

Let's open our Bibles tonight to Ruth 3 as we continued our study through our favorite book of the Bible....until next week. Then we'll be changing our favorite book of the Bible to 1 Samuel.

We told you a few weeks ago that the biblical chronology - that which follows one upon another - stops in the book of Judges in chapter 16 with Samuel; and the rest of the book of Judges, as well as this whole book of Ruth, are little vignettes that came out of the time period of the judges. We don't even really know where to place those four chapters at the back of Judges (and these) as far as those 350 years of that judgment period. But the Judges was that horrible time period where everyone did what was right in their own eyes, and nobody sought the LORD, and there really wasn't a leader, and there was a generation after Joshua that kind of perpetuated that didn't know the LORD and didn't know His power. And so you find it was a horrible time. And we went through it with you: there was this syndrome - seven steps. The nation was given rest. Rest led to rebellion. Rebellion led to retribution. Retribution, at some point among God's people, led to repentance. When repentance came, so did redemption. And then rest. And this cycle just continued on, generation after generation.

But in the midst of that is this story of Ruth which is, like I said, a breath of fresh air. But it didn't really start out that way. Eighty-five verses; fifty of them are dialogue. We meet a lady named Naomi and her husband, Elimelech. They were wealthy farmers. They had lived in Bethlehem before, literally, it was called Bethlehem. They were there for years. They were well known, they were well established. Their lives were godly and biblical, and everything that we know about their past relationship with the LORD was good. They lived in Bethlehem, the "house of bread" in the Land of Promise. When God brought a famine to bear upon the land (it was one of those retribution times of the seven that are listed, when the people had really gone away - God used it to get their attention), rather than waiting it out, as Elimelech could have done with his wife and children, he decided he would leave the "house of bread" to go to a place called Moab, a place that was across the Jordan River in the mountains along the Dead Sea. It was a place God had judged, a place God had cursed for the way that they had dealt with God's people coming out of Egypt. But he left, and he hoped to just kind of ride out the

storm or, if you will, the lack of food and provision until that thing would pass, and then he could return home to his land and all. And so he leaves with the idea (and we read it in chapter 1) of temporarily avoiding the consequences. He takes with him his wife and his two sons: one of them was named Mahlon - it means "to be sick;" the other boy's name was Chilion, which means "to cry." We suspect that both of the boys were born during this time of famine and may very well have been some of the dad's argument with his own heart, "Well, we've gotta do it for the kids' sake." Whatever, he left desiring to escape, and he hoped to come back as soon as the famine went away.

Unfortunately, he didn't return. For the better part of ten years (they're all there in chapter 1 of this book), he died (dad), both boys die, and Naomi, the wife, is left with two daughters-in-law, both of whom want to go with her back to the land; now she wants to return home. One of them decides, "This is really not the place for me. I really do want to stay with my family and back to the gods that I serve." But Ruth, watching her mother-in-law, Naomi, go through these great losses in her life, also saw in her life this repentant heart. And in her desire to go back home to Bethlehem, it was really that walking back to the LORD that occurred in Naomi's life. She just wanted to be right with God. She had kind of gotten stuck in this whole mess, and now she had lost literally everything that was dear to her. Except now she has a daughter-in-law that not only loves her but wants to forsake the gods of her ancestors and worship the God of Israel; and not only that - return to the land of Israel where the LORD had said of the Moabites, "They should not be allowed to dwell among us for ten generations" (Deuteronomy 23:3) or, in other words, forever. It wasn't a place she was welcome, and yet she had become convinced, watching her mother-in-law, that the God that she served was real, and she could depend upon Him. And so Naomi's life of repentance really did affect her daughter-in-law greatly. She returned home with repentance and with humility. She was welcomed in town because she'd been there for a long time; but nobody helped her.

