Jesus, Our True Redeemer

Ruth 4:1-22

Key Verse: 4:14 “The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel!”

I want to review what we have studied in the book of Ruth thus far. In chapter 1 as Ruth became a woman of God, a daughter of Israel, through faith in the God of Naomi, we also became people of God through faith in Jesus Christ. In chapter 2 as Ruth had found a favor with Boaz, so too have we also found favor with God through Jesus. In chapter 3 as Boaz accepted Ruth as his pure bride, Jesus also accepts us as his pure virgin brides. In chapter 4 today we will study about Boaz, who finally redeemed Naomi and Ruth. As I mentioned before, Boaz has the preimage of Jesus in many ways such as his kindness, gentleness, humility, and so on. Today we’ll study deeper meaning beyond his noble character as a redeemer. May the Holy Spirit open and enlighten the eyes of our heart through this story. Amen!

First, Boaz redeemed Ruth (1-10) Here the word ‘redeem’ came from slave markets. To redeem means to pay the price to purchase a slave or to set him free. In the book of Exodus God paid the price to redeem the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt by killing the first-born in the land of Egypt. This is the same as God paying the price for our sin by the blood of Jesus. According to Moses’ law the Jews set a custom to redeem his people who were in very difficult situations. They call a guardian-redeemer or kinsman-redeemer who has the obligation to redeem a relative in serious difficulty. (Lev 25:25-55). Usually, the closest relative had the priority and first right to redeem the difficulties. Boaz, who was the relative of Elemelek, the dead husband of Naomi, promised to redeem Naomi and Ruth, her daughter-in-law.

In chapter 3 that night in the threshing floor Boaz promised Ruth to redeem her. As he promised, Boaz started acting. Look at verse 1. “***Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat down there just as the guardian-redeemer he had mentioned came along. Boaz said, “Come over here, my friend, and sit down.” So he went over and sat down.***” Boaz met the closest guardian-redeemer at the town gate. And he called the ten elders of the town as the witnesses. (2) Then Boaz said to the guardian-redeemer, “***Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.***” (3-4) Boaz gave the first choice to the closest guardian-redeemer. The man answered. “***I will redeem it.”*** (4) The man thought that he would get some financial benefit when he redeems the property. Then Boaz continued. “***On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man’s widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.***” (5) Boaz added the condition for the redemption for Naomi by receiving Ruth, the dead man’s widow. Boaz mentioned ‘the levirate law’ as a requirement to complete the legal transaction. The levirate law is a Jewish law according to Deut 25:25 that a man should marry his brother’s widow to maintain his brother’s name if his brother didn’t have any children and died. Boaz asked the guardian-redeemer to fulfill this levirate law to complete his redemption. What was the reaction of the man? Look at verse 6. “***At this, the guardian-redeemer said, “Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it***.” The guardian-redeemer calculated this and that and finally said, ‘No’ because of the danger of losing his money. He said ‘yes’ first because of the possible financial benefit, but now said ‘no’ because of the possible financial loss. I believe that Boaz knew the weak point of this man, which is greed. I also believe that God gave him wisdom to redeem Naomi and Ruth.

Look at verse 7. “***Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.***” When we finalize our legal action, such as buying or selling houses or land, we usually sign on paper. Our signature is the completion of our final action. But at that time, I think, sandals were expensive and giving a sandal’ meant ‘I will keep the promise because I cannot walk out or run away without wearing sandals.” ***So the guardian-redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it yourself.” And he removed his sandal***. (8) In this way Boaz’s legal redemption for Naomi and Ruth was completed. This is Boaz’s final statement. “***Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, “Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, 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 his hometown. Today you are witnesses!***” (9-10)

As I mentioned before, Boaz has many similar images of Jesus as a redeemer. Ruth was a poor gentile widow, whose destiny was running for her life by picking up leftover grain in another's field. But she found favor with the eyes of Boaz, who loved her. In the same way we were slaves of sin and death. We were hopeless sinners. Our destiny was living in misery and suffering under the power of sin and death. But we were redeemed by Jesus who shed his precious blood on the cross. To redeem us Jesus was hung on the tree and shed his precious blood. Hebrews says that Jesus offered his blood as a ransom for our eternal redemption. (Heb 9:12,15) “*He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption*.” (Heb 9:12). “*--now that he has died as a ransom to set us free from the sins committed under the first covenant.*” (Heb 9:15) Amen! Praise Jesus who is our true and eternal redeemer! Amen!

