

# Responding to the Redeemer

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] But I hope that today in this passage that we see that there's a God who is longing for us to reach out in faith and receive good from him.

And actually is there waiting to wrap his arms around us and welcome us home. But as we're jumping back into the book of Ruth, you might have missed some of our time.

And also just to get our head into the time that we're in that is very different to what we face today. And let's just look back at what we saw. Because as we continue this series in Ruth, we saw two Sundays ago where we met Ruth and Naomi.

And Ruth is her daughter-in-law. And if you missed these Sundays, please do go back. They're on the website or on the Facebook page. Do listen in. And we saw that the book of Ruth takes place in a time when people do not listen or trust God.

And often are turning away from him. And we saw that Naomi left the land that she lived in. She left the town of Bethlehem in the face of famine.

[ 1 : 1 3 ] And what we saw is they turned their back on God. They went to another land, the land of enemies of God's people, to Moab. And we saw sadness. There was three funerals in this land.

Her husband and her two sons die. And Naomi was left almost alone. She was left feeling empty with a bitter taste in her mouth towards God.

But we saw there was a glimmer of hope. God had visited his rebellious people. There was food that was coming. The harvest was going to happen. And so Naomi, with a glimmer of hope in her heart, sets out to return home with her daughter-in-law.

And so the story continued last week. They arrived at the beginning of the barley harvest. And we saw that it ended at the end of the barley harvest, covering some seven weeks.

And throughout it we saw that Ruth, this Moabite daughter-in-law, faithfully went out into the fields day by day, gathering up grain for their mother-in-law. She picked up the leftovers of the field that the workers had left behind under God's good law to protect someone in her position.

[ 2 : 2 5 ] And it was in this field that we met Boaz. And that's who the chapter was focused on last week. He was a good man called a worthy man. And he lived up to the description in everything he did.

And we saw how he acted from the way he spoke to his servants, how he meets and shows kindness to Ruth, even though she was a foreigner and part of God's enemies.

He offers her his protection, offers her to come and eat lunch with him, and goes above God's requirements to ensure that she has food and that she's cared for. And Ruth was astounded at this man.

And in seeing the care of Boaz to Ruth, Naomi begins to turn from her own despair and her emptiness and her blaming God to praising God, praising him for his love and his faithfulness to her.

And she begins to long to receive more from him. She begins to see that God had not forgotten her family like she had feared. And even though she had turned her back on him, God was there waiting to welcome her.

[ 3 : 39 ] And yet she was even more hopeful because this man Boaz, as we were told many times, is a relative, a redeemer. And last week, Ali showed us, in these days, in the Old Testament, there was a provision where it was called a kinsman redeemer.

Another good law that was given to protect someone in Naomi and Ruth's position. It was their job to protect and defend their relative, to pay their debts, or to restore their property, or in the case here, to marry the relative of the one who lost their male husband so that there would be a son to be born so that the name would not die out.

Because each family, when they had been taken from Egypt to the Promised Land, had been given a portion. They were given a bit of land that belonged to them and their family. It tied them to God's promise and to God's land.

And this is why, for Naomi to leave in chapter 1, to leave God's land, was so shocking. It was her leaving the provision of God, turning her back on Him. And it's why the death of her husband and sons without an heir was so devastating.

And this is why their return to God and to His land was so important. And this is why, when we're introduced to Boaz, it's so exciting. There's hope of marriage and provision and protection and an heir.

[ 5 : 24 ] We were left wondering in all this, how was this woman Ruth, a Moabite, going to come and marry this man Boaz, who was so worthy and so kind and so good?

And having looked at this background, we're going to see how this comes about today. We're going to be looking at this chapter in three headings. We're going to look at first, the plan, and second, the proposal, and third and finally, the promise.

So that's the plan, the proposal, and the promise. And so we begin our chapter with a risky plan. And I don't know if you caught this as Ali read. But Naomi is seeking rest for her daughter-in-law, Ruth, and this rest is marriage.

And this is something we've seen that has been a longing for Ruth, for Naomi, all the way through the book. In chapter one, in verse nine, it was the prayer of Naomi that these women would return, her two daughter-in-laws, would return back to their own family in Moab.

She said, May the Lord grant you the fine rest, each of you, in the house of her husband. And as we saw in these days, for women, a husband was essential for protection and provision, for sons and daughters who would be able to care for them in their old age.

[ 6 : 46 ] And Naomi believed it would be impossible to find in Bethlehem. But about hearing about Boaz in chapter two, Naomi has hope for a husband for Ruth.

And this marriage comes with the prospect of children, of welcome, of inclusion and integration into the society. Naomi says, in verse two, as this plan begins to form, is not Boaz our relative?

He will be down at the threshing floor. And this is where they gathered all the grains that they've been harvesting all the way through and where they were going to separate it. And she thought, here's an opportunity for Ruth to go and speak to Boaz when he'll be happy and he'll be open.

And this threshing floor is a place of celebration and harvest has come and it's where the workers would stay as they drank and as they worked. And Ruth is given the plan by Naomi.

