked without grumbling and demonstrated the character qualities of constancy, diligence, gratitude, and going the extra mile. And I'll comment on that more toward the end of the sermon.

VI. The character of going the extra mile is noticed

Anyway, Boaz notices. Guys and girls - the habits of conversation, work, politeness, interaction with your elders, honoring of your parents, and many other things will likely be

noticed by others who could be potential lifelong partners. If you girls want to attract a good man, become the kind of person that a good man is looking for; become a person *worthy* of a good man. And guys, if you want to attract a good lady, become a Christ-centered good man that will be *worthy* of her. It is never too early to begin imitating Boaz and Ruth, who are fantastic role models for us.

Boaz was definitely a man of noble character and remarkable generosity who you immediately see fits the noble character and remarkable generosity of Ruth. They are a match made in heaven. He is generous to all those who came to glean in his field. Coming from Moab, Ruth is blown away - she is not used to such generosity and is overwhelmed by his kindness.

In verse 4 Boaz says, “Yehowah be with you!” That is not an empty blessing. And when he blesses, all his workers and gleaners say, “Yehowah bless you!” They were so grateful for their boring jobs that they wanted God to bless Boaz in return. Do you have gratitude for your job? Do you bless your employer? Or do you find yourself grumbling against God’s providences or grumbling that he is better off than you are?

VII. Boaz’s welcome and protection of Ruth is an example of how we should treat the foreigners and strangers in our midst

Anyway, Boaz must have been impressed with the diligence of Ruth. She no doubted looked different. And he asks about her. And almost every time I read the dialog between Boaz and Ruth in verses 8-16 I am deeply moved. I identify with Ruth when I bow before my Kinsman Redeemer, Jesus. I feel utterly utterly unworthy of His grace. And it’s not by accident that the word “grace” is used in the Hebrew. In the New King James it is translated as “favor” - “why have I found favor in your eyes...” But because Boaz stands as a type of Jesus Christ, the Hebrew uses the word “grace,” which means undeserved favor. Boaz and Ruth stand as a remarkable type of Christ and the Church. None of us deserves salvation. None of us deserves the health we have or the work we have. Every day that we live is a demonstration of His undeserved favor. Surely His mercies are new every morning.

But even on a human level this conversation is a wonderful display of the beautiful character of both Boaz and Ruth. Starting to read at verse 8:

Ruth 2:8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, “You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women.

The word “daughter” shows his kindly intent. He’s not hitting on her. He is just concerned for her welfare like a father would be for his own daughter. And he is an older gentleman. He knew the dangers that a foreign woman like Ruth could experience. With no one to protect her, she could easily have been exploited by men.

VIII. His cautioning of Ruth and protection of Ruth is an example of how we should caution and protect our women

And it is for this reason that I don't recommend that young women be sent off to work or sent off to the college where their home support system and protection are absent - unless of course you have arranged for very godly protection and oversight where they have been sent. Sometimes it is unavoidable, just like it was with Ruth. But Boaz knows that it is not a good thing for a woman to be working all alone in her situation. He is already being a generous protector for other gleaners, but shows a special heart for a foreigner like Ruth. So he lets her know that his field is safe. Unlike other fields that he apparently knows about, this is a safe place. She should stay there. He continues in verse 9...

9 Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."

Wow! He's already protected her by warning the young men not to harass her. Verse 10:

Ruth 2:10 So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

Ruth 2:11 And Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. 12 The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

Ruth 2:13 Then she said, "Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

She was deeply impacted by his kind treatment of a foreigner. While I am not in favor of criminals charging into our country, our immigration policies are messed up. Of course, many immigrants don't come into our country to work; they come into our country to get on welfare. But let's get rid of welfare and other socialistic programs so that immigration can be properly managed in a Biblical way. It used to be that our country welcomed them and gave them opportunities to thrive. Carved on the Statue of Liberty are the words, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." It didn't say, "Give me your criminals, your lazy, your lethargic masses yearning for a handout." That's one extreme. But neither did it say, "No trespassing! We don't want you! Go back to where you came from!" That's the other extreme. The early immigrants of America were closer to Ruth. But the Bible definitely gives an honored place for immigrants. We need to rethink our views of immigration.

IX. Boaz goes above and beyond what the law required in his generosity (2:14-17)

In any case, Boaz actually is more generous than the law called him to be. Look at chapter 2, beginning at verse 14, and see how this was very kind hospitality that went beyond the gleaning laws.