And, in chapter 2, we see Ruth beginning to go out - she's younger - and work the fields as a poor gleaner. A gleaner is someone that didn't own land. In fact, it would seem that Naomi had sold all that she had ever had or held to get back and be able to get back on her feet. But Ruth went out to work the fields. She would follow the harvesters. She would pick up whatever was left. The law in Israel had a welfare system that would allow the poor to work for their gain if they were willing to. And so she went out. And we started to see how God began to guide her

life. In fact, if you go to chapter 2:3, it says that when she went out she "just so happened" to end up in one field of a man named Boaz. Now, in the days of judges, very few people were following the law which would have allowed the gleaners. I'm sure there were a lot of rich farmland owners who wanted nothing to do with letting anybody have anything. But he wasn't one of them. He was a godly man who had survived the famine and was back to being very productive. The famine had passed. And it turned out that this fellow, Boaz, was a relative to Ruth's husband, to her father-in-law, if you will, a near relative. And she showed up at this field on the first day. She worked hard. He took notice of her. He asked about her. His staff said, "Oh, man. She's been workin' all day, took very few breaks." And he realized who she was. He was aware of how kind she'd been to her mother-in-law, how she had gone to serve and been faithful and had asked about the LORD. And so he started to make provision for her. He told her to go work in the front rather than at the back so she'd get the first glean, not the last. He told his workers, "Hey, just drop some stuff every once in a while for her" - handfuls of purpose is what he called it - so that she could not have to work so hard. And by the time that she went home the first night, she went home with so much food that Naomi looked, and she went, "The LORD's doin' somethin' here." And she had come home calling herself "bitter" because she figured, "I'm done. I disobeyed God. I ran off. I lost my husband, my children. God will never bless me again." And now there was this inkling, at least in the life of her daughter-in-law, that God was working. She asked where she had been serving, and she said, "Well, I've been with this guy named Boaz. He let us sit at lunch. He told me to get water." She goes, "Oh, I know Boaz, and he's one of my husband's relatives. And, oh, you just be faithful. God has blessed." And we read, at the end of chapter 2, that for the next three months or so she spent gleaning in the fields of Boaz.

So chapter 1 was the resolve of love. Ruth resolved in her heart, "Where you go, I'll go. Wherever you live, I'll live. God forbid that, except for death, I would be separated from you." She made a commitment to the LORD in Moab. In chapter 2, we saw love's response in the fields of Bethlehem, as she ran into Boaz, who took a great liking to her. He was much older, he was very wealthy. He probably was..... everyone had their eye on this man.....he would have been quite a catch. And yet he admired Ruth. He was interested that the LORD had brought her into his field, and he began to kind of look in and find out about her. And so, for the next three months or so, she works in the fields.

Tonight, in chapter 3 and in chapter 4, we want to look at love's request and love's reward, as Ruth asks Boaz to be redeemed by him, and it leads to a wedding. All of this plays out on the threshing floor of Boaz and finally in the gates of the city of Bethlehem. The book of Ruth begins pretty quickly with a funeral, and it ends with a family; it starts with a famine, ends with a wedding celebration and abundant provision. And really what we want to look at tonight and walk away with is watching them see the end of God's work and His provision, even upon lives that have been cursed. Naomi really did believe she'd brought all this on herself for going where she didn't belong; and at least she was partly right in that - she went to the wrong place. Ruth was an innocent bystander to God's judgment in the sense that she belonged to a race of people, a group of people, that God had summarily judged because of their behavior. Both of them find grace with God and blessing: one who had no way in and yet found a way in, in God's mercy and in His grace, and the other one that was able to return and see again His restoration and His favor.

Before we read the two chapters, I want you to know, or at least think about, two important Old Testament biblical laws that kind of control these last two chapters. The first one is a law called the law of the kinsman redeemer. Most of the verses are in Leviticus 25. It was a regulation to govern the lives of God's people from a political standpoint, an oversight standpoint. But the law basically said that if one of your family members lost property - was foreclosed upon, was sold into slavery because of a debt that they could not pay - that there should be a willingness on the part of you, as part of the family, to go and pay the debt, redeem the land, redeem the slave, and somehow take the loss, if you needed to, to keep into the family that which God had given you by division, by right. So there was this obligation to family. It would last until the fiftieth year, the Jubilee Year, which was called a fixed relief or release year. And the word "redeem" in almost all of those verses is the word "*goel*," a redeemer, if you will. It was designed by God just to keep the land in the hands of those to whom it had been given as a Land of Promise. From a spiritual standpoint, it is obviously the fulfillment of what Jesus came to do in being our "*Goel*," our Redeemer, in that we were lost in sin, we were bound. We suffered the loss of relationship with God due to sin, and yet He comes to pay the price so that, at the end of the day, we, as part of His creation and the ones that He loved, could be brought back to Him, and we could be given what God intended us to have all along. The responsibility for redemption fell on the next of kin. Jesus took a body, became our next of kin. And so when you get to the New Testament, and you keep seeing this word "redeemer" and "redemption," it is a constant reaching back to that law.