Second, build up the family of Israel (11-12) After hearing Boaz’s statement, all the elders said, “***We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. Through the offspring the LORD gave you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah***.” (11-12) The elders of the town blessed Ruth, Boaz, and even a child-to-be between the two. They blessed Ruth to the level of Rachel and Leah, who were the wives of Jacob and built up the 12 tribes of Israel through their sons. The elders also blessed Boaz to become great in his town Bethlehem. It is amazing that they also blessed a future baby to become like Perez, who was born between Judah and Tamar as the covenant son. Rachel, Leah, Perez, Tamar, and Judah, all these men and women built up the family of Israel. Indeed, in the future through Ruth God established not only the family of Israel, but also the nation of Israel. Obed, the son whom Ruth bore to Boaz, became the grandfather of King David, who established the kingdom of Israel. From a human point of view Ruth was a poor gentile widow. But when she found favor with God, she became a great mother of a nation Israel and mother of the Messiah Jesus. People often despair about themselves when they think of their unfavorable situation. They complain about their poor human condition. But we must learn from Ruth, who overcame her fatalistic situation and became a great mother of Israel. There is no fatalism and despair for people of God.

Through their blessing on Ruth and Boaz, we also learn that we must bless others. God fulfilled as they blessed Ruth and Boaz. When we bless others with faith and hope, God will bless them as we blessed and prayed. Please bless your children with hope and faith. Even though you bless them without any faith, God will fulfill his will in their lives. Amen!

Third, restore the fortune of Naomi (13-22) Verse 13, this one verse, shows a fast process of Boaz and Ruth’s marriage life. “***So, Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son***.” Recently the West family got two granddaughters. Melissa is busy taking care of her two granddaughters, one in Alabama and the other in Minnesota. She is now in her mid-60s, but she doesn’t care about her age or distance. We see how happy she is when she holds them in her arms. It was the same as Naomi holding her grandson Obed in her arms. What was the response of the women to Naomi? Look at verses 14-15. “***The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth***.” The elders blessed Boaz, and the women praised the LORD who provided Boaz, a guardian-redeemer for Naomi and Ruth. They also blessed Boaz to become famous throughout Israel and to renew Naomi’s life and sustain the old Naomi. They were so thankful to God who brought Ruth to the life of Naomi. They said that one daughter like Ruth is better than seven sons. Indeed, a woman of faith is as worth as 100 or 1,000 men of unbelief. As the Bible proves, God used the women of faith such as Rahab, Deborah, Esther, and other women to build up the family of Israel and protect Israel from their enemies.

Look at verses 16-17. “***Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The women living there said, “Naomi has a son!” And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.***” The name ‘Naomi’ meant ‘pleasant’ or ‘joyful’. But since she moved to the land of Moab, her life was not pleasant. She was very sorrowful. She lost her husband and her two sons in the foreign land. She went there full, but when she came back, she was empty. So, she asked people to call her ‘Mara’ which means.’ bitter’ rather than ‘Naomi’ But now God restored her fortune. Naomi restored her joy. God changed her life from bitter to pleasant. God brought fullness back to Naomi from emptiness through Ruth, her daughter-in-law and a woman of faith. Our God is God who restores. He is the one who brings us back to joy and happiness. He is the one who gives us final victory. In this way the story of Naomi in the book of Ruth finishes with a happy ending. This story started with the death of Naomi’s husband and her two sons, but it finishes with the birth of her grandson Perez. Her story started with emptiness, but now finishes with fullness. Naomi’s life started with sorrow, but finishes with joy. This is what God does for his people. This is the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ died for our sins on the cross and he was buried. His story did not end with his death. God raised him from the dead and opened the gate for heaven to all those who follow him. The story of Jesus finishes in this with a happy ending.

Here we learn that our God is faithful to those who are faithful to him. God was faithful to Ruth who followed the God of Naomi. God was faithful to Naomi who helped Ruth to live by faith not by sight. God was faithful to Boaz who was faithful to his promise and mindful of the needy. Psalm 18:25-26 says, “*To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the devious you show yourself shrewd*.” In conclusion, throughout the whole story of Ruth God’s kindness and faithfulness flows like a mainstream behind the love story of Boaz and Ruth. Through these men and women of faith God built up the family of David, the genealogy of the Messiah Jesus Christ. Above all God restores the fortune of Naomi, the fortune of Israel, and the fortune of his people. Because of this we persevere and endure present sufferings. God will restore our joy and happiness after our days of suffering pass. May God bless you to be faithful to the Lord your God like Ruth. May God restore your fortune and your joy through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen