

Ruth 1:8-18; 4:13-17; Mt. 1:5-6; Ruth, the Mother of Jesus I. The Bitter Beginning II. The Radical Choice III. The Gracious Covering

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, this morning as we continue our series on the “mothers of Jesus” we come to perhaps one of the best known OT love stories. If Tamar is the least know- most people have heard the story of Ruth in that she has her own OT book. Now the narrative of Ruth is a reminder of God’s love and grace- a picture of what Jesus Christ can do in the hearts of His child. There are two key themes that run through this book- the theme of the need for a coming King- and the theme of redemption. The concept of “Go’el”- to redeem- is found in over 20 times in this book. So today we see that loving groom redeems His bride at great cost. Ruth’s saga proves that those who hope in the LORD will be protected and provided for. So we consider this theme: Jesus Christ gives us a picture of His redeeming work in the covering protection of Ruth.

I. The Bitter Beginning

We start with the bitter beginning. The book of Ruth opens with Elimelech and his family coming on hard times in the land of Judea. Elimelech is the head of his house- the father and leader whose name means- my God is King. He is from the region of Bethlehem- and as you may know- the word Bethlehem means the house of bread. But there is no bread in the house of bread- as a famine has covered the land. So Mr.- My God is King- decides to leave the king’s country and they travel to the land of Moab- traveling East as they cross the Jordan- leaving the promised land. Now Moab was a country named after one of Lot’s sons- remember Lot had a child with his daughter. Lot’s daughters were known as people who lived by sight- not by faith! They did what they thought was necessary- not what God had commanded. But upon their move to Moab, our story continues to descend into death. Things do not get better for Elimelech- rather he and his sons all die. There are clear similarities between our passage and the one in Genesis 38- where Judah leaves his own country and kin. The family dies off- leaving only a widow left. Now as difficult as it might be in our present society to be a complete widow and outcast- with no family and no church- imagine living in a world with no social programs. Society as a large was not kind to women. Naomi was living in the days of the Judges- there was no king and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. And she was living in Moab- the Moabites were not welcomed in Israel- as tribes they

often quarreled. All this loss leaves Naomi empty, bitter and resentful. Losing both of your children and your husband would shake even the strongest heart! But Naomi is bitter at God- as she says in 1:20- it is the Almighty that has dealt bitterly with me. “El Shaddai” has dealt me this great blow. Call me Mara- call me bitter. So here is Naomi- an old, bitter lady who has no hope- she has no expectation of good things. She believes that God has forsaken her. It is interesting to note that as she renames herself in 1:20- she calls herself Mara. This is the OT version of the name- Mary. So here we have the OT Mary from Bethlehem! But we note that Ruth is in the same position- she is young widow without any prospects for a husband- with a long life of being at the mercy of others before her. Who will want to marry her- she is the daughter in law of a bitter widow- and she is a foreigner.

II. The Radical Choice

This bitter situation leads to a radical departure. Naomi chooses to go back to the land of Israel- she has heard that the LORD has visited His people in 1:6- the House of Bread has bread again- so she decides to go home. There is finally a glimmer of hope for her- but not for her daughters- in- law. Naomi cannot hope for a son in her old age- thus the Levirate Law cannot provide a groom for her daughters-in- law. Thus she seeks to turn Orpah and Ruth away. Go back to your own land- to your father’s house- return to your old lives. Orpah eventually goes- but Ruth will not leave. We note that our passage continually refers to her as Ruth the Moabites- as we found with Rahab the Prostitute. Every time we read her name, we know her history- where she comes from! Yet consider Ruth’s radical allegiance in 1:16. She will not be deterred. Where your feet go- mine will follow. Where you stay, I will lodge. Your way will be mine, your home mine as well. Your people will be my people- your nation my inheritance. Where you find rest, I will dwell. Your God will be my God. Here, Ruth uses the name- Elohim. The Mighty One- God of creation. But in v. 16 she continues by saying- may the LORD do to me and more also if anything but death separates us! This is striking because again we have an outsider using the covenantal name- Yahweh- the God who is. And she uses a covenantal oath- may the LORD do to me and more. She knows who the LORD God is- and she binds herself to Him and to Naomi. Now to put this into perspective- back in 1:15 Orpah went back to her people and her gods. As Naomi had urged, Orpah returned to her own family and to her family’s pagan idolatry! For Ruth- to chose to go with Naomi is to give up everything she had

known and travel to an unknown land. And Naomi is even trying to drive Ruth away! But she will have none of it! I will not go back to gods of wood and stone- I cling to the Name of the LORD! She has an unflinching devotion to Naomi, her people and her God who is the only true God! How could a child of Moab have such clear and strong faith? Well- as we saw with Rahab- again this is nothing less than the work of Jesus Christ by His Spirit! Ruth has a strong faith- and an ardent hope in the LORD God of Israel! She wants nothing of the gods of gold and silver- but only the One true God will do! She will cling to the covenant promises- calling upon the name of Yahweh- the God who is! Remember that Joshua challenged the people before they possessed the land- choose you this day whom you will serve! Well- Ruth chose the LORD! Although the first generation of elders who had traveled with Joshua had all died off- there is still a remnant who believe! Found here in Ruth- but also in Ruth's redeemer!

III. The Gracious Covering

As we come to our final point, we have to jump ahead in our story to the point when Ruth and Boaz have met and Naomi begins to see light- hope returns to this bitter widow and she hatches a plan to find a place of rest for her daughter-in-law. Go and find Boaz- and find rest with him since he is able to redeem and he is a good man- faithful and generous. But to secure this blessing, Ruth needs to be wed to Boaz. In a strikingly bold move, Ruth is told to go to Boaz who was harvesting the wheat. In 3:8, Ruth creeps up to Boaz and lays down at his feet. She uncovers his bare feet- and when Boaz awakes Ruth says in 3:9- spread your wing over your servant- or cover me with the corner of your robe. Extend your wing- or cover with your robe- so that I might find shelter since you are a redeemer. The idea is that a protective covering would be provided by Boaz- a shade and refuge from the storm. By this she is looking out for not only her wellbeing- but for the good of her formerly bitter mother-in-law. For Ruth, to have a shelter- to find rest- and above all to have a child- would be blessing from God for the good of Naomi! It was Naomi's husband- Elimelech- whose name needed to be passed down- his promised line extended by way of an heir! And God's mercy runs rich- as Boaz proves himself faithful. Remember Boaz from last week- the son of Rahab! He has learned faithfulness and mercy from his mother the reformed prostitute! He knows of God's grace- and Boaz does not let this request of Ruth go unnoticed. The next day he acts- first by removing the

other possible redeemer. And next by satisfying two OT laws. The first was the kinsman redeemer- Boaz purchases and secures the land for Naomi- in order to redeem the portion and lot which was the LORD'S portion for His people. In this way, a future sustenance could be provided for both Naomi and Ruth. The second matter was that of the Levirate Law- since Naomi had no other sons, Boaz presents himself as a groom for Ruth. The hope was to produce a child to be heir for Naomi and Elimelech by way of Boaz and Ruth. So Boaz is faithful in redeeming- ransoming in order to deliver from bondage and poverty. This is the first kinsman redeemer of our passage. But surprising, our text reveals another redeemer. As we read in 4:14- the baby born is also called the redeeming one. So Boaz and Ruth get married and have a child- named Obed meaning "servant". Obed is considered to be the heir of Elimelech and Naomi- thus Obed is the one through whom redemption is realized! So it is Ruth's son- Obed- who becomes to Naomi and Ruth- even the whole community- a reason for joy and thanksgiving! The whole city is filled with joy and praise to God for His goodness- as the women praise the LORD for the redemption He has given. So Obed is the one who is the restorer of life- v. 15- and the nourisher of strength! Ruth becomes like one of the matriarchs of old- as all the people prayed in 4:11. May you Ruth be made like Jacob's wives! And God is faithful- Ruth's son becomes next in the line which will be populated with kings! Our text ends in v. 18- Perez son of Tamar- down to Boaz son of Rahab and now Obed son of Ruth! And Obed fathered Jesse- and Jesse fathered King David- the forefather of Jesus our Lord! Great is God's faithfulness!

In this chapter we find clear pictures and pointers which lead us to Jesus Christ- the perfect kinsman redeemer. As our text said- Jesus Christ gives us a picture of His redeeming work in the covering of Ruth. The concept of redeemer- one who saves our lives and restores our soul! How can we help but look to Christ! Born in the city of Bethlehem- born the son of Mary! One who will be our redeemer who covers us with the shadow of His wing! It is this redeemer- Not Boaz or Obed- but Jesus- who will restore and provide for His bride by way of redemption- by purchasing us from bondage and restoring us to a land of blessing and rest! A King is coming who will redeem, protect and cover with his wing- who will give shade by His right hand! Praise God for the redemption of the hopeless in Christ- that He gives them a home, a name, and eternal blessings and rest!