The other principle that you find mostly in Deuteronomy 25 is called the levirate marriage, and the levirate marriage was applied only to the eldest brother of one who had died. And it was applied specifically if you had an older brother, and you were the next older brother, and your brother got married, and he didn't have any children, and he died - which was the case here as well - that that brother should take upon himself the obligation of taking his brother's wife as his own and then having a child, and that firstborn son should be named for his father who had died (or his brother, if you will), and that way he would have his name continue in the land, and it wouldn't die out. It was designed to, again, perpetuate the relationship in the family. An elder brother in that position could, for honorable reasons, refuse: maybe he's already married, maybe he isn't in a position to be able to have children. If that was so, then, by law (Jewish law, now) that obligation would be passed along to the next elder brother if there was one. If the elder brother refused to follow that law that you find in Deuteronomy 25, for dishonorable reasons, the woman - who now is without a child, without a husband, and is in line to have help from the family and not getting it - could take this brother to the chief in the city - to the rulers in town - have him stand at the gate, and then spit in his face and declare that, "This is the man whose shoe was loosed," and take his shoe. And that was a cussword, man. "You were the guy who had his shoe loosed" in a bad way. "You shirked your responsibility." His sandal was removed. You can read it applied in Genesis 38 (if you want to go and read a story of where that was applied). Later on, in the New Testament, you might remember that the Sadducees came to Jesus (there in Matthew 22), and they said to Him, "Now, look, Jesus, Moses said that if a man dies, has no children, his brother should marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Well there was a guy now - there's a family that had seven brothers, and the first died after he got married, and then the second died." And they went through all the seven. And then they said to Jesus, "So, last of all the woman died. Now when we get to the resurrection, who's she gonna be married to?" And they tried to use this levirate marriage against Him. And Jesus said, "Well you guys are havin' a problem because you don't know the Scriptures nor the power of God. In the resurrection, you aren't given in marriage at all. You'll be like the angels in heaven." But they tried to pull this out of that Old Testament practice and say, "Well, how does that fit into Your plans of being in heaven?" So, the levirate marriage was only for the brothers. It was an obligation to continue the name of others.

So these two laws of God were both merciful, and they were kind. They were never, in the Bible, mandated together although they could certainly cross paths

(as here in Ruth), where they both applied, and they were both fulfilled. The law of the "*goel*" was optional. It was something that you should do, but there isn't any obligation where you have to redeem the land. If you don't, someone else will. You usually get the first shot at it if you're the closest relative, but that could be passed along without much consequence. The other law - the law of marriage and having the son - that was obviously an obligation that fell upon the eldest brother. But, again, it's a duty that had to be accepted to be carried out, and if you didn't care about the law, I guess you'd just walk away. But those were the laws that were applied. So, keep those two laws in mind as we go through these coming chapters.

We'll start at verse 1 of chapter 3. Just so you know, verse 23 (of chapter 2) tells us that Ruth worked through the end of the barley harvest and through the end of the wheat harvest, which would mean that she was probably at work for at least three months. So there's at least three months that pass between verse 23 (of chapter 2) and chapter 3, verse 1. Verse 1, "Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, 'My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?' " After three months of watching all of this transpire, and Ruth constantly coming home with way too much grain (she knew she was somebody's favorite), Naomi brushed the idea of believing that the LORD was putting a plan together. She'd certainly been delivered from her bitterness by now. Her fear that God would never use her again, I think, has dissipated, and now she's looking not at the things which are but at the things which might be. And so she says to her daughter-in-law (with kind of renewed hope), "I think it's my job to be sure that you're covered." I mean, from a historical standpoint, Ruth's plight was she was an unprotected and uncovered woman, a widow - that's tenuous, at best - and she was a Moabite in Israel. Yet with her life now fully committed to the LORD, Naomi saw the work of God He was doing in Ruth's life and wondered if He didn't have a plan for her beyond just getting food for the family - that maybe God had some plans for her to get with this guy that she'd been working with, this family member that she looked to. After all, He had put her in the fields of Boaz. Of all people, she didn't but believe he was the closest kinsman to her dead husband, Elimelech, that he had. Obviously, Boaz was showing a genuine interest in Ruth, though he was extremely old by comparison. I suspect he's one of the most available bachelors in Bethlehem. I don't know how many moms had tried setting him up with their daughter, but Ruth has been there for three months, and she had done well in her humility, and God had begun to use her.