Ruth 2:14 Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, "Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back. 15 And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. 16 Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."

Ruth 2:17 So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

An ephah of barley was an astonishing amount to have been able to glean. There is no way that she could have gleaned that much without him being generous and her being extremely diligent. In a previous sermon I mentioned that there are differences of view on what an ephah constitutes. The archaeologist Scott found a pot that had the word bath written on it, and since a bath is a unit by which an ephah can be measured, he came to the conclusion that an ephah was approximately 3/5ths of a bushel of grain and would have weighed about 29 pounds. That's what you tend to see in modern study bibles. But that evidence from a dug up pot is not as clear as you might think, and it actually may be an underestimation. Josephus (who lived in the time of Christ) gives a much more generous definition of an ephah, making it almost twice that size. I don't see any reason to question Josephus on that measure. He would have known exactly what it was. But either way, it was a lot. She gleaned somewhere between 29 and 50 lbs of barley in one day. This means that Boaz was a great example of ungrudgingly carrying out God's law on charity just as Jesus loved God's law and called us to be generous.

When Ruth carried the grain home, Naomi was ecstatic. She was ecstatic not just because of the enormous amount of food, but also because Boaz was their kinsman redeemer. This idea of a kinsman redeemer is rooted in the law and is what makes the book of Ruth such a prophetic statement about Jesus. It is the law of God and this book's clear references to the law of God that is the justification for treating Boaz and Ruth as types of Jesus and the Church.

A kinsman redeemer was a powerful and wealthy relative who had a responsibility to provide for those in his family who were suffering. He was a protector and even an avenger of blood (which is the same word for kinsman redeemer). So he would have been a leader of a unit of the army. But the law also made provision for the kinsman redeemer to marry a widow who had no children, to take up the land, and to protect that family. So Naomi has a glimmer of hope. *She* is past child-bearing years, so she is not going to offer herself in marriage. But since her son Mahlon would have inherited the land, Ruth could be married and the land be redeemed through Ruth. And so her situation was a combination of two laws in the Pentateuch - the Levirate law and the Kinsman Redeemer law.

X. Ruth's appeal to her kinsman-redeemer

In chapter 3, Naomi strategized on how to see if Boaz (who just happens to be an eligible single older man) might be willing to marry Ruth and redeem their land from whomever they sold it to. This is one of the few places in the Bible where the woman proposes to the man rather than vice versa. But God's law made provision for that in the case of the Levirate marriage in Deuteronomy 25. There was nothing out of line for Ruth to propose.

Now, I will hasten to say that Boaz recognized that Ruth had crossed some lines of Biblical propriety when she laid down at his feet that night. And I get that from chapter 3, verse 14, where he says very clearly, "Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." This was a bad testimony! He did not want that known. But he also knows that she was just following the suggestions of Naomi, and that this was not intentional. He calls her a virtuous woman. So he is very gracious about the way that he corrects her on how she went about it.

Anyway, back to the earlier part of chapter 3. Ruth trusts Naomi's advice since Naomi is more familiar with the cultural norms there. Sometimes we do need to be careful how much we trust the advice of others; we need to double check. In any case, she follows Naomi's advice and bathes, dresses in her best clothes, and anoints herself. She is not going out to glean this time. Naomi wants her to make her best presentation. She is going to propose marriage.

After everyone has laid down for the night and fallen asleep, Ruth crept in, uncovered Boaz's feet as a symbolic gesture, and lay down at the feet of Boaz. This was not seduction. Seduction would have lain by his side. This was at his feet, and as such was a symbol that she was willing to come under his dominion, his lordship, and his protection. And that too is a beautiful picture of our coming to Christ. We come under His Lordship when He redeems us; we come under His feet. And by the way, that speaks to the headship of the man in the home. The man is the lord of his wife. Yes, he is to be a generous, gentle, and kind lord as Boaz was, but he is to be the (small 'I') lord of that home. Read 1 Peter 3:6 and you will see that Peter says that continues to be the case. This is the opposite of feminism. Male headship of the home is written into the law, illustrated in history, and repeated in the New Testament. It too is a test of whether we will follow culture or the Bible.

