

Redeeming Love

Ruth 2:1-23

October 4, 2009

Intro

We come now to the book of Ruth. This book is a story of redemption because it pictures for us, and in fact prophetically looks forward to the redemption of believers by Jesus Christ.

It is also a love story and in fact, this story has become a classic in literature. Many students of literature study this book because it is so beautifully written in both poetry and prose.

The book of Ruth was written during the time of the Judges. We don't know the exact time when Ruth lived, but we have a fairly good sense of it because she was the great grandmother of David the king.

There are a lot of lessons for us to learn from this book both from a personal standpoint as well as from a theological perspective. The hero of the story, Boaz, is clearly a picture of our Messiah, Jesus Christ. Therefore, Ruth is a picture of the church whom Christ loves and redeems.

From a personal standpoint there is a lot for us in this book because we see how each of the characters responds to difficulty and we see the hand of God interacting in their lives along the way.

I. Nothing Just Happens

- 1 One of the great lessons that we learn from the book of Ruth is that nothing just happens. For example, from the first verse of the book we learn that there was a famine in the land.
- 2 But we learned from the book of Deuteronomy that if Israel went through a famine it was because their hearts became hard and so God was trying to bring them back to Himself.
- 3 In other words, the famine just didn't happen, God was using this in their lives for the purpose of repentance.
- 4 Remember that this story unfolded during the time of the Judges and what we saw during that time was that when the people turned their hearts away from God He would allow difficulty and troubles to come into their lives so that they would call out to him again and return.

A. Stay faithful in difficulty

- 5 The second lesson we learn from the book of Ruth also comes from the very first verse. It says that because of the famine a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the land of Moab with his wife and two sons.
- 6 It is no coincidence that the name Bethlehem means house of bread. So here they are in Bethlehem and there is a famine in the land so they leave the place which

God had given them as their inheritance to go to Moab.

- 7 But Moab is not a good place. In fact, it is a picture of the world. God even refers to Moab in the Psalms to give us insight.

Psalm 60:7-8, “Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet of My head; Judah is My scepter. Moab is My washbowl; over Edom I shall throw My shoe;”

- 8 The wash bowl is the place where the dirty water falls and collects in one place. God is making it quite clear how he feels about Moab.
- 9 Yes, life was difficult in Bethlehem and they wanted something easier, but stepping out of God’s will is not the way to find it. In fact, what they will discover was that life in Bethlehem wasn’t quite as bad as they thought.
- 10 That becomes very clear to us in verse 21 of the first chapter where Naomi says, "I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty."
- 11 The great lesson here is that it's better to walk with God through difficulty than to seek your own solution; to become your own provision.
- 12 Naomi stayed 10 years in Moab. During that time her husband died, her two sons died, and all she had with her was her two Moabite daughters-in-law.
- 13 God will never let you be satisfied in Moab. Just like the prodigal son could never be satisfied even though he had lots of money to spend on worldly living.
- 14 Finally, Naomi came to her senses and decided to go back to Bethlehem, to the house of bread. She finally decided that there was bread enough to spare in her Father's house.

Luke 15:17, “But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger.’”

App - I love the words of the hymn, “And when we've come to the end of our hoarded resources, He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.”

- 15 Stay faithful in difficulty. Keep walking with God no matter how difficult it becomes because He promises to be with you, that He will never leave you, that He will never forsake you.

B. Don’t allow your heart to become “Mara”

- 1 One of the tragedies of this story is seen in the heart of Naomi. When Naomi

returned to Bethlehem the city was stirred because of them and it seems they were surprised at her appearance. "Is this Naomi?" they asked.

- 2 "Don't call me Naomi," she replied, "call me Mara." Her name, Naomi, means "pleasantness," but the name, Mara, means "bitterness."
- 3 She made it clear who it was that she blamed. "The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me."
- 4 Naomi had resigned herself to the thought that God was against her, but we have the opportunity to see from God's perspective that in the midst of troubles and trials, of darkness and despair, that God was doing a work of redemption. If she could have only believed that the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Romans 11:29, for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Psalm 127:2, It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, To eat the bread of painful labors; for it is He who gives to His beloved even in his sleep.