So here's mothers-in-law, you know? Mothers-in-law are always the same, right? So here's mom, and she's saying, "What if Boaz is to be the *'goel'* for our family, and for her son, who had died, "and after marrying Ruth that now he could marry Ruth, and they could have a son, and he could be named after my son? And what if the LORD did that?" And I'm sure her eyes were lighting up, "We'll have grandkids!" I'm sure she was just elated, if you will. So she feels a bit of responsibility, notice from verse 1. "Hey, Ruth, what do you think about taking a step of faith and going over to make a marriage proposal of sorts to Boaz? I want to help you. I want it to be well with you."

Verse 2, " 'Now Boaz,' " she said, " 'whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do.' " So she lays out for Ruth, who is new to everything here, the proper procedure of the day to make a request into the possibility of seeing if God maybe was at work on the other side of the equation. I know you read this, and you say, "Well, that's extremely odd." But it was the culture. Along with the role of the levirate may come this "*'goel'*" as well, this buying back. And so, if nothing else, Naomi, in her mind, was saying, "This could work out great!" And I'm sure that that's the way that she was praying. So she says to Ruth, after these many months, "Go home, and take off your widow's garb, the black that you were wearing. Go put on your best clothes. Go present yourself humbly to Boaz while he's in the threshing floor." The threshing floor, in most of the Old Testament, took place on the top of mountains. When wheat or any harvest grain was brought in, the stalks were beaten on rocks. It would break away the chaff from the seed, like that thing that gets caught in your mouth when you're eatin' popcorn (you want to get rid of that). So they would beat it. And the mountains tend to be a good place - on the top of hills. The wind blows. You just throw the grain, and the chaff is light - it gets blown away. Usually at night because it's cooler and windier. And so this was a pretty normal practice, if you will. So he was up actually harvesting the grain that his land had brought forth. So, she gives her some advice.

Notice in verse 5, she says to her (Ruth does, to her mother-in-law), " 'All that you say to me I will do.' " So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to

all that her mother-in-law instructed her." This girl has changed a lot, hasn't she? She comes from this idolatrous Moabite culture. She loses her husband, falls in love with her mother-in-law, has worked the better part of the summer just straining to make provision. She's now willing to follow the practices of God, which have to seem extremely odd to her, and she's doing things God's way, still submitted so much to her mother-in-law. So, in the field, Ruth had been working for her and her mother-in-law's gain. Here at the threshing floor, she was going to offer herself to a man. That's literally what this is all about, right? "I'm gonna submit myself to this man for a decision." From a spiritual standpoint, it's a great picture because it's the picture of you and me as saints. When we come to the Lord, a lot of times we serve the Lord for our own benefit, "God, will You bless me, and will You meet my needs, and will You answer my prayers? And what will You give me?" But the more I grow (mature) the more I have to come to the threshing floor, which is a place where God begins, in my life, to separate the chaff, if you will, from the wheat; and that only happens when you come to lay yourself at Jesus' feet, and you say, "I'm Yours. I serve at Your pleasure. What do You want to do with me?" as Greg was sharing (a testimony given before tonight's study). You just have to make yourself available to the will of God even if you don't see it, maybe, as the best choice for your life at the moment. We go from the fields of growing - what can God do for me? - to the threshing floor - what can God do with me?

And notice, in verse 4, Naomi's counsel was, "He'll tell you what to do." I love it. If the LORD's gonna lead us, then we have to be able to listen to what He has to say. So, she went to lay at his feet - a real action of submission in any culture, a dependence. It is the best place to be. Mary and Martha. You check with Mary. Every time you see Mary in the New Testament, she's at Jesus' feet. She'll never get out there and make coffee for you, but she'll love hangin' out with Jesus' feet. Martha will get you coffee but won't really be able to tell you anything about sittin' at Jesus' feet.

There was a sculptor, maybe twenty years ago. His name was Thors Walton. And he had a whole bunch of sculptures. He's a pretty famous guy. But the one that he made that drew the most attention was he had a sculpture of Jesus positioned in such a way that you couldn't see His smiling face unless you kneeled down at His feet. You had to get way down there and look, "Oh, there He....." and He was really smiling, you know? He was glad that you had come. But to see His face, the plaque said, "If you want to see His face, get on your knees." That was cool. I liked it a lot.

So, here's Ruth - submissive to her mother-in-law, submissive to the God that she has come to know, willing to put herself in a very humble place and make herself available to a man that has a great interest in her, and I suspect she did in him as well. But she didn't know. "How does this work out?" It was a new thing for her, and she was just going to trust whatever the LORD was going to do.

Verse 6, "She went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down. Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet." A lot of animals running around; this wasn't one of them. "And he said, 'Who are you?' So she answered, 'I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative.'" "Take me under your wings," literally, "spread your skirt over me." It is a request; not immoral but an appeal to be covered and married and cared for and accepted. It is the same terminology that you will find in Ezekiel 16:8, when the people turned to the LORD, and they cried out to Him, and He said, "This time in My love I will cover My wings over you and cover your nakedness," and He uses the same phraseology, "I'll cover you, I'll protect you, I'll be the One that watches over you." That was her request. "I want you to take care of me." She makes herself available to this man.

Verse 10 tells us, "Then he said, 'Blessed are you of the LORD, 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. 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. Now it is true that I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you - good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the LORD lives! Lie down until morning.'" A marriage proposal made by a bride to a groom. A godly request in line with the will of God to do things His way. He was not a brother. He had no legal obligation. He was a close family member. Certainly he could have helped with the redemption of the land, which obviously she had lost. Boaz is blown away. Here's what he's blown away with....."You want the likes of me," the senior citizen in the story, or the older guy, anyway. And he saw that as virtuous and godly that she would request a "*goel*" to honor her dead husband's name in Israel. She was selflessly going after an old fogey like himself. "Your

desire to do what God wants, and you'll certainly be blessed." Understand this, at least from all that we know - Boaz had everything in life that he could have wantedexcept a wife. I mean, he had the respect of his city, he had the respect of his workers, he was profitable in everything that he did. What he didn't have was a bride. Jesus has everything that He needs, and He wants a bride. And He gives you the choice of being His bride or not. You can't force love; you can invite. Right? You can wait upon the heart to turn. You can wait and watch people to turn. And here you see that same kind of picture. You're the one He wants. Anyone who comes to Him and lays at His feet and looks in His face and surrenders his life, God will cover. No way will He cast you out. That's what He's longing for. The Lord has all things. But the things that He wants, He leaves in the hands of the decision makers in your life. He holds you responsible for them. But, hey, if you come willingly, He can't but embrace you and love you.

So, he says to Ruth, "Look, don't worry about it. I'll do all that you say. You have a great reputation in town. You're a virtuous woman. Your desire has not been opportunistic. You haven't been out trying to hustle. You've been faithful, and you've been a woman of great faith. There's only one little hitch." What is that? "There's a closer kinsman than I." And I can just see Ruth go, "You've gotta be kidding. All of this, and you're number two? I thought God had put this all together. You have to be kidding me!" I'm sure that, from the story, neither Ruth, obviously, nor Naomi were aware of this man because they were pretty convinced this was the guy. Boaz said, "No, no, no. I've checked it out for myself." I suspect he's been lookin' into this. "There's a guy that's just one step ahead when it comes to being in line." So, verse 13, "All is not lost. Just let me work on it. The LORD will have His way. We have to submit to Him." Difficult as it must be, considering that he had a great love for Ruth - his desire was certainly for her - his first devotion (this guy's a pretty good guy) is to the LORD. And so he said, "Just sleep on it," and I'm sure that Boaz rolled over, went to sleep with a prayer on his lips, "Oh, LORD, please.....please." (Pastor Jack says this in a pleading tone.)