Anyway, when Boaz woke up in the middle of the night and asked who was there, she basically asked Boaz to redeem her family and to marry her. And as I have already stated, it was perfectly lawful for her to propose rather than waiting for him to propose. And it was perfectly lawful for him to turn her down if he so chose. We should not be offended with bold inquiries like this. We need to have an open culture when it comes to investigating who might be a good match for our children. The normal paradigm is for *parents* to take the first steps of this communication, but the law of God also indicates that it doesn't have to be that way - especially with older people. There is some flexibility.

XI. Boaz and Ruth are models of principled virtue being more important than handsomeness or beauty

Boaz is blown away that she would think of him rather than going after younger and more handsome men. She is taking the path of Scriptural principle in marrying him rather than the path of human wisdom in allowing her beauty to capture a younger more handsome man. And in this she stands as a model to you singles. Don't let beauty or handsomeness be your first concern. Let it be godliness.

In verses 10-11 he says,

"Blessed are you of Yehowah, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman.

The expression "virtuous woman" is exactly the same expression for "virtuous wife" in Proverbs 31. Her value was far above rubies. And when he sees that she is available, he is eager to pursue her hand in marriage.

XII. A possible glitch that will require them to trust God (3:12-4:8)

But he tells her that there might be a glitch. Since both of them are doing things according to the law of God, they have to follow the law to a t - even if that brings disappointment. There was another kinsman redeemer who was closer than Boaz, and Boaz was going to trust God by letting that man know that Ruth was available. It was a risk, but he knew that if God was in it, it would work out.

God will often put integrity checks into our lives to test that trust. I knew that Kathy was the right one for me before she really knew me that well. I was going to ask if I could court her, but my best friend beat me to the punch the very day I was going to ask, and he started to court her. Unknown to me, she broke it off very quickly - not because he wasn't a good guy (he was very good - a wonderful man), but she broke it off simply because she didn't have peace. You don't need to have a good reason to break off a courtship. If you lack peace, that's good enough. But my best friend came to me for counsel on how to make his relationship with Kathy work out. And I knew before the Lord that this was an integrity check for me. Would I give him the best advice that I could, and just trust God on this? And I did. I gave him the absolutely best advice that I could, and trusted God with the results. And as you know, it worked out well. God puts integrity checks into all of our lives to see if we will trust Him. Too many times Christians try to manipulate the results, but you can't manipulate God's Providence. All that does is to add stress.

Well, Boaz has a confidence in God that makes both Ruth and Naomi have confidence in God too. We can lead in developing a culture of confidence and faith. May it be so in this church. May we overflow with confidence in God's ways.

So Ruth goes home, tells Naomi that he said “Yes, but there is a closer kinsman redeemer who has first rights.” And Naomi is certain that whichever way it works out, God will be in this. She knows that Boaz won’t rest until it is settled one way or the other. He is a very decisive man. He is a man of action. And young men, you need to learn to be so immersed in God’s Word that you have what it takes to be able to take decisive steps that are in accord with God’s Word even on huge issues like this. And once you know what you should do, to immediately set to work to accomplish the task. Trusting God does not mean you are passive. That’s an important lesson. Most of the examples of faith in Hebrews 11 are very active examples, not passive. By faith Abel offered something. Verse 6 shows that faith is expressed by diligently seeking God. By faith Noah prepared an ark. Etc. It’s not passive.

Well, in chapter 4 the tension rises as Boaz finds out that this other family member *is* willing to redeem the land. He would love to add that land to his own holdings. But when the other family member finds out that he has to marry Ruth in order to do so (Biblically it would be required to be a package deal), he realizes that it might spoil his own plans, whatever those were. Maybe he already had his eye on another woman. But the phrase “ruin my inheritance” in verse 6 seems to indicate that his decision was purely economic. There are inheritance rights connected with this. So he says “No.” And Boaz and Ruth are no doubt breathing a sigh of relief.

XIII. After a betrothal commitment (3:8-4:8) they get married (4:9-13)

Boaz knows Ruth’s true character and he redeems Naomi’s land from whomever it was sold to and marries Ruth. There was not a long romance. He saw everything that he needed to see from observing her work over the previous season. Why drag out a courtship if you both already know the answer is “Yes.” Get engaged and begin to work on the expressions of non-sexual love that will last you a lifetime.

Now, I will admit that this was a remarkably short betrothal - much shorter than most betrothals, so let me quickly distinguish between the betrothal that took place in chapter 3:11-15 and the marriage ceremony that took place in chapter 4. They are quite different, and there are some betrothal models that fail to see these distinctions and get themselves into legalism by saying you can’t do it this way. And I did point these differences out in our overview of the book as a whole, but I will repeat myself.

