

A Love Story – 4
(*There is a Redeemer*)
Ruth 4

The Gathering Place
February 3, 2008

What kind of story do you like to read?

I like stories that keep you in suspense. I also like true stories. But I like them to have a good ending. The stories I like best have happy endings. Stories where good triumphs over evil. Stories where the hero gets the girl. Stories where the bad guys get what they deserve.

That's why I love the Book of God. The Bible tells us that God wipes away all tears from our eyes. It has an ending where *good* triumphs over *evil*. The *devil*, *death* and *hell* are banished forever. But best of all, the *hero* gets the *girl*! Jesus is the hero and the Bible tells us we the church, are His Bride!

The good thing for you and me is that in God's story – ***the bad guys don't get what they deserve!*** God gives grace and mercy to us bad guys and girls! What we deserve He put on Christ. It's called **REDEMPTION**. We're **REDEEMED!** God made something good out of something bad. Buying back what was lost.

The Book of Ruth has all these components in it too.

Ruth is a story of REDEMPTION

Bareness to birth

Widowhood to marriage

Poverty to riches

Bitter to sweet

Idolatry to worship

Devastation to redemption

One of the things we see over and over again is that God takes what looks an awful like a disaster and takes the disaster and turns it into a glorious victory. There is no story that illustrates that better than the story of the trial and crucifixion of God's one and only Son! On Friday the Kingdom of God appeared to have lost the battle, BUT THEN CAME SUNDAY! And the grave couldn't hold Him. Nor could DEATH AND HELL! ***Up from the grave He arose, with a might triumph o'er His foes. He arose a victor from the dark domain, and He lives forever with His saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah, Christ arose!***

God turned defeat into glorious victory!

God can and does do that with you and me too! But we have to let Him have His way in our lives. We need to yield ourselves in obedience to His will and plan, and not take things into our own hands. When we do it, we will only get ourselves into deeper trouble and likely progress toward bitterness against God and our fellow-man.

Before we take that thought further, let's quickly review the story of Ruth.

Elimelech and Naomi, citizens of Bethlehem, take their two sons to the country of Moab to get away from the severe famine in Judea. It was not a good place to go to. Moab was a nation the people of Israel were told by God to have nothing to do with and most of all they were not to give their daughters

to men from Moab nor marry their sons to women from Moab. But Elimelech took things into his own hands and did what God had told them not to do! How many of us do that quite regularly? No, don't put your hands up, we all do. Worse yet we try to create a god who let's us do that kind of thing and we justify our disobedience with all kinds of rationalizations. Some of us did that with the messages of last week concerning "Integrity" and "True Love Waits". Someone has said, ***you don't break the laws of God, the laws of God break you.*** The Word of God is given for the purpose of us living lives free of the damage, destruction, and ruin that sin brings on us. God's plan is to free us from the enemy of our souls, but when we disobey God, we put ourselves into a place where the Devil reigns and he takes us captive and puts us into bondages of all kinds.

1 Corinthians 10:6-11 makes reference to the Old Testament experience of Israel ...

Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. ⁷ Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." ⁸ We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. ⁹ We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. ¹⁰ And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.

¹¹ These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

It goes badly for this family of Israelites living in Moab as it always will when we do it our way instead of God's way. First, Elimelech dies. Kilion and Mahlon each marry a girl from Moab, Kilion marries Orpah and Mahlon, Ruth. But both boys die and so the family of Elimelech is reduced to three widows.

Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem and tries to persuade both her daughters'-in-law to stay in Moab. Orpah stays, but Ruth refuses to stay and more than that indicates that she has become a believer in Naomi's God. That's the first sign of God's plan to redeem the error and resulting disaster of Elimelech's move to Moab. But Naomi's pain and loss is such that she does not see Ruth's coming with her as a blessing at all. She probably sees it as another problem. A young woman that she is going to have to help find a place of safety and security and believes that it is just about impossible for a Moabite to be able to find such a place in Judea.

Naomi testifies to the desperate circumstances she finds herself in, in Chapter 1:20-22

"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. ²¹ I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."

Chapter 2 tells us that Ruth decides to help keep her and Naomi from starving by going to work in the harvest fields as one of the poor people in Bethlehem. Poor people had the right to follow the harvesters and pick up grain dropped or overlooked by the labourers. To appreciate the kind of woman Ruth is you need to know that Jewish tradition says she was brought up in a palace – not the fields. According to that tradition, she was a princess, daughter of Eglon King of Moab. Working hard in the fields had to be difficult for a girl brought up in the palace.

