

Chapter 9: God's Gracious Redemption

Three things to notice about Ruth and Naomi:

- They could not _____.
- They were unable to _____ from their predicament.
- Only through the _____ would they live a life out of bondage.

Naomi's Lower Story:

"The Almighty has left my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. The Lord has afflicted me: The Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."
Ruth 1:20-21

The Upper Story:

The Kinsman Redeemer: *God's provision for the less fortunate*

- 1) The redeemer must be a near relative to the one redeemed
- 2) The redeemer must be willing to perform the work of redemption
- 3) The redeemer must possess the ability to redeem
- 4) The redeemer must himself be free
- 5) The redeemer must pay the value or price of redemption

Redemption costs the redeemer and is for the benefit of the redeemed.

Jesus—Our Kinsman Redeemer: *God's provision for the poor in spirit*

1) Jesus is a *near kinsman* to mankind because he is fully human.

For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the Devil, who had the power of death.

Hebrews 2:14

2) Jesus was willing to perform the work of redemption.

No one can take my life from me. I lay down my life voluntarily.

John 10:18

3) Jesus alone possessed the ability to redeem because He was sinless.

"You were not redeemed with...precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

1 Peter 1:17-18

4) Jesus was free because He fulfilled the Law.

"Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to fulfill them."

Matthew 5:17

5) Jesus offered Himself as the price of redemption.

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:45

6) Like Boaz, Jesus took the Church as His bride. (Eph. 5:25, Rev. 19:7)

Equipping Point

Be your family's _____

- Your family is your responsibility.
- You want to set your family free and provide for them spiritually.
- You are not obligated to do so, you are motivated by love.
- Are you willing to let God cleanse you and set you free, so you can redeem?
- You are charged to be Jesus to your family.
- You have the character to do this.

Quick Takeaways

- 1) God raises up some of the most _____ to accomplish His will.
- 2) God is telegraphing His plan to _____ with the message of Christ. *This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to his own holy people. For it has pleased God to tell his people that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. For this is the secret: Christ lives in you, and this is your assurance that you will share in his glory.* Colossians 1:26-7
- 3) God is at work in the lives of the faithful even in the _____.
- 4) We have a responsibility to take care of _____ people.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Like Naomi, did you get caught up in the Lower Story this week? The temporal, difficult conditions we live with every day?
- 2) Like Ruth, what might God be orchestrating in your life at a higher level? An Upper Story?
- 3) How could you or your family demonstrate God's compassion during the holidays this year?

Teaching Script

As we saw last week, the period of the judges wasn't the godliest in Israel's history. This sad period of over 300 years encompassed six different occupations and oppressions by the worst of the Hebrews' sworn enemies. God allowed these calamities to come on His people because, as it says at the end of Judges, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit." (Judges 21:25) God's chosen people looked more like a reality show gone wrong than a holy beacon of hope. They had abandoned God's plan over and over and looked more like the Island of Misfit Toys than the hope of the world. The light had gone out on God's people; it was a dark time indeed. Then a foreigner stepped onto the stage and a candle of hope flickered once again.

In the 1964 draft, the Dallas Cowboys picked Mel Renfro on the second pick, Bob Hayes on the 7th, and a guy named Roger Staubach on the 10th. It was a bit of a risk—a guy who still had a Navy commitment to finish, but the Cowboys did it anyway and the rest is history.

In this book, Ruth is the surprise draft pick. After the Israelites had shown their fickleness and disobedience time and time again, God went outside the circle to a Moabite—a Gentile—to continue the line of succession to Jesus. This surprise draft pick was an outsider that would show God's people what faithfulness looks like.

The story of Ruth is a beautiful story that glimmers against a backdrop of blackness. Naomi's family was leaving the Promised Land because famine had left them hungry for food and for hope. They settled in Moab where idol worship was the prevailing ritual and God seemed far away. Naomi's two sons married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. But then tragedy struck again: the wedding celebrations were followed quickly by funerals—first Naomi's husband and then her two sons. All that was left was three widows, no children and no prospects. The outlook was grim indeed.

Naomi later heard that the famine had lifted and decided to return to Bethlehem. She sent her daughters-in-law back to their homes where they might find new husbands. Ruth refused to leave, and we first hear her often-quoted declaration of loyalty and commitment: "Where you go, I will go; your people will be my people and your God my God." (p. 122) As Naomi and Ruth traveled home, survival, not prosperity, was the objective. A widow had few rights, and the provisions for them were dictated by God to care for the less fortunate of their society.

One right was the ability to gather leftover grain from the fields. Her field of choice "just happened" to be the farmstead of a godly man named Boaz. He also "happened" to be a family guardian who could carry on the heritage of Naomi's deceased husband and sons. He noticed Ruth from the start and admired the way she worked to provide for her aging mother-in-law, and he offered both his help and protection.

Jewish law required a family guardian to redeem both a widow and her land to preserve the family line. So, as was the custom, Naomi told Ruth to offer herself in marriage to Boaz, and he patiently waited as closer relatives were offered and then declined the opportunity to help. Other than this, there wasn't much in the way of provision for the

poor. For the rest of their lives, Ruth and Naomi would be dependent on the kindness and grace of others.

We need to notice three things at this point about Ruth and Naomi:

- **They could not *save themselves*.**
- **They were unable to *extricate themselves* from their predicament.**
- **Only through the *intervention of another* would they live a life out of bondage.**

Does this sound like a setup or what? Could this be the opening lines in yet another Messianic story that foreshadows a future Redeemer? Now, in Chapter 9 of *The Story*, we can see it coming. We've had so many characters so far that herald a Savior: Noah, Abraham and Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, even Gideon last week—it's starting to sink in that a pattern is emerging here.

Even though the book is named Ruth, and much of the story is about her extraordinary faith and character, the Christ-figure in this story is Boaz. Two months ago as we began *The Story* you might not have been able to identify the name of Boaz as a precursor of Jesus, but now we see him clearly whispering Christ's name and acting as Jesus would 1,000 years hence.

Boaz fills his role as a family guardian or “kinsman redeemer,” and in doing so, becomes the great-grandfather of David and a direct ancestor of the Lord Jesus.

And like Jesus, Boaz may have had a particularly tender heart for outsiders. Jesus seemed to be drawn to the unwanted and unneeded of society in his ministry to the Samaritan woman at the well and the other woman caught in adultery. The Bible says he was a descendent of Rahab the harlot, so perhaps it's not surprising that Boaz had a heart for the stranger, the outcast, the marginalized—just like his Savior would.

Throughout the story of Ruth, we can see God working behind the scenes for the good of His faithful followers. It would be easy to get lost in the Lower Story here: three widows left without provision, a family split, returning home destitute, and Naomi even saying,

The Almighty has left my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. The Lord has afflicted me: The Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.

Ruth 1:20-21

But we know something is coming...we've seen Joseph, and Abraham, and Gideon: when it looks the darkest, God is still at work. When it seems God has afflicted us, he is working out his perfect will and bringing about an ending we would never imagine.

Look at the concept of the Kinsman Redeemer—God's provision for the less fortunate.

He was to act as God's hands and heart toward the less fortunate within their community. Much of the Law was designed to provide opportunities for Israel to trust God, to be generous like God, to demonstrate the love and the justice of God. God's means to take care of the poor, the widow, and the orphan was through His people.

- **The levirate marriage** was one such custom. When a man died without a son to inherit his land and carry on a family line, his brother was responsible to take the widow as his wife and produce a first-born son who would bear the dead brother's name. The following children born to the widow and her new husband would belong to the new husband and bear his name, since the widows had very little means of providing for themselves.
- **Redemption of property** was another responsibility of the kinsman redeemer. If someone became poor and was therefore compelled to sell off his or her land to survive, then a kinsman redeemer was obligated to buy it back, or redeem it, for the poor person.

For someone to qualify as a **kinsman redeemer**, J. Vernon McGee suggests at least 5 criteria must be met:

- 1) The redeemer must be a near kinsman (relative) to the one redeemed
- 2) The redeemer must be willing to perform the work of redemption
- 3) The redeemer must possess the ability to redeem
- 4) The redeemer must himself be free
- 5) The redeemer must pay the value or price of redemption

These were God's provision for the less fortunate.

The key is this: **Redemption costs the redeemer and is for the benefit of the redeemed.** The kinsman redeemer was called upon to give of his own resources to benefit others. He used his money to redeem property for someone else because he understood that all belonged to God anyway. The redeemer is acting in gracious, loyal lovingkindness toward the redeemed—he is acting like God!

So let's look at Boaz, the Kinsman Redeemer:

- 1) Boaz was a near kinsman to Naomi and Ruth.
- 2) Boaz was willing to perform the work of redemption, but a closer relative was not. That Boaz still wanted to serve as the kinsman redeemer without being obligated by law demonstrates even further his godliness.
- 3) Boaz had the *ability*—the financial means—to be a kinsman redeemer. He was clearly a very successful businessman and farmer. He had servants who respected him.
- 4) Boaz was free and therefore able to redeem. His land and his possessions weren't under obligation to another. Israel had been through a very long drought period (at least the 10 years Naomi was in Moab). It was not uncommon to sell oneself as a slave due to poverty (Lev. 25:39) but such was not the case for Boaz.
- 5) Boaz paid the full price of redemption for both Naomi's land and for the responsibility of Ruth as a wife.
- 6) Boaz was a man of *character*.
 - His harvesters left grain to be gleaned by the poor, as prescribed in the Law. But he went above the legal requirement and had them leave extra for Ruth, revealing his generous heart for the LORD.

- He remained sexually pure and honored Ruth when she uncovered his feet in the night. He preserved her reputation by sending her home before light.
- Boaz was a man of prayer, who spoke blessings over his workers and Ruth.

Jesus Our Kinsman Redeemer—God's provision for the poor in spirit

Jesus is our ultimate Kinsman Redeemer and meets all the criteria listed above. All mankind are helplessly enslaved to sin, under the dominion of the evil one, unless and until we are redeemed by the One and Only Redeemer. Christ alone is God's provision!

- 1) Jesus is a ***near kinsman*** to mankind because he is fully human. He is described as our brother who redeems us from the power of sin.

For only as a human being could He die, and only by dying could he break the power of the Devil, who had the power of death.

Hebrews 2:14

- 2) Jesus was willing to perform the work of redemption.

No one can take my life from me. I lay down my life voluntarily. For I have the right to lay it down when I want to and also the power to take it again. For my Father has given me this command.

John 10:18

God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.

Galatians 4:5

- 3) Jesus alone possessed the ability to redeem because He was sinless.

You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold...but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ

1 Peter 1:17-18

- 4) Jesus was free because He fulfilled the Law

Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to fulfill them.

Matthew 5:17-18

- 5) Jesus offered Himself as the price of redemption.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Mark 10:45

- 6) Like Boaz, Jesus took His beloved as His bride (Ephesians 5:25, Revelation 19:7).

The Church is betrothed to Christ and is to be a pure virgin (2 Corinthians 11:2).

This week's Equipping Point:

Be your family's Kinsman Redeemer.

- You are the nearest kinsman to your family.
- You *want* to perform the work of redemption to set your family free and provide for them spiritually.
- You are not obligated to do so, you are motivated by love.
- If you are willing to let God cleanse you and set you free, as we discussed a couple of weeks ago, then you are free and able to redeem. You don't carry baggage with you, but you are not under the obligations of the world or of the Enemy—you are *God's* man and can do His work.
- You are charged to be Jesus to your family. You cannot pay the price for their sins, but you CAN minister to them in His name.
- I believe you have the character to do this. All year long we've been talking about the character required to spiritually lead your family, and I'm betting the men here this morning are men of integrity willing to be the conduit for your family to God.
 - We are to remain sexually pure like Boaz
 - Care for our families and the less fortunate of our society
 - Remain unburdened (or “unleveraged”) so that we're able to help others. (Provision for elderly parents, Tam's M.S.)

Quick Takeaways

1. In the midst of a very low period in the history of God's people, marked by weak faith and irresponsible living, God continues to surprise us by **raising up some of the most *unlikely servants*** to accomplish his will. Before it was Potiphar and his wife, the 10 faithless spies, Aaron and Miriam, Esau, and even the Midianites and Philistines.

Like a surprise UT draft pick from some podunk little Class 2A high school in East Texas, God uses a foreign woman, whose faith stands in stark contrast to the unbelief of the people who should know better. God used the example and faith of Ruth, one of the hated Moabites, to show his people what faith and character is supposed to look like. So as this outsider is taken into God's community of faith, our first takeaway is to withhold judgment on those not like us.

Can I suggest to you that this is very appropriate this week? If studying God's word has taught us anything, it's that He has everything under control, and we are foolish to dismiss those not like us, or who do not agree with us. If God could breathe fresh

life into the lineage of the Messiah by introducing someone as different as Ruth, is He not capable of doing so again today?

2. Even this early in the Old Testament **God is telegraphing His plan to reach the entire world** with the saving message of Christ. In the story of Ruth, the curtain is being drawn back on the hidden plan of God. Look at Colossians 1:

This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to his own holy people. For it has pleased God to tell his people that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. For this is the secret: Christ lives in you, and this is your assurance that you will share in his glory.

Colossians 1.26-7

3. **God is at work in the lives of the faithful even in the darkest of times.** I should trust Him even in life's darkest times when I do not "see" or "feel" God. Genuine faith, like that of Ruth, trusts God to always be working even when one does not see His hand. Joseph never lost sight of God's long-term purposes, and today's story of Ruth reinforces the promise that even in Naomi's desperation, even in the bleakness of destitute poverty of a couple of helpless widows, God never forgets His children.
4. **We have a responsibility to take care of marginalized people.** The law of God prescribed the means by which the last and the least could be provided for, and they very clearly reveal the heart of God for the poor, the widow, and the orphan. So my question is this: Three weeks before Thanksgiving, and a month and a half from Christmas, how could you or your family demonstrate God's compassion during the holidays this year?

This charge is not only for the rich and well-off, but for all of us. Boaz had abundant resources to care for Ruth, but look at the attitude of Ruth, who had no job and not two sticks to rub together: From page 123 in *The Story*:

Then Ruth said to Naomi, 'Let me go in the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor.' When Boaz asked who Ruth was, the overseer said, 'She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi. She said, "Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters." She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter.'

Ruth 2:2, 5-7

Boaz later said,

May the LORD repay you for what you have done [for Naomi]. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

Ruth 2:12

In this holiday season, let us remember that an "others-centered" life creates blessings for the giver. You may not think you have much, but I would beg to disagree. There are single moms here at Oak Hills who would love for a family to adopt their family and provide a Christmas for some kids who could use one, a family without a father. There are men and women who are between jobs who could use a night of encouragement, a

night to be treated with compassion and grace, because finding a job in this economy is deflating and discouraging.

There's no denying the story of Ruth is a great romance. But even more, it brings us to a defining episode in the greatest love story ever told. Boaz' love for Ruth is a mirror image of the heart of God. Boaz steps in as a willing kinsmen redeemer and foreshadows One who would step in as the Redeemer for all people. It turns out everyone is "chosen"—Jew and Gentile alike. Everyone, no matter what their circumstances, needs our help. And God can use even the most unlikely people, in our eyes, to accomplish His will.

May you today become the Kinsman Redeemer of your family.