

Series: Ruth

Sermon Text: Ruth 4

Date: 5.30.2021

Title: Redeeming Love

MPT: God's faithfulness to his promise to Abraham brings blessing to Boaz, Ruth, Naomi. God blesses future generations through the faithfulness of these three.

MPS: The Redeeming love of God is your past, present, and future

Memorial Day Intro

Good morning Mercy Church. Happy Memorial Day weekend! President Lincoln, in the Gettysburg address, called dying for one's country the last full measure of devotion. And he said we are to figure out a way, however small, to honor those who sacrificed their lives by devoting ourselves to the country. The whole speech is a little more than a paragraph. And yet it has stood for more than 150 years and I encourage you as a citizen of this country to read it. Now as Christians we submit ourselves first to God. That is our first citizenship. But secondly we are Christians in a time and place and we are to bring God's purposes to bear in our time and place. So you won't see an American flag in our auditorium. Not because we dislike America. No we are actually called as Christians, according to Romans 13, to be model citizens of our country. There is no flag because we will not conflate our primary citizenship with our secondary citizenship. And our worship gathering, which represents our church body, is for all peoples of the earth. But along with our country I want to recognize

and honor the sacrifice of our soldiers who've died fighting for their country. For those families who've lost loved ones in the service we honor you today and want to offer any comfort or help we can to you.

Hey let me pray for our time in God's word. PRAY

We are going to be in the book of Ruth this morning. Ruth chapter 4. If you are new to the bible it is the 8th book in. It's only 4 chapters and it is a GREAT starter for you in bible reading. You could read the whole thing in 15 minutes and you'll have read a book of the bible! But just because its short doesn't mean it is shallow. The depths of God's love are on display in full.

We'll be in this chapter both this week and next week. It's the final chapter in the story and it draws out the main theme of Ruth so powerfully that I just believe we need two weeks to fully embrace the message for us. Here's the main idea for us today:

**The Redeeming Love of God is for you.
For your past, present, and future**

The Redeeming love of God. That's the theme today. And my prayer is that your heart will be like a campfire that gets going in the morning after smoldering at night. You know how you can take hot coals and just fan them a little and the fire will light up? For some of you, man your love for God has been smoldering. It's there, the fire isn't all the way out, but you

haven't felt active flames in a while. I hope seeing God's redeeming love in Ruth 4 lights a fresh fire in you. For others I hope it ignites a flame that's never been there before.

Here's what we are going to do. I'm going to take us through the scene that unfolds ok. And then I'm going to show you How God's redeeming love is for your past, present, and future.

1 Boaz went to the gate of the town and sat down there. Soon the family redeemer Boaz had spoken about came by. Boaz said, "Come over here and sit down." So he went over and sat down.

Context cause if you are new you are like who is Boaz? Who is he talking to? I can't tell you everything. You can read up. Like I said. Short story. Boaz is our protagonist in this story. He's a middle aged farmer who has lived in the same town his whole life. A town called Bethlehem. who has a great reputation as a God honoring man and great boss. And he's got a love interest. A widow named Ruth. Ruth is not from Bethlehem. She's moved here from another country called Moab. She moved because her mother-in-law Naomi, also a widow, IS from Bethlehem and when Naomi decided to go home Ruth decided to go with her.

Short story even shorter – We learn that Boaz "happens" to be one of Naomi's Kinsman Redeemers. Which is a Jewish legal term that means a man who has the legal "dibs" to marry the widow of his relative. We'll see more about that today in chapter 4. All that to say...As Boaz and Ruth fall in love it seems like all is heading to marriage EXCEPT – there is a closer

relative who has dibs before Boaz. (Now please be gracious to me with dibs. That's me contextualizing to middle schoolers in here who may not understand the term first right of refusal).

So when Ruth proposes marriage to Boaz – yes she proposed to him because she was a go getter. Boaz says well, first I gotta talk to the guy who is in line before me. And THAT is who Boaz just told to come over and sit down. Boaz is

2 Then Boaz took ten men of the town's elders and said, "Sit here." And they sat down.

Every step of the way in his endeavors Boaz is trying to be above reproach. Ten elders – you might be wondering...Were these guys just around the gate Boaz is sitting at? YES. For you and I, gates are just things you go through to get somewhere. But in ancient cities the gate represents the center of commerce and business. Because you had homes on top of each other and streets were almost like alleys. The gate is the place that had the largest open common area. And the elders of the town did usually hang out there. And Boaz calls over 10 guys so that there are AMPLE witnesses to the integrity of Boaz's attempt to uphold God's law.

