Ruth 4:1-12; Dt. 25:5-10; “Identifying the Redeemer”

I. The True Redeemer Found II. The Ritual of Redemption III. The Blessings of the Redeemer

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, in my opinion, being a foster parent would be a very challenging job. It takes a special kind of person- a sacrificial heart- to care for a child that is not your own. The idea of caring for and raising a child that is not your own is a concept that touches our passage today. In some ways, the redeemer of Ruth will be like a foster parent- raising a child for another man. In our story over the past weeks, we have been noticing a need for a Redeemer or Savior who will solve the lasting problem here faced by Naomi and Ruth. Last week we as the readers of this story were caught by surprise- when another redeemer closer than Boaz is introduced. We are left on the edge of our seats- so who is going to take care of Ruth? Will it be Boaz or will it be this other man from Bethlehem. We have grown quite attached to this generous man Boaz- and this beloved Ruth- and we want to see these two brought together- but there is a hurdle that must be crossed before this can take place. We remember that Boaz is also a Godly man, and he has a deep respect and submission to God’s Law- in other words, Boaz wants to make sure that he does things right. He is not going to rush into this redemption- he wants to make sure that he has followed proper procedure. This story has a measure of intrigue and mystery- we are left in suspense. Who will be the redeemer? What is the difference between these two redeemers? The identity of the true Redeemer is revealed.

**I. The True Redeemer Found**

So first, in our story, we like a good detective have to follow the plotline to see which of these two men will be the faithful and true redeemer. Which one is willing to do what is necessary? In verse 1, Boaz is faithful to his promise, and first thing the next morning he goes to the gate of the city so that the matter at hand may be settled. Remember that the gate of a city was similar to the planning area and courtroom of a town- transactions and legal matters were settled here- so Boaz goes to the city meeting place, and it just so happens that the other redeemer mentioned by Boaz is quickly at hand. Boaz then turns to this other, closer of kin and calls him aside. Now it is interesting to note that Boaz does not use the name of this man. Remember they were close relatives, but in passage Boaz calls him friend. Literally Boaz calls him “Mr. So and So” to come to such and such a place. The Hebrew goes out of its way to withhold the name of the man and the name of the place from us, the reader. Why is that? Well, remember that in our story, names have been very important. Elimelech whose name means the LORD is King acts like there is not God. Naomi who was full and blessed becomes Mara which means empty and bitter. The two sons of Naomi were named sickly and wasting away and they soon die. The house of bread or Bethlehem had no bread. Ruth means companion or friend. Names are very important- but what Ruth was looking for was for someone to carry on the name of her dead husband. As verse 5 points out, the duty of the redeemer was to carry on the name of the dead- so for this supposed redeemer and close kinsman to have no name at all is very important! And it will shortly be revealed that this no named man receives just that- no name in history and he is forgotten. When Boaz first tells this Mr. So and So about the field of Naomi- he was eager to help out. In verse 4, this closer redeemer sees that he can make a good financial decision in redeeming or purchasing the land. The land always stayed in the hands of male children. If this man would buy Naomi’s land- and since Naomi had no children to speak of, it made sound financial sense to buy the land because as soon as Naomi died the land would be inherited by his own sons- so he is quick to jump on the deal. Yes, it may cost some money now, but in the end the land will be his. But all of the sudden, Boaz throws down the trump card. OH, and by the way- if you buy the land you have to also marry Ruth the Moabite and raise a family for her. Well that last phrase puts the breaks on this redeemer’s zeal. If Ruth was to be married and a son would be born, then the land would not end up passing to him- but would stay in the line of Ruth and Naomi- it would stay in the name of the dead Elimelech. Well this did not make sound financial sense. It meant that you had to pay out without hope of getting anything back. The good deal became a bad deal real quick. All of the sudden, this supposed redeemer backs away and says in verse 6- I can’t do it. It would cost me too much and my own family would suffer. Extra mouths to feed and land to purchase! As you know, raising children is expensive! It is estimated that each child cost over 15K a year to raise. Add to that the cost of land- for example, in IL the average farmland goes for around 10K an acre. Now this no named redeemer was asked to buy the farmland and raise a son for a dead man- at great cost to himself with no real or tangible benefit to himself! So he says- no thanks- I can’t do it. Now remember that this law of redemption was enforced only on brother- it was not demanded for extended family. So it was within the rights of this man to decide not to redeem- but the reason he decided not to help was because his math was based on you can see. It may not be a good financial decision to help the poor- to give to the needy- to offer your time and money to help others- but we must think of the world to come. For Boaz- he was not thinking of what he would lose, rather what he would gain. He was all to happy to step up to the plate to help the widow and the needy- because the Law of the LORD was his delight- he did not hold his money with a tight fist- he gave to those in need- and we know that the first man, the Mr. So and So was made like Orpah- forgotten on the pages of Covenant History- never to be mentioned again- he lost all hope of a lasting name. As an aside- we are also tempted to limit our obedience to tangible gains. When asked to give or serve- we tend to think about what it will cost- or what will we get out of it?! What do I get if I say yes? But remember that godliness is not a means of financial gain. This man would help if this help would not end up costing him- and as a result he misses out on the blessing! But what about our mighty man Boaz?