Verse 14, "So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, 'Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.' Also he said, 'Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it.' And when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley, and laid it on her. Then she went into the city. When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, 'Is that you, my daughter?' Then she told her all that the man had done for her. And she said, 'These six ephahs of barley he gave me; for he said to me, "Do not go empty-

handed to your mother-in-law." Then she said, 'Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.' " He's gonna take care of it today. So he instructs Ruth to go home to protect her character; sends her home at dawn. "Don't tell anybody you've been laying at my feet because, really, there's another guy's feet you should have been laying at. But you didn't know it. And so there's no evil done here." She goes home to Naomi. She tells her everything that had happened. She brings home more barley than she's ever had. I guess barley was the rose of the day - 1300 B.C. Back in chapter 2, by the way, verse 17, she brought home an ephah of barley. It was a day's work - it was four gallons dry weight. He gave her nearly twenty-five gallons of dry; more than a dozen roses, that's what I'm thinkin'. Naomi realizes, hearing from her daughter-in-law, that this man loves her and desires to bless her. He assures her that he'll go and do everything he could. Her counsel is to wait upon the LORD and let the LORD work it out. Hard counsel to hear. Psalm 62:1 says, "Truly my soul silently waits for God." Pretty good verse. And there's that Jeremiah verse that we know that the thoughts God thinks towards us are thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give us a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11). So she had to sit on pins and needles. She'd been up half the night. I don't know how well she slept at his feet. She'd done all that she could. Now she'd have to let the LORD do the rest. And so, in her life and for her life, she has to hand over the most important things to her life to God. "LORD, You handle it." And she gave it to Him.

Well, chapter 4, we switch to the city gates. We read, in verse 1, "Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold," (again, there's that word both in Hebrew and in Greek which means "check this out, this is very different, don't miss this") "the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by." Just happened to come by. "So Boaz said, 'Come aside, friend,' " (want a cigar? No, I don't know) " 'sit down here.' So he came aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, 'Sit down here.' So they sat down." So the gates of the city - if you've been with us to Israel, we've been able to show you - the entrance to the city was usually the regular place of business. Outside was where the legal transactions took place, where the court would meet, where the king would sit, where the judges would be gathered together, where the forums would be held. Everything happened in the gate of the city. They don't want to let you in the city because you could be a problem, and that's why they have a wall and a gate. So Boaz, as an official, a judge, an elder, not only is able to grab the guy that he's talking about but then he gathers together some of the elders from Bethlehem as

well, sits them all down and says, "Look, I've got a thing. I've got to work this out." And so he calls a meeting, if you will, that morning.

"Then he said," verse 3, "to the close relative, 'Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.' " So there's why we know that she's no longer a landowner. " 'And I thought to inform you, saying, "Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you." And he said," (without batting an eye) " 'I will redeem it.' " Yeah, this isn't going so well. "Be a *goel*.' " "I will." The man had a good heart. His response that is quick would indicate that he's a godly man. At least he wants to do what's right before the LORD. He's willing to pay for the land to give it back to the family. He also, no doubt, realizes that Naomi has no successor - she doesn't have a husband, she doesn't have any sons. So eventually this gained land would come back to him. So we can at least wonder if maybe that was one of the motivations, but we're not sure. But his answer is pretty quick, "I'll do it."

Verse 5 says, "Then Boaz said, 'On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance.' " And now he calls upon him to consider the second part, the second law. Having suggested to him the privilege of being the *goel*," he now reminds him of the moral, if you will, and ethical duty to Ruth and to Mahlon, Naomi's son, that there was no one left to carry on his name or the property. "So, hey, you can pay, but in the same way that you pay, you really should step in now and take care of the family in marrying the daughter-in-law, raising up a child and all." And so he lays on him this cost. The land redemption was costly, but this would be even harder.

So the man's response, in verse 6, "And the close relative said, 'I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it.' " So the cost of marrying in, having a son, being involved with that, was too great. We don't know if he had limited resources, enough to redeem the land without spending money that maybe his kids were waiting upon. Maybe his wife had died. He had only the children, maybe, to take care for. We don't know. But he just was not in a position to be able to do the moral thing or the right thing by Ruth although, at least, he comes across as a guy that wanted to do what was right in the eyes of the LORD. And so was Boaz.

Everything seemed to be on the up-and-up. "Yeah, I'll buy that out for her because I'm gonna get that back." "Well, yeah, there's more than that. You're gonna have to have a son. You have to leave that land to the son. You have to raise up a name. This is a big investment and a big..... This can take you a lot and cost you a lot." And, "Yeah, I can't. I'm not in a position to do that. But if you want to, you can." And I'm sure Boaz then put his hat on backwards and danced a little bit.