1. First, the biggest difference is that betrothal is a promise to get married (sometimes in the form of a contract, but it doesn’t have to be) and marriage is a covenant. Marriage is more than a promise or a contract; it is a covenant.
2. Second, Boaz’s promise to marry Ruth in Ruth 3:10-13 did not have an oath, though it did include a promise and a token (in verses 15-18) - just like betrothals or engagements today have a promise or commitment and a ring or some other token of that commitment. In contrast, his marriage covenant in verses 8-13 goes way beyond a simple contract.
3. Third, a contract does not need witnesses. So his betrothal was without *any* witnesses in 3:8-18 (and yet was still a valid betrothal) whereas the marriage covenant

necessarily involved witnesses, and he had ten witnesses in chapter 4:2 who also participated in the marriage ceremony in verses 9-12.

4. Fourth, the betrothal was not done under authority in chapter 3, whereas elders are part of the ceremony in chapter 4. All covenants are administered under some authority.
5. And last, his betrothal had a condition inserted into the contract in 3:13 whereas the marriage covenant was an unreserved commitment of Boaz's person and property to Ruth in 4:1-12 and vice versa.

XIV. They have a baby who begins a line that leads to David and ultimately to Jesus (4:13-22; Matt. 1:5; Luke 3:32)

Anyway, in verses 13-22 Boaz and Ruth have a baby, and they lived happily ever after. Of course, that's not the end of the story, is it? The *real* end of the story is not the birth of Obed, but the genealogy at the end of the book that shows that Obed was the grandfather of David, who in turn was prophesied to be the forefather of the coming Messiah. So we learn that every detail of this story was beautifully being woven together to be part of the grand story of redemption that Jesus would bring. And if I were doing a series of sermons on this book, I would take you through all of the marvelous details of this typological prophecy. It really is marvelous.

And I love the fact that the only women that are mentioned in Christ's genealogy in Matthew 1 are the women who might otherwise be shunned because of either their sin or their foreign ancestry. In Matthew 1, Jesus identifies with sinners, the hurting, the outcast, the widow. He loves to identify with those who are broken and crying and to take them up in His arms and apply redemption to them. And this book of Ruth puts emotional depth to that love and loyalty that Jesus has for us.

XV. Final thoughts and other lessons

Ruth is a marvelous model. And I want to end the sermon by giving some additional lessons and applications that we can glean from her story.

A. We all need Ruth's faith

The first obvious application is that we all need Ruth's faith. Faith believes God even when we don't see *how* everything is working together for good. Faith believes God even when you lose your money, your husband, and other loved ones. Faith continues to believe God even when other believers seem different and have a hard time identifying with you. Faith believes God through thick and through thin. Like Job said, even if God kills me, I'm still going to trust Him. That's the kind of faith Ruth had. Do you? We all need Ruth's faith.

B. We all need Ruth's constancy & willingness to go the extra mile

Second, we need Ruth's constancy and willingness to go the extra mile. She went the extra mile when Boaz gave her some special food, and she saved some of it for Naomi instead of eating it all. She went the extra mile when she worked longer hours than others worked. She went the extra mile in her gracious disposition. We need constancy at work, knowing that God sees, but also knowing that God rewards. It is impossible to make a lifetime of going the extra mile without God pouring out blessing. And others will notice it as well.

We need constancy at home. It is tough to be constantly faithful in discipline, in discipleship, in training, in devotions, in prayer, and in other aspects of our home life. We easily fall out of patterns and habits and only catch ourselves days later that something has slipped. And we think, "Oh, man! I need to get back into that habit." Constancy is a good character trait to develop.

C. We all need to be willing to take risks for Christ

Third, we all need to be willing to take risks for Christ. Ruth took great risks in coming to Israel. She took a great risk in following Naomi's advice to lie down at the feet of Boaz. Risk by its very nature is scary, but there are often great rewards associated with risk. Some of you have taken risks in applying for a vaccine mandate exemption. Some have taken risks in relocation, buying a house, getting a different job, pursuing a spouse. For others, the risk is simply leaving your comfort zone. But all of us should be willing to take risks for Christ.

D. God has a special heart for foreigners and strangers, and like Boaz, so should we

Fourth, the story of Ruth shows us that God has a special heart for foreigners and strangers. Boaz did too. And I believe Boaz is a model for how we ought to treat the foreigners and immigrants who come to America. The law of God repeatedly commands us to not neglect the stranger who comes to our land. And we should evaluate ourselves on how well we keep those laws. I'll just give you a sampling:

Exodus 20:10 commands us not to overwork a migrant worker, but to give them a full Sabbath. Well, that first of all implies that it's OK to have migrant workers, and secondly, that we should treat them with respect.

Exodus 22:21 says, "You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." Or as Jesus said, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Leviticus 19:10 commands citizens to deliberately leave some things that can be gleaned by the poor and the strangers. I love the fact that on Discord you guys and gals are giving away things that you no longer need. That's a kind of gleaning. But think of creative ways we can do that for the poor and the stranger.

Leviticus 19:33-34 is even stronger and commands us to love the stranger as we love ourselves. That's amazing. Let me read that:

Lev. 19:33 “And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. 34 The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Just look up in a Bible concordance the words “stranger,” “alien,” or “foreigner,” and you will see that neither the Trump administration nor the Biden administration had it right. Thomas Sowell, Cal Beisner, Gary North, and many other Biblical economists have demonstrated that authoritarian approaches to the poor and the immigrants do not work well. What do I mean by authoritarian? Well, Gary North writes against both the establishment Republicans and the establishment Democrats when he demonstrates (and I think he demonstrates it very well) how unbiblical and how disastrous tariffs are, and price floors, anti-trust legislation, minimum wage laws, compulsory unionism, restrictions on agricultural production, state licensing of professions, zoning laws, immigration quotas, and a host of other laws. Those all flow from a totalitarian, authoritarian, statist philosophy. And in terms of our present subject, they contradict God’s laws related to the alien. This means that both the Democratic and the Republican parties have for the most part been grossly unbiblical in their policies for immigration. God’s call for treating these down and outers is a radical call to love. And Boaz was an example of that.

Ruth is a great example of the benefits of the right to free travel. In America we no longer have the right to free travel. You’ve got to have a passport, and now it appears that you will also need a vaccine passport. Modern travel laws are not even remotely like the ones they had in Biblical days. And there are calls from Congressmen who want to force every citizen to get a unique medical identifier that contains all your medical information (including that you are vaccine and booster compliant) before you will be able to travel from one state to another. This is all totalitarianism. Even totalitarian Moab was not *that* bad. Moab allowed free travel. So did Israel.

And by the way, Biblical laws related to foreigners also factors into God’s permission to marry a foreigner. In Christ’s genealogy there were two Canaanites (Tamar and Rahab) and one Moabite (Ruth). Moses married an Ethiopian. There is controversy on that subject, but I think the Bible is clear.

E. Your character and work-ethic can overcome prejudice

But a fifth application can be made to the *foreigners* who immigrate to America. Don’t come to America to get free welfare; you’ve got to work for your money. Why was Ruth able to make a go of it in Israel, even though many Israelites were prejudiced against foreigners? It was because Israel didn’t have minimum wage laws, job protectionism, etc. Down through history immigrants were able to better themselves because they were willing to work harder than others, do a better job than others, and work for less pay than others. Because there were no minimum wage laws they were able to prove themselves and show that they were indispensable and work themselves up the pay scale. Minimum wage laws make all that illegal. And when that is illegal, who is the first ones to be unemployed? The ones whom people tend to be prejudiced against. Minimum wage laws may seem like the loving thing to do, but it puts the very ones you are trying to help out of work. The black economist, Walter Williams, in his book, *The State Against Blacks*, gives graphs showing

that there has been a direct correlation between increases in the federal minimum wage level and the rise in unemployment among low-skilled workers and others facing prejudice. Minimum wage laws hurt those who are targets of racial bias since it removes the economic incentive to hire across barriers of bigotry. People like Ruth can prove themselves by working in the worst jobs and gradually climb the economic ladder. The point is that good character and a good work-ethic can overcome prejudice if there is a free market.

F. God loves women and elevates their status

Another lesson seen in this book is that God loves women and elevates their status. We can see this principle because Boaz followed God's law, and God's law gave all kinds of protections to women. It protected the property rights of women. Since there were no male survivors, these women fit the law made by Moses for the daughters of Zelophehad - whom I hope to preach on next week. God didn't want women to be neglected when it came to property.

God's law protected women sexually by making penalties for those who abused women. Boaz as a lover of God's laws protected the women who came to glean in his fields.