3 He said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has returned from the territory of Moab, is selling the portion of the field that belonged to our brother Elimelech. 4 I thought I should inform you: Buy it back in the presence of those seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you want to redeem it, do it. But if you do not want to redeem it, tell me

so that I will know, because there isn't anyone other than you to redeem it, and I am next after you."

OK what stands out SO OBVIOUSLY is that at this point...Boaz...DOESN'T MENTION RUTH! It's tough to know whether this is a strategy to be able to discern this guy's motives. Maybe he wants to leave Ruth out of it entirely since he doesn't know how that will sway the man. We don't know. We know Boaz isn't a young guy, he's been through his share of negotiations so it's safe to assume he knows how to negotiate in a fair yet shrewd way.

"I want to redeem it," he answered.

That's a setback for Boaz. Because he wants to marry Ruth. But, Boaz's faithfulness to his God goes before his personal desires. So he says

5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from Naomi, you will acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the deceased man, to perpetuate the man's name on his property."

That's such a big lesson here ya'll. He trusts God and it would be dishonoring to God to violate God's law in order to be with Ruth. You only do that if you truly trust the Lord. Tinder says swipe and satisfy the flesh. The world says satisfy the desires of the flesh. Hollywood tells Boaz to follow his heart, sneak off and grab Ruth and ride off into the sunset. Can't you see that? Music intensifies...I'll meet you back at the threshing floor. Sells everything and they live on love. So dumb. That's not Boaz. Boaz is smart & above all God honoring. So he wants to make sure this guy knows what he is getting into. This land comes with a responsibility. See Ruth is a widow of the rightful

owner of this land. And whoever Redeems this land...has the responsibility to marry Ruth and to provide an heir. See the first son that Ruth has with her new husband, will also be legally seen as her first husband's son. So in effect the land will be that son's land when he grows up. And he will be an heir to whatever share his biological father has.

6 The redeemer replied, "I can't redeem it myself, or I will ruin my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption, because I can't redeem it."

This guy says no thank you. I will ruin my own inheritance. He is concerned about his legacy. About his own name. Instead of sacrificing himself for another, he makes an attempt to preserve his own legacy. And in a great stroke of ironic warning to us who would do the same...there is no record of his name anywhere.

Gospel motivated Self-sacrifice always hurts. It is always costly. And yet what I want to make abundantly clear is that self-preservation is far costlier. See when you trust God and sacrifice your desires in order to follow his commands...you will lose out on something here. To redeem this land will cost money and he won't get anything in the long run for it. But to preserve yourself – your wealth, your comforts...will likely mean you will lose out on being a part of God's redemptive purposes in the world. The crazy thing about generosity towards God and his mission is that you end up receiving way more than you give.

We don't know this man's heart. We aren't told the motivations, just his words. But his words are deeply revealing. And oh did he miss out on God's story because he was so caught up with his own. That step of self-sacrifice is perhaps the hardest step for the western church to take. Will we slay the idol of comfort with the sword of scripture and give ourselves radically to carrying out God's purposes in the world no matter the cost? Will redeeming love be our theme EVEN when, especially when, it costs us?

7 At an earlier period in Israel, a man removed his sandal and gave it to the other party in order to make any matter legally binding concerning the right of redemption or the exchange of property. This was the method of legally binding a transaction in Israel. 8 So the redeemer removed his sandal and said to Boaz, "Buy back the property yourself."

9 Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I am buying from Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon. 10 I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, to perpetuate the deceased man's name on his property, so that his name will not disappear among his relatives or from the gate of his hometown. You are witnesses today."

11 All the people who were at the city gate, including the elders, said, "We are witnesses."

Then the people offer two specific blessings over Boaz that connect him to the legacy of God's redeeming love to his people throughout generations.

May the Lord make the woman who is entering your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built the house of Israel. May you be powerful in Ephrathah and your name well known in Bethlehem.

- Bethlehemites are descendants of Judah, son of Leah. Yet they put Rachel first. Probably not a huge deal. But from these two women came the 12 tribes of Israel. Ruth was unable to have kids for 10 years while in Moab. Barren like Rachel. And after many years Genesis 30.22 says God remembered Rachel and she bore a son named...Joseph. Who became the means by which God saved the people of Israel at the end of Genesis. This is a prayer for God to give Boaz a baseball team worth of sons.
- Ephrathah – little area of Bethlehem that Elimelech was from (1.2)
- In short: MAY GOD BLESS THE HOUSE OF BOAZ for the kindness & generosity he's showing to this widow. To his family.

12 May your house become like the house of Perez, the son Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring the Lord will give you by this young woman."

- Genesis 38. House of Perez – ok Boaz knows that name. That's his great x4 granddaddy. Tamar's story bears similarities to Ruth primarily in that they were widows who the Lord brought redemption to later in life. The son Tamar bore to Judah. Tamar after being widowed with no children was in a place where she

wasn't sure if she would have a son. Especially as she grew older. But, the Lord vindicated her and provided for her. And her son Perez would go on to have children and the line of Judah continued through him down to Boaz. We are going to talk more next week about Boaz's history when we finish up in the genealogy. But in short the elders are saying Just like God remembered Rachel and God remembered Tamar...Just like what started in darkness in Perez's life became God's great work of redemption to build a family that would bless many generations. May he give you many children and may many people be blessed by them.

13 Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. He slept with her, and the Lord granted conception to her, and she gave birth to a son.

We aren't told how much time has passed and that isn't important. What we know is that the Lord blessed her. The Lord has redeemed her by giving her a son to carry on the family name.

And then the story wraps up by circling back to the woman it started with.

14 The women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you without a family redeemer today. May his name become well known in Israel. 15 He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. Indeed, your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." 16 Naomi took the child, placed him on her lap, and

became a mother to him. 17 The neighbor women said, "A son has been born to Naomi," and they named him Obed.

This is not cutting Ruth out btw. Ruth is the mom. I mean Ruth just got a pretty great compliment. Better than 7 sons. And they say Ruth is the mom. What they are acknowledging is that Naomi's sons had died and she was without sons. And this grandson...this is God's redeeming love for her! And then we get this little line of GREAT importance.

He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. -- Ruth 4:1-17

Ok, we'll see this more next week when we finish chapter 4. But what you see is that the book of Ruth is actually a historical account of something that happened in David's lineage. It's been passed down by Boaz to Obed to Jesse to David and written probably during his son Solomon's reign. So that generation after generation could remember to trust the redeeming love of God.

I told you we'd see the story and then see how God's redeeming love is for you. For your past, present, and future.

God's redeeming love redeems our past

When the bible says redeem it means take something that originally had a good purpose but then it went wrong. It got dark and maybe veered far off course. Maybe on purpose maybe not. Naomi went to Moab with her husband. Leaving Israel was symbolically leaving God. They left for another land with other Gods in hopes they could find life there. And it got dark in Moab. So dark she renamed herself bitter. But that

was just chapter one. See God had a redemption plan for Naomi. Her bitter end was his new beginning. She came home to Bethlehem. Home to God. She didn't know what that would mean. She returned to God and his people without knowing how it would turn out. And God blessed her return. God provided for her. And God took her past and redeemed it. In Moab her son Mahlon met and married Ruth. And you can only imagine that even looking at Ruth in some way or another used to remind Naomi of her dead son & of their journey to a land they never should have gone to. And yet the towns women say here in chapter 4 that Ruth is better to her than seven sons. Speaking of Ruth, God redeemed her past. She was unable to have children her entire marriage in Moab. 10 years. And yet God gave her a son. She was an outsider that God drew close. Because he loves redeeming the outsider and showing off his grace through them.