Verse 7, "Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was a confirmation in Israel. Therefore the close relative said to Boaz, 'Buy it for yourself.' So he took off his sandal." Now remember, the dishonor (you can go back and read it), if you're dishonored, you got spit at. Right? And you were given a bad title, "This is the man whose shoe was loosed," kind of like taking off of his.....it was an insult. But this was an honorable, if you will, exchange. So he takes off his shoe, denoting the rendering of a rightful claim or a transfer of ownership right before the elders. And Boaz is now in a legal position to do what's been in his heart - to redeem the property of Naomi to give it back to her so the land will be hers again and then to take Ruth as a wife, raise a child named the firstborn Mahlon, and then to continue his name. So he's getting everything he wants, and God has put this thing together for Ruth and her family.

Verse 9, "And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, 'You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, from the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. You are witnesses this day.' And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, 'We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.' " Those are two names for the same place - one a very early name, the other a much later name. Verse 12, " 'May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the LORD will give you from this young woman.' " So, in verse 11, we see the elders ratifying the process, and then they do something really cool at their court meeting - they pray for Ruth and for Boaz. That would be kind of cool - the court makes a judgment, then they pray for you. I don't know if we'll ever see it, but you see it here. "May your family be as fruitful as Leah and Rachel, from whom came the nation of Israel," if you will.

"May your family be like Perez," (chapter 38 of Genesis) "born to Tamar and Judah, and then be blessed, in fact, like Perez." Now if you jump over to verse 18 for a minute, it says, "Now this is the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron; Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon; Salmon begot Boaz," (now we're at Boaz) "and Boaz had a child named Obed; Obed had a child named Jesse, who had a child named David." So the lineage that the LORD now moves Ruth into is a lineage that will lead itself down to Jesus in Matthew's record of the lineage of Joseph. God certainly answered the prayers of these elders at the gate. Through Jesus, we are of the family of Ruth and Boaz. Pretty interesting picture.

So what does Boaz do? Here's a good picture of him being like Jesus. He purchases a field to obtain the bride. He doesn't need another field. He doesn't need another possession. The guy has got everything he would ever need. But what he wanted was the bride. When you go to the New Testament, in Matthew 13:44, the Lord said, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure that's hidden in a field, and when a man finds that treasure that is hidden there, with joy he sells everything he has so that he can purchase the field." But he doesn't need the field; he wants the treasure. That's why the Lord came for us. He came to give His life so that we could belong to Him.

Well imagine, now, if you're Boaz going over to Ruth's house to tell her the good news. Verse 13, "So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi," (I guess they're talkin' to her now) " 'Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel! And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him.' " The blessings of the ladies. Notice that she's just called Ruth now; the words "the Moabitess" are no longer used. No, no, no. She's covered, now, by her redeemer, and God has blessed their union with a son. I love verse 15, that Ruth "was better than seven sons to you," which is quite a word considering the culture. They didn't value women much; everybody was happy with boys because they could work the fields. But this was....what a great compliment to Ruth. Right? "Who can find a virtuous woman? She's far above rubies" (Proverbs 31:10). So Naomi was gone and bitter but now has found the grace of God and is home, rejoicing.

Verse 16 says, "Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him." She did what every mother-in-law does, and grandma. "Also the neighbor women" (came over because that's how neighbor women are) "gave him a name, saying, 'There is a son born to Naomi.' And they called his name Obed." Mind your own business. (Laughing) I have no idea. "He is the father of Jesse, the father of David." The word "Obed" means one who serves.

The story starts in unbelief and sin and ends up with trusting the LORD, watching His blessings; and the Moabites, as a people, were cursed but Ruth finds life in Jesus' lineage as she comes, by faith, to Boaz. So, there's the generations, there's the relationship. And isn't it interesting that Jesus is now the type. Right? He's our "*Goel*," He's our Near Kinsman. He became flesh. He took a body. He suffered in all ways without sin so that we could be redeemed by His blood (Hebrews 4:15). That's the redemption we have. So when you read "Redeemer," remember this story. Right? Put yourself in that understanding again. That's what God came to do in redeeming us.

Next week, we're going to start our favorite book in the Bible - the book of 1 Samuel. Here's your job: read chapter 1, and pick out three lessons that you think chapter 1 is meant to teach you. And then we'll get together next week and discuss it together. Chapter 1, that's your homework. Don't forget. Twenty-eight whole verses. That's four verses a day.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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