So Ruth is a story of how God elevates the status of women. Of course, we have seen that lesson a number of times in this series on women.

G. Your past does not have to dictate your future or hold you back

A seventh lesson that I see from the life of Ruth is that your past does not have to dictate your future or hold you back. I've seen way too many people who are so emotionally chained down by their horrible past that they can't get past it. It cripples them and hinders them from improving. Well, Ruth had a horrible past, yet she refused to let it chain her down. She left the horrible past behind and pressed into the opportunities for the future. And in the same way, your past does not have to chain you down forever. Be driven by God's future call upon your life. Just think of Ruth:

1. She came from a pagan past (like her sister in law)
2. She lost her father-in-law and her husband
3. So far she was barren and unable to have children
4. She must have had enormous pain
5. She must have been nervous about going to Israel
6. She had plenty of reasons to go into a shell and live in obscurity

Yet because of her faith in God, she was able to move forward with confidence and even help her mother-in-law move forward. She had a purpose in life and a calling. Though she had no idea what the future held, she held onto God and His call upon her life. Don't let your past pains keep you from God's upward call. Think of the apostle Paul, who had murdered so many Christians, and who could very easily have become so ashamed of his past that he wouldn't dare face Christians. Yet he said,

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

H. See adversity as a test of faith, not as a reason to cast off faith

The next lesson that I see from her story is that we should see adversity as a test of our faith, not as a reason to cast off faith. Naomi had such weak faith that she didn't pass this test very well initially. Ruth had a faith that in effect said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

How do *you* handle adversity? Does it make you grumble and feel sorry for yourself, or do you resolve to pass the test that God is bringing into your life by moving forward? See adversity as a test from God's hand, and respond appropriately - in a way that will please God.

I. No one is unimportant to God

Yet another lesson is that no one is unimportant to God in His kingdom. He has a plan for the least of these to the greatest of these. It may not seem like you are important to God when you are trekking from Moab to Israel with hardly any reserves and on roads where you could easily be waylaid by bandits. But God was there with them. No one is unimportant to God. Jesus said that the very hairs of your head are numbered and God has committed Himself to caring for you.

J. Believe that God can redeem the messiest of situations

The next lesson is that God can redeem the messiest of situations. If you study much about Israel's land laws, you will realize that there was an unpayable debt on their land. Debt is one kind of messy situation. And I have known people who have gotten into debt up to their necks and they feel paralyzed and hopeless. God may not bail you out with a kinsman redeemer, but Dave Ramsey shows other ways that God has used to get huge numbers of people out of horrible debt.

Your messy life may not be debt; it may be a moral mess - much like the background of Ruth. God can redeem and fix even the messiest of situations if we are willing to get rid of the past and press into God's Biblical blueprints with all of our heart.

K. God is in providential control over even the little things

The next lesson I see is that God is in providential control of both the little things of life and the big things. God controlled Ruth's infertility when married to Mahlon (because it was not God's time for her to have a baby) and He controlled her fertility when married to Boaz. You can trust God on even issues of fertility.

When we did an overview of the book of Ruth some months ago we saw from the first verse to the last verse God's providence had to control the economics of a nation, immigration

laws, bandits deciding not to be on the road at that time, what field Ruth wandered into, romance, the fact that Boaz couldn't find a wife for years, and many other details. And without those details, Ruth wouldn't have married Boaz, and there would have been no King David, and ultimately Jesus would not have been born. But God ordains not just the ends, but all of the means leading up to those ends. We need to get used to seeing God's providence in the tiny and the big things of life and have peace that if God is for us, who can be against us? Proverbs 16:33 says that there is no such thing as pure chance since every casting of the dice is determined by God. That should affect how you feel when you lose a Monopoly game or some other game of chance. Are you a poor sport when you lose fictional games? It might reflect how you respond to the real game of life. It should affect how you react when you stub your toe or hit your finger with a hammer. God is in control of even accidents and chance events. How do we respond to God in those events?

L. Decisions made today often impact future generations

The last application that I see in her life is that decisions made today often impact future generations. You may not realize it at the time, but they do. You can leave a legacy for future generations just by the faithful decisions you make today in the mundane things of life - like gleaning. All the tiny things of this story added up to a story of marriage and a child that would be part of the lineage of David and of the coming Messiah. Be faithful in the small decisions of today and know that at least some of them might impact future generations. And may God receive the glory for our faithful responses to Him. Amen.