God's redeeming love redeems our past. Listen I have no idea what you walked in here with but one thing I have learned in ministry is that EVERYBODY has baggage. And man we carry it with us. Each one of us has a story. Maybe you came in here today a little like Naomi. Coming back to God after years away. Maybe you are like Ruth and God and his people are totally new to you. The story of the gospel is that no matter your story the redeeming love of Jesus Christ can redeem you and restore you and make you whole. I want to speak this truth over you. Maybe it is the only thing you walk out of here with today: **In Christ, you are not your past.**

That's the story of the gospel. It's the story of the prodigal son. Who despite his sin comes back home and finds

redemption in the father's forgiving love. It's the story of Zacchaeus, of Matthew the tax collector, of the woman with the alabaster flask, of the thief on the cross who finds redemption in Jesus' forgiving love. It's the story of Lydia in Acts 16, it's the story of the apostle Paul who finds redemption on the road to Damascus after all those days persecuting Christians. THE GREAT HOPE OF THE GOSPEL IS THAT the redeeming love of God IS STILL available to you...especially you. **In Christ, you are not your past.** In Christ you are not your past. Ephesians 2.4.

So whether you are a teenager with a short record, middle aged with a long record...1 John 1.7 says the blood of Jesus washes away ALL our sin. Stop seeing yourself by your sin! I believe in the power of God to change people right where they sit. I think it takes a lifetime to fully appreciate it but the gospel is a gift of grace you can receive RIGHT NOW in full.

In Christ, YOU ARE NOT YOUR PAST.

God's Redeeming Love sustains you in the present

We covered this a lot last week so I won't revisit it too much but for Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz they each chose to trust God at his word and to take steps that demonstrated that trust. Naomi & Ruth trust God's law about possible provision for them through a kinsman redeemer. God's law gives them hope. Ruth trusts God and proposes to Boaz. Boaz trusts God and has this conversation which means he may never get to marry Ruth. But Boaz had seen the Lord bless Ruth already and trusted the God who sustained her in chapter 2, and who

prompted her to propose in chapter 3, would not leave her here in chapter 4. Boaz trusted God and took a step.

One of the great misses a lot of Christians experience is they trust God only with redeeming their past. And not with their present or future. See Lamentations 3 says the mercies of God are new EVERY morning. Great is your faithfulness. See when you become a Christian God himself comes and lives with you. That's what the Holy Spirit is. It is God living with you. Guiding you. Comforting you, sustaining you moment by moment. That's why the 1 Thessalonians 5.17 says pray without ceasing. It's because God is with you without ceasing.

I want to challenge you to open up God's word every day and pray to him. Talk with him. Get into community. You know that's what the church is? It's God's mouthpiece to one another. God says "that guy needs to be reminded my love will sustain him today. Joseph, go tell him. Nigeria go tell her." We need to start about 20 new community groups for Mercy by August. So many of ya'll are new. So what. Make the plunge. Don't waffle. There is a battle for believing the redeeming love of God will sustain us and it is raging right now. Some come help us by planting a new group this august.

The Redeeming Love of God blesses future generations through present faithfulness

The last line of this story is remarkable. It's like we were all gathered around for a story that grandpa David is telling. And he tells us these 3 people and Moab and Bethlehem are familiar. And we hear the tragedy of Naomi, the courage of Ruth, the everyday guy Boaz who is gonna be the hero, the

unrequited love of Ruth & Boaz. And then they actually do get married in the end! And right before grandpa David says they lived happily ever after he says...and they had a son and they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse who was my dad.

And all the grandkids sitting around go WAIT...WHAT!?!?! THIS HAPPENED!?!?! And David says yes. All of us sitting here in this palace are only here because of the faithfulness of my great grandpa Boaz. He trusted God and God multiplied his faithfulness and God multiplied my great grandma Ruth's faithfulness. And then king David looks at these children and says you have no idea what your faithfulness to God TODAY will BECOME tomorrow.

God's way of bringing his redeeming love to bear on the future is through present steps of faithfulness. Now this is important – God is faithful to HIS plan for the future not to your expectations of the future. You gotta surrender that. But I'm telling you if you will trust his redeeming love in your present, he will multiply that trust in the years to come. That's not prosperity theology, that's discipleship. He blesses obedience to him. He multiplies it.

A LITTLE MORE HERE

CLOSING

British lawyer named William Cooper wrote a hymn called "There is a fountain" and the last verse says "Redeeming love has been my theme and shall be till I die." He wrote those words in 1771 while battling depression and they remain so

true today. We sang it in church growing up and it just kind of stuck with me. It's so powerful.

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in His day;
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away:

E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die:

Will you believe?