- 5 Bitterness keeps us from trusting God. When you're blaming God, it's very hard to trust him.
- 6 There is a scripture in the book of Romans that we find very encouraging, but we need to correctly understand what it means.

Romans 8:28, And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

- 1 This verse doesn't mean that God will cause all things to be good; it means that God causes all things to work together for our good and for His glory.

Illus - When Jonah was trying to flee from God's will, he got on a ship in Joppa and headed for Spain. That ship then ran straight into a storm. Jonah immediately recognized that God was using the storm to turn his life around.

- 2 The key is to acknowledge God in all your ways.

Proverbs 3:5-6, Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Psalm 139:1-10 His right hand lays hold of us at all times.

II. God Blesses Faithfulness

- 1 In chapter 2, the storyline changes to focus on Ruth. Her heart and her faithfulness is seen when she refused to return to Moab. Her declaration to stay with Naomi was both poetic and powerful.
- 2 We immediately are struck by Ruth's heart and character. She walked in faithfulness and God would bless her for it, though she is a Moabite.
- 3 But we are also introduced to Boaz in verse one and his heart and character jump out from the pages as well.
- 4 The lesson that becomes clear to us is that "grace comes back to you."

A. Grace comes back to you

- 1 Ruth's grace is seen again in her heart to take care of Naomi. She wants to go and glean in the fields for the both of them.
- 2 And then we see the grace of Boaz in even the simple greeting that he gives to his workers.

Illus – Grace should be seen in even the simplest things in our lives. Boaz could have treated his men harshly, no doubt that would have been common in that day.

Colossians 4:6, Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Mark 10:42-45 We must have grace in authority.

- 3 But what we also see in the book of Ruth is that grace comes back to you.
- 4 When Boaz treated Ruth with such kindness she asked him in verse 10 why she had found such grace in his sight. He responded in verse 11 that it was because of all that she had done for Naomi. He then said, "May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel."
- 5 In other words, grace was coming back to her.

Luke 6:36-38 – The measure of your grace comes back to you.

Illus - Many years ago someone was unhappy with me and I received a harshly worded letter as a result. But God made it clear to me that every word in my response must be grace. And the result was beautiful reconciliation; for which I give God the glory, because the letter I wanted to send was anything but gracious.

B. Live in the shadow of the Almighty

- 6 The other statement that Boaz made to Ruth in verse 12 should also strike us powerfully. He said, "May your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel,

under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."

- 7 Now that is a powerful statement filled with insight. When Elimelech and Naomi left Bethlehem, they went out from under the shadow of the Almighty. But it is better to walk with God through difficulty than to seek your own solution in the world.
- 8 But when Ruth and Naomi came back to Bethlehem they had decided to dwell under the wings of God and seek refuge there.

Proverbs 18:10, The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe.

Psalm 91:1-9 Abide in the shadow of the Almighty

C. God gives handfuls on purpose

- 9 A beautiful part of the story of Ruth and Boaz is seen in verse 16 where Boaz told his workers to purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it where she would glean.
- 10 Again, Boaz is a picture of Christ as we will see very clearly in chapters 3 and 4. And the picture here is the desire of God's heart to give us blessings on purpose as we walk our way through the path of life.
- 11 I love that phrase, "handfuls on purpose."

Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans that I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope."

Romans 8:31-32, What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

- 1 But there is a purpose in the blessings which God gives.

Illus- Samson's great error was assuming that the great gifts of strength which God gave him were his to use as he wished.

- 2 But if we use God's blessing for our own glory, or for our own pleasure, we will miss out on the fulfillment that comes from being in God's purpose.

Illus - God allowed me to be able to play musical instruments and when I was young I

wanted my own glory...