She is led by the Lord to the field of Boaz. Boaz meets Ruth and falls in love with her. Now the Scripture doesn't say that, but if you read between the lines, you know that's what happens. Boaz gives this girl so much attention, that she bows before him with her face to the ground (Ruth 2:10) and exclaims, ***"Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?"***

Boaz tells her all that he has heard about her.

Ruth responds to what he says ...

¹³ ***“May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord,” she said. “You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls.”***

I think that it is here that Boaz falls in love. He invites her to sit beside him and eat with him. Now remember she is not one of his employees, she is just the girl from Moab. Why should he take any interest in her at all? Disagree with me if you like, but I am enough of a romantic to believe that his heart is beating a lot faster and there is a well of love that has burst forth in his heart for this young woman from Moab

But Boaz does not think he stands much chance to win the heart of Ruth. So Ruth, with the help of Naomi, is the one that has to propose. Read Chapter 3:1-10 to get that part of the story

As soon as Boaz knows Ruth’s heart of love for him, he goes right to work to make it possible for them to marry. But there is a problem! This is a good story!!! She proposed marriage to Boaz on the basis that he could fill the role of the KINSMAN-REDEEMER.

Naomi has a field that belonged to Elimelech which she plans to sell to ease the financial stress they are in. However, to keep the land in the family, the provision God gave to Moses for the families of Israel not to lose their inheritance was that a relative would be given first opportunity to act as a KINSMAN-REDEEMER. The other provision was that when there was a widow in the mix the KINSMAN-REDEEMER would marry the widow and the first child from that union would be considered a descendant of the deceased husband for purposes of inheritance. (See Ruth 4:10 ***I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon’s widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records.***)

Boaz is prepared to fill the role. But the problem is there is another man who is a closer relative than Boaz who has to have first chance at being the KINSMAN-REDEEMER.

That brings us to Chapter 4:1-22.

Boaz is a man of action. The very next morning after he discovers Ruth’s love for him, he goes to the gate of the city. God has Mr. “No Name” – the other KINSMAN-REDEEMER - first into the city that morning. Boaz is waiting for him and asks him to sit down with him because there is a matter that he needs to settle with him. Boaz calls for 10 other men to come and witness what now will now take place.

Boaz tells Mr. “No Name” that Naomi wishes to sell a field and that because he is the closest living relative he has first opportunity to buy the field and act as KINSMAN-REDEEMER. He agrees to do that, but then Boaz tells him it will also require that he care for the two widows and that he marry Ruth the Moabite. Mr. “No Name” changes his mind. We are not told exactly why, but it may be that his financial circumstances may not be sufficient to support the additional people. It could be that he is already married and that to introduce another wife and possibly her children would jeopardize the inheritance he wished to pass on to his own children.

Whatever his reasons, he passes on the opportunity and Boaz quickly steps up to the plate and seals the deal. He will be the Kinsman-Redeemer.

Read Ruth 4:13-16

The hero gets the girl. Ruth was married for several years to Mahlon and had no children. But very quickly after she marries Boaz she becomes pregnant. The Bible tells us that ***“the Lord enabled her to conceive”***. She gives birth to a son who is called OBED. Naomi is a delighted grandmother and they all live happily ever after. END OF STORY!?

BUT THAT IS NOT THE END OF THE STORY.

The Book of Ruth ends with a genealogy that tells us that Obed had a son named Jesse whose son was King David.

The only other place Ruth is mentioned in the Bible is in Matthew 1:1-17 where we have the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, Son of God.

In that genealogy there are five women named and all five are wonderful illustrations of God's ability to redeem circumstances and people. Three of them were foreigners. Tamar (Canaanite), Rahab (Canaanite), Ruth (Moabite), Bathsheba (Jew) and Mary (Jew).

This is significant, because in those days women were not usually mentioned in genealogies! They are listed to illustrate that God is no respecter of persons. God is not a racist!!!! Nor is He a bigot. The Scripture makes it clear, in the eyes of God there is ***neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female***. We are ***all one in Christ Jesus***. ***If you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.*** (Galatians 3:28 & 29)

Jesus was sent to earth in order for him to become OUR KINSMAN-REDEEMER!

Hebrews 4:14 to 5:9 tells us He became one of us for that purpose!

The story of Ruth could have had a different ending, an unhappy one. Ruth could have remained in Moab living a life of idolatry and paganism, never knowing the love of her Kinsman-Redeemer!

Your story and mine will have a very different ending too, if we insist on our own way of life and ignore the love of our Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

God, thank you for what You have done for me. I believe You sent Jesus to die for my sins and be my KINSMAN-REDEEMER. Please forgive me for the wrong things I have done and cleanse me from my sin. I invite you into my life and I want live my life with Jesus all of my days. Thank you for hearing my prayer and forgiving me for all my sin. In Jesus' name. Amen.