She says in verse three, wash therefore and anoint yourself and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor. But do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

[ 8 : 01 ] She is to prepare herself, she is to hide herself and to wait till the end of the evening. She goes on in verse four, but when he lies down, observe the place where he lies, then go and uncover his feet and lie down and he will tell you what to do.

I don't know what you made of this plan. Maybe you skipped over it, maybe you didn't notice. Maybe you might have been thinking, isn't this a bit risky?

In days such as this to send a vulnerable woman at night to where these men are having basically a party. And we saw that Ruth needed protection from Boaz in the middle of the day in an open field.

Or maybe you think this is a bit scandalous. Is Ruth being sent here out to seduce righteous Boaz when he's drunk or half asleep? Or is Naomi being a bit untoward in sending her daughter and lot into this?

And in this chapter, there is deliberately provocative language and it can be easy to draw the wrong ideas. What we do find is the writer deliberately uses words that have more than one meaning.

[ 9 : 17 ] Some of these words do have sexual connotations. The threshing floor is a place that has been known in Israel as a place where immorality happens. And she is told to wash, to dress up, to anoint, are used elsewhere of prostitutes.

And Ruth is to wait till the end of the night when he's had his fill of food and drink and he's happy. It could mean drunk or it could just mean that he's enjoying the wine.

And we see in verse 4 this uncover his feet. Strangely, elsewhere, it's used of reproductive organs and Ruth is told to lie down at his feet and to wait for him to respond to you.

And this language comes with even stronger connotations for this first reader who knows about the history of these people or maybe if you've read through the Bible to this point.

See, you would know that both Ruth and Boaz's families are well-known history of falling foul of this type of plan. See, Ruth comes from the people of Moab who come from the family of Lot.

[ 10 : 31 ] And in Genesis 19 we read a sad tale where two widow daughters, rather than seeking God, seek to provide heirs for their father and despair from him.

And in the family of Boaz, he is the lion of Judah and Tamar. Another sad story where after the death of two wicked sons, Judah failed to provide a kinsman redeemer for his daughter-in-law who sought an heir for herself from him.

So we're left thinking about all sorts of things that could go wrong for Ruth and Boaz. And Ruth, we see, is on board with this plan.

We see, all that you say I will do. And this is what we see that happens in verse 6 down to verse 7. And so she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law commanded her.

And when 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 softly and covered his feet and lay down. But we are left in this tension wondering what will happen when Boaz wakes up.

[ 11 : 39 ] And having seen this plan, this plan of Naomi and Ruth, we turn to her second point, this proposal. And we see that this plan works at midnight when it gets cold.

Boaz awakes with a start. Not only are his toes cold, which is bad enough, but he turns over and he sees that there's a woman at his feet.

And needless to say, he's a little shocked and he asks this woman, who are you? She replies simply in verse 9, I am Ruth, your servant.

But here she deviates from Naomi's plan when rather than waiting for his response, she jumps in and asks Boaz to spread your wings over your servant for you are a redeemer in verse 9.

And here it is good as getting down on one knee and pulling out a ring to Boaz. She tells him her desire for him. She's not interested in something a bit untoward.

[ 12 : 44 ] She's interested in marriage. This phrase, spread your wings, is a cinnamon for marriage. And we saw that last week, this was the very words used by Boaz to describe how Ruth had come to seek refuge under the wings of God in chapter 2, verse 12.

And here, she quotes Boaz's own words back to him. The very promises he wanted for her. Ruth is now wanting and asking Boaz to become part of that, to be the one to fulfill this protection and provision in her life.

To fulfill his own words that he spoke over her and be the one to deliver God's care and promises. She says, you are one of my redeemers.

She's asking him to fulfill his responsibilities as someone called to help his relative in need. And in verse 10, we see that Boaz responds and not in a lewd way, but with God's blessing on his lips.

He commends Ruth for her kindness and her honor. He recognized that she could have abandoned her mother-in-law and gone after other men who were richer or younger or just younger and poorer.

[ 14 : 11 ] Or she could have found a different redeemer. But she sought him and sought him alone. He praises her in chapter 2, we saw that Boaz was presented as the worthy man, but here, Boaz and the whole town recognized that Ruth is a worthy woman in verse 11.

See, they have seen her trust in the Lord, her faithfulness and her work to provide for her mother-in-law. And this worthy, it's the same word used to describe in the book of Proverbs in 31, this woman who exemplifies godly character.

And Ruth is praised as this picture of wisdom and faithfulness. A woman who is worthy as a potential wife, who trusts in God, who is full of faith and character and cares for her family.

And he praises her for her kindness. In chapter 2, verse 11, he was impressed by Ruth's kindness towards Naomi in choosing to return with her.

And now this kindness he's referring to is that she is desiring to provide an heir for Naomi. And Boaz acts in purity rather than anything else.

[ 15 : 33 ] He acts wisely. And even though there is sensual language in here, there is a desire, it's that he wants to marry her and she wants to marry him.

This is not a business deal but a desire for marriage. And as we