**II. The Ritual of Redemption**

Boaz was willing to go beyond what the law required to give comfort and protection- to redeem his beloved. He was willing to do what no one else would- which cost him much, but he was happy to do. And for this redemption Boaz receives a lasting name. Even the north pillar of the OT temple was named Boaz in honor of this great man. He gives much, but he also gains something great. He gains a standing with God’s people and becomes the ancestor of the true Redeemer of Israel. Boaz does not redeem because his hand is forced, he redeems because of love and desire- moved by faithfulness! In order to finish this transaction and the passing of redemption right from the first no named man to the rightful redeemer Boaz, a ritual of redemption takes place. In verse 7 and 8 a strange ceremony takes place. In order to legalize transactions, the seller would take off his shoe or sandal and give it to the new owner. Earlier we read from Deuteronomy 25:9-10. This is where the widow would go to her brother in law and demand that he marry her and raise a family. If this brother in law would fail to perform his duty, the widow would pull of his sandal and spit in his face because he would not perform his duty. That shamed family would then be called the family of the one who had his sandal pulled off. But this is not what is taking place in our story. Remember that the law of redemption only demanded that brothers marry the widow of their dead brother. Here we have extended family. So there is no outright shame or blame placed upon the first man. Rather, in our story, the sandal is a reference to a ritual of land sale not a symbol of shame. In our story, the first no named man gives his sandal to Boaz. Now remember back to the promise of God given to Abraham- wherever your feet travel- wherever you sandals trod - this land I will give to you. To give someone your sandal in our story is a sign that your feet or your sandal will never travel across this sold piece of land- no longer does this foot have claim over their piece of property. This is referenced in Psalm 60:8 where the Lord gives the possession of the land to his people- saying that we will toss our sandal upon Edom- meaning that we will possess the land of Edom. So after this ritual takes place, Boaz is given complete ownership of the land. Only the feet of Boaz will cross over that piece of land. Ruth is also given to him as his wife, and Boaz becomes the full redeemer of his beloved- promising to provide, protect and give to her rest! Boaz is a man of his word. As he had promised Ruth last week, he will settle the matter! He will not rest until Ruth is settled in a home. Boaz will make sure that Elimelech’s name is remembered- that his family and his widow do not lose their link to the land. Abraham’s blessing and the covenantal line will not be snuffed out! Jacob’s line through Leah- Judah’s line through Tamar will not die off! God always blesses obedience- to the generous God will show Himself generous! Give and it will be given to you!

**III. The Blessings of the Redeemer**

But before you think the story is over, we have the privilege of hearing the rest of the story- or how this redeemer becomes a blessing and is himself blessed by God. After Boaz becomes the redeemer and husband of Ruth, the people of Bethlehem recite a wedding blessing upon them both. A prayer if you will- May the LORD bless you! The first one to be blessed is Ruth who was not even present- but a part of this ceremony. Ruth is given the blessing and the LORD is called upon to make this Ruth like Rachel and Leah. This may be a strange blessing to our ears because Ruth is not even an Israelite, but to be made like Rachel and Leah was to be made like the women who gave birth to the sons of Israel or the sons of Jacob. Even though there were two other women who gave birth to sons for Jacob, these two in particular were the chosen mothers who mothered children who grew into a mighty nation. The 12 tribes of Israel were the pinnacle of hope- these 12 men were given a lasting name and were the heads of many thousands of people. To be made like these mothers was to be given the hope that your own children will become well known and given names that will last for many generations. Naomi’s people have become Ruth’s people! And remember that the first readers of the book of Ruth would have been during the early reign of the Israelite kings. In other words, Rachel and Leah built the house of Israel by giving birth to the 12 tribes. The book of Ruth was written after David was king- so in some ways this book serves as a genealogy of the king! In our story, Ruth gives birth to the ancestor of King David- whose son also built the house of Israel or the temple. This blessing was fulfilled by King David and King Solomon who built and established the nation of Israel and the Temple or House of God. A further fulfillment of these blessings is seen in the birth of the Great Son- the Redeemer of Israel- who built the house of Israel with His blood and with His body was the House or Temple of God! Thee perfect Israel whose own birth would come about in an extra-ordinary way as well!

And for Boaz, it was asked that the LORD make him famous in Bethlehem. And here we are, almost 2500 years later, reading about this very same Boaz who redeemed Ruth. And it was from this marriage, that many famous Bethlehem citizens would come- shepherds, kings, and a great Redeemer. His name is mentioned 4 more times in the OT outside of this book- and a pillar of the temple bore his name! Solomon- David’s son, named the two pillars in II Cron. 3- Jakin and Boaz. The redeeming Boaz is also a clear shadow of the redeeming work of our God. Boaz provided cover or the shelter of his wing under which Ruth could hide. We are covered by the blood of Christ, and our sins are atoned for- we have been redeemed in Him! This offspring was said to be like Perez- Perez was the son of Judah and Tamar- and was the ancestor of Boaz. Remember that Bethlehem belonged to the tribe of Judah- the kingly tribe. It was hoped that this marriage would produce a son, and that son would be a blessing to this family of Boaz and to the family of Elimelech, to the city of Bethlehem, to the tribe of Judah, to the nation of Israel. But to hear about the birth of this blessed son, we have to wait until tomorrow. But suffice it to say, that Boaz has fully shown us that he is the faithful redeemer. You have seen that a redeemer is one who gives of himself for the good of his beloved- counting all but loss for the sake of his bride.

As we saw last week, we are on our way to a wedding- we too are engaged to be married to our redeemer! We need to be covered by the wing of redeemer- as the wings of the cerebrum covered the mercy seat. Boaz went beyond what the Law demanded, because his love was great. He had seen God’s faithfulness- so he was happy to show himself faithful to those in need! He redeemed those who had no hope, giving a name to the one who was as good as dead. The giving of a name and an inheritance to someone who was a good as dead is resurrection language. Remember that Naomi thought that she was as good as dead- Ruth has no hope for continued sustenance- the name of Elimelech and his land was lost- but the redeemer gives a name and inheritance to those who were without hope. You also have been redeemed by one who gave a great price- His own blood. He was wounded so that you might be healed. He died so that you would never die in your sins. Boaz is pointing us forward to the great Redeemer who gave life to the dead- a name to the nameless, and an inheritance to the pilgrim. We find life and a lasting inheritance under the shelter of His wing! He is our True and Great Redeemer.