

Ruth 3-4 Sermon / COB 11.17.13

Introduction

† **[Slide 1: city gate]** Let's pray.

- † Last weekend, fourteen of us attended the banquet for the Bridge Academy, which is a Coatesville ministry to underprivileged children. At the banquet, we heard from “The Ambassador,” who apparently is a nationally renowned rapper, but who has a master's degree from Dallas Seminary and currently is pursuing his doctorate at Southeastern Baptist.
- Now the Ambassador mostly preached to us, but he did do some soft stepping through rhymes at the beginning, and you could tell by how he held the mic and danced around that he was itching to deliver to us some poetry, not just prose, however elegantly spoken. I thought I would honor him and entertain you by emulating his rap style for you this morning... but perhaps not!
- † Two weeks ago, I had the privilege of teaching at the Bridge Academy. I hope I will be able to do that once every semester, just to give the usual teachers a rest. I have to tell you folks, I had a lot of fun. Those children were a little rambunctious, as children often are, but I could tell they were listening. They answered my questions, they laughed at my jokes, they made really funny faces in reaction to the Bible story. I hope to see the same expressiveness from you today!
- We are studying a different narrative, of course. You should turn in your Bible to Ruth 3, using the table of contents if you need it. With the children, we learned about the surprising birth of Isaac to people even older than I am and the children really made funny faces when I told them about how God tested Abraham by asking for his blessing back. In here, we are studying Ruth, and we need to finish our narrative this week. We also have a tension about lack of children, or heirs, and so we need to find out how the characters resolve that tension. And we need to figure out why this narrative is in the Bible – it is a good story with some good teaching points, but – why this is worthy of being called Scripture?

Verses 3.1-18

- † Let me remind you that we are in a time of general waywardness in Israel, so God brought a famine to encourage repentance. Elimelech instead led his family to seek provision in a forbidden place, Moab. After God struck Elimelech dead, his two sons married Moabite women, which also was forbidden by God. God let them struggle through ten years of barrenness, and then struck the two men dead.
- After that, Elimelech's widow, Naomi, heard there was food back in Judah, so she returned home to Bethlehem. She encouraged her daughters-in-law to abandon her and return to their Moabite families and Moabite gods, so they could find new husbands. Orpah departed, but Ruth vowed to stay with Naomi and to adopt Yahweh, Israel's God, as her own.
 - Once back in Israel, Ruth came up with the covenant solution of gathering grain at the margins of the fields, a right which God had written into the Mosaic Law. While doing this, she met Boaz, one of Elimelech's brothers, who went beyond the requirements of the Law to bless both Ruth and Naomi with food.
- † **[Slide 2: 3.1-2]** **3.1-4: 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? [i.e., should I not find you a husband?] Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight [I heard the gossip at the hairdresser's]. [Slide 3.3-4] Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. It shall**

be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do.”

- † **[Slide 4: threshing floor]** This is a threshing floor in Israel. Winnowing was the act of separating the grain from the chaff. The winnower would repeatedly pitch fork the mixture into the air and let the breeze blow the chaff away, while the heavier grain would fall to the ground.
 - This was a festive time of the harvest, and we see here that Boaz and his people will have a feast after the work is done, and then bed down, probably to guard their grain.
 - While we know Boaz is a righteous man, Naomi might be considering her knowledge that sometimes things got a little too festive at these affairs.
- † **[Slide 5: 3.3-4]** Naomi decides to resolve the tension of lack of children. Will she choose to find an answer from God’s revelation and then trust God with the results or will she continue to employ human reasoning?
 - On the surface, it looks like she is searching in God’s revelation. She previously identified Boaz as a kinsman redeemer who could redeem the land of a poor relative, and now she seems to imply that this means Boaz should provide children for Ruth. We talked about the Levirate marriage provision last week:
 - **[Slide 6: Deuteronomy 25.5-6]** Deuteronomy 25.5-6 [NIV]: “If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband’s brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel”
 - This is about protecting the family’s inheritance rights in the land, of redemption of a widow or of a line of seed, of preserving a heritage or family name. Based on what we see here, do you think Boaz should be bound by this passage of the covenant? If it were so, as Elimelech’s brother, whom should he marry?
- † Perhaps Naomi *is* looking in the covenant for a solution, but what about her approach and attitude?
 - **[Slide 7: 3.3-4]** She told Ruth to take off her mourning clothes and put on her best clothes, to wait until Boaz was exhausted from the hard work, alone in a dark place, and satiated with food and drink, and then to reveal herself at his bedside!
 - In the Hebrew text, there is sexual suggestion in the phrases “uncover his feet” and “lie down”; i.e. Naomi told Ruth to use sexual enticement, not make a logical proposal based on God’s Law. Do you think her idea is more godly or fleshly?
- † Do you think this shows a lack of confidence in Boaz? Probably not: Naomi seems to think a lot of Boaz, and she will express confidence in him later. She simply is not a very spiritual person.
- † **[Slide 8: 3.5-7]** **3.5-9: She [Ruth] said to her [Naomi], “All that you say I will do.” “So she [Ruth] went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her. ⁷When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down. [Slide 9: 3.8-9] ⁸It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. ⁹He said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative.”**

- † Ruth calls him a **גֹּאֵל** again, kinsman redeemer [“close relative” in NASB], showing either confusion or intentional combination of this concept with the Leverite marriage concept. Remember, the Leverite marriage concept is of a man redeeming the widow of his brother; the kinsman redeemer is a man redeeming the land of a poorer relative. Ruth blends the concepts: taking Naomi’s suggestion of seeing Boaz as a candidate for the Leverite principle, but calling him a kinsman redeemer.
- † **[Slide 10: wings]** She also said something very interesting! Back in v.2.12, Boaz had said he hoped Ruth would be blessed by the Lord, God of Israel, under whose wings she had sought refuge. Ruth uses the same Hebrew word for wings – **כַּנָּפִים**– to say spread your covering, literally spread your garment over me, which symbolized taking someone as a wife...
- She is communicating two things to Boaz: first, she is seeking refuge from Boaz as God’s man; and second, she is calling on him to be God’s man by fulfilling the covenant promises for God.
- † Notice that Ruth did quite literally what Naomi advised, but do you think she did it in the way Naomi intended or did she change it in some way to reflect her own character?
- Ruth literally uncovered Boaz’ feet, but did not approach him sexually; she did not try to entice Boaz when he was satiated and lying down, instead she waited patiently at his feet until he discovered her after rest, and her approach was to propose that he fulfill what she saw as a covenantal duty, not to entice him.
 - This exhibits Ruth’s upright character and conviction that God’s revelation held the answers for her life problems.
- † Think about Boaz’ situation. He loves God, he has just been blessed with a great harvest after over ten years of famine, he has eaten a good meal and had a little wine and no doubt sung some praises to God with his good friends. He is giddy with joy, exuberantly high on life, and sometimes that is when we are most vulnerable. And now he finds himself alone in the dark with a woman by his bedside. How will he react?
- How would you? Researchers say over half the church in this country uses porn. That’s not just middle schoolers, that’s housewives, that’s fathers who hope to raise up their children right. So obviously we have a lot of vulnerability to sexual lust. How would you handle this situation? What if you were riding an emotional high, having one of the best days of your life, and though not drunk you have had some wine as part of the celebration. And suppose you find yourself in the middle of the night in bed with someone you really find attractive, and nobody would know... what would you do?
 - Let’s see what Boaz did. By the way, I have no idea if Ruth was all that attractive.
- † **[Slide 11:3.10-13]** **3.10-15** Then he said, “May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter [uh oh, that doesn’t sound too romantic!]. **You have shown your last kindness** [this is to Naomi] **to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich. Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence. Now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; [Slide 12:3.13-15] let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning.”** So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said [probably to God], “Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.” Again he said, “Give me the cloak that is on you and hold

it.” So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.

- † When Boaz discovered why Ruth was by his bed, how did he react, and what does that reveal about his character?
 - He reacted with honor, generosity, and responsibility; he protected her chastity and reputation, gave more food to her, and promised to resolve her lack of children tension.
 - He praised Ruth for seeking a covenant solution to help Naomi instead of seeking out love [another indication that this is not primarily a romantic story]. Ruth is showing kindness to Naomi by trying to marry a relative who will redeem the family heritage instead of going after her own desires.
- † **[Slide 13:correct use]** Boaz said there was a kinsman redeemer - **גֹּאֵל** – closer than he, no doubt his older brother. Boaz will ask him to redeem Ruth, but promises her that he – Boaz – will redeem her if his brother will not. Note again the blending of the Kinsman Redeemer and Leverite Marriage roles.
- † Why does Boaz take responsibility for redeeming Ruth? We saw that this case is not covered by the letter of the Law, but I would say Boaz sees the Law correctly: the Law cannot cover every situation, but it reveals the character of God and provides overlying principles to use when making decisions. In contrast was the approach of the Pharisees in Jesus’ day, who diligently tried to keep the letter of the Law, but failed to understand the spirit of it.
 - How do you approach scriptural teaching for your life? Are you one who looks to apply the principles of God in every aspect of life, or are you one who looks for legal loopholes to get away with what you can? It is worth considering.
- † Note that Ruth’s “excellent” character is a factor in her destiny! But still, even with her excellent character, why does Ruth merit redeeming, and why can Boaz marry her if she is from Moab?
 - Remember, she has inheritance rights to the land from her first marriage to Mahlon
 - One has to assume God now sees her as an Israelite, both because of her first marriage and because of her choice of faith in him. Recall his warning against marrying foreigners was that they would lead Israelites astray in faith; Ruth has the correct faith.
- † **[Slide 14: Matthew 1.1-5]** Look at something interesting in Matthew 1.1-5 [NET]: This is the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah (by Tamar), Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz (by Rahab), Boaz the father of Obed (by Ruth), Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.
 - Boaz’ mother was Rahab! She was a Canaanite prostitute who helped the Israelites spy out Jericho! So it is understandable that Boaz is not afraid of Ruth’s foreignness, so long as she is a true follower of Yahweh.
- † **[Slide 15: 3.16-18]** **3.16-18: When she [Ruth] came to her mother-in-law, she [Naomi] said, “How did it go, my daughter?” And she [Ruth] told her all that the man had done for her. She said, “These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, ‘Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’” Then she [Naomi] said, “Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today.”**

- † Notice, Naomi does have respect for Boaz' character. She trusts that he will do right by them and even take care of it all this very day. We asked earlier if Naomi was conspiring to have Ruth seduce Boaz because she thought little of his character, and here we see it is not so, she just always thinks bottom line, in the flesh.

Verses 4.1-22

- † **[Slide 16:4.1-3] 4.1-4** Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, “Turn aside, friend, sit down here.” And he turned aside and sat down. ²He [Boaz] took ten men of the elders of the city and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down. ³Then he [Boaz] said to the closest relative, “Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. **[Slide 17: 4.4]** ⁴So I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy it before those who are sitting here, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am after you.’” And he [the closest relative] said, “I will redeem it.”
- † **[Slide 18: city gate]** Notice Boaz is doing it all properly, with elders as witnesses. It was common in that day to resolve such matters at the town gate. This is a depiction of the elaborate city gate at Megiddo. You can see there is a town square involved in the design, where people might meet.
- † Notice also that there is land that needs redemption: because Naomi has no income, she will have to sell the land unless someone will care for her. This answers the question of where Naomi and Ruth have been living and whether Naomi still has Elimelech's land.
- † **[Slide 19: 4.5-6] 4.5-8:** Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance.” ⁶The closest relative said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it.” **[Slide 20: 4.7-8]** ⁷Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel. ⁸So the closest relative said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself.” And he removed his sandal.
- † Recall, the point of redeeming the land of the poor was to keep the land in the family to whom it had been allocated, and the point of redeeming the widow was the same: to continue the name of the family and its existence in the land. Perhaps this is why the two concepts became merged in practice.
- † The closest relative was willing to redeem the land, but not to marry Ruth.
- If he married Ruth, their first son would carry Mahlon's name and inherit the redeemed land. Any further sons would be this man's own and would dilute the inheritance of his existing sons.
 - Perhaps he was hoping to get the land for himself, but was not willing to invest in redeeming the land and investing in it if it would not ultimately go to himself.
- † **[Slide 21: unnamed]** Note the trail of responses: there was a tension of lack of children for Elimelech's family; Naomi responded by suggesting Ruth approach Boaz; Ruth responded by doing so in her own way; Boaz responded to Ruth by seeking provision for her; the kinsman redeemer responded to the obligation by declining to fulfill it; Boaz responded to this by doing it himself; God will respond in two ways:

- To Boaz and Ruth, he will give a son, and he will hold up Boaz' name forever in Scripture for reflecting the character of God as a redeemer and over-blessor.
 - In contrast, note this closest relative is never named! In the covenant [Deuteronomy 25.10], if someone failed to fulfill the Levirate marriage obligation, his name was struck from the record, and he was referred to essentially as the man who would not honor this obligation! This appears to have happened in this narrative!
 - Where Boaz appears to call him “friend” in v.1, the Hebrew word is פֶּלִנִי [puh-loh-nee], literally something like “the unnamed one.”
- † **[Slide 22: 4.9-10] 4.9-12 Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his birth place; you are witnesses today.” [Slide 23: 4.11-12] All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem. Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD will give you by this young woman.”**
- † This is a nice benediction. Let me explain some of the references to you.
- First, note at the end here, it is God who provides descendants: he is the covenant blessing who will bring children.
- † Rachel and Leah were the wives of Jacob, and from them and their maids came the eleven sons which developed into twelve tribes of Israel and the Levites. This no doubt was a prayer for fertility, an answer to the lack of children issue.
- Note, however, that while the birth of a son will solve the children issue for the line of Elimelech and his son Mahlon, there is also a wish here for Boaz' line to prosper through Ruth.
 - Rachel gave birth to Joseph, who saved his people while they were in Egypt: he was a deliverer for God.
- † These people who were praying were all Judeans, descendants of Judah, and they were also descendants of Perez, Judah's son. Tamar was Judah's wife, who also was a foreigner who perpetuated a family line threatened with extinction. It is interesting to see how God used the three women named in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus: Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth, all foreigners.
- † Note the prophetic properties of this: build the house of Israel, achieve wealth and fame, and the mention of Tamar and Perez. We will come back to this in a moment...
- † **[Slide 24: 4.13] 4.13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.**
- † The one semi-romantic line! It is interesting to consider that if we assume the average age was fifteen when getting married, then Naomi is at least in her forties, perhaps older since she earlier implied she would not be able to have more children [1.11-13]. Ruth would be in her late twenties. If Boaz was older than Elimelech, then he would be even older than Naomi, in his upper forties at least.

- † More importantly, how do we know God blessed this marriage? He immediately blessed them with a child, whereas Ruth had been barren for ten years in her previous marriage to Mahlon.
- † **[Slide 25: 4.14-15] 4.14-15 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. ¹⁵May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."**
- † Notice to whom the women give credit for the provision of a child: God!
- † Here, "redeemer" refers to the child, the one who would carry on the family name. It is a bit confusing in English.
- † **[Slide 26: 4.16] 4.16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse.**
- † The Hebrew literally says she set the child on her breast, but we are not to take that to mean she was nursing him. Rather, she was holding him lovingly, and would become a care-giver to him, like any live-in grandmother would.
- † **[Slide 27: 4.17-22] 4.17-22 The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. ¹⁸Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron, ¹⁹and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab, ²⁰and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon, ²¹and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, ²²and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.**
- † Obed means "one who works" or "one who serves."
 - The elders prayed that Boaz' house would be like that of Perez; here we see that Perez was a direct ancestor of Boaz, and that Boaz, like Perez, would be the line of seed that brought King David.
 - v.17 implies Obed was the heir of Elimelech/Mahlon, but v.21 calls him a descendent of Boaz! He inherits Elimelech's land, but he was biologically from Boaz, who redeemed the widow and the land; and it is from Boaz' line of seed that God will bring King David and eventually [legally] Jesus the Messiah.

Implications

- † **[Slide 28: judges to king] *End answers Beginning:*** Remember how the book began? It was the days of the Judges. And the book ends with David. David was the answer to the problems of the time of the judges: he was the king after God's own heart, who would unite the country and lead it toward God. God would raise up a good prophet and judge named Samuel, who would anoint David as the king. [King Saul was merely a lesson God was teaching the people for demanding a king like the other nations had.]
- † **[Slide 29: covenants] *Further Biblical Integration:*** The Abrahamic Covenant led to creation of a nation, which led to the Mosaic Covenant of Law for that representative nation, which led to Ruth and Boaz being faithful and obedient, which led to David being born to be the representative king for God, which led to Jesus the ultimate representative of God the Father.
- † **[Slide 30: come in faith] *Come in Faith:*** Also, note that Ruth is not only blessed by God but allowed to come into the promised land and become one of the chosen people. Even as God chose Abraham

to become the founder of the nation Israel, he told Abraham that the rest of the peoples would be blessed through him. Ultimately, that would be through Abraham's descendent, Jesus, but even before Jesus came Israel was to represent God to the rest of the world, a fact that was codified within the Mosaic Law. God wants people to know that it doesn't matter who you are or what family you are from, if you come to him in faith he will make provision for you.

- † **[Slide 31: new covenant]** *Living by the Covenant:* God blessed Ruth for seeking the covenant answer to both the food tension and the child tension. This is one purpose of the book: God wants us to know that we would be blessed to understand the covenant he has with us [even though it is different than the one he had with them]!
- † **[Slide 32: seed]** *Seed Path:* Recall, God promised in Genesis 3.15 that Eve would have a "seed" that would redeem mankind and the earth from the curse and from Satan's rule. In Genesis 12.1-3, God chose Abraham's line to be the line of that seed, a promise reiterated to Isaac and Jacob. Jacob and Tamar had Perez, who had Hezron and so on, leading to Boaz, Obed, Jesse, and David. From the line of David, we know, would come Jesus the Messiah, as God also prophetically promised. Jesus is Eve's seed who will redeem mankind and the Earth. Thus, the book of Ruth ties together the "ultimate seed" path of Jesus from Abraham to David!
- † **[Slide 33: redemption]** *Redemption:* One big message in this narrative is about redemption. God wrote into his Law for the nation that they should reflect his character by redeeming the widow without a son and redeeming the land of a poor family member. God the Father later would send his Son, Jesus to redeem the lost, by paying with his blood to free us from our captivity to sin, death, evil, and even the Law itself. We need to put our faith in that God, in that savior, in that single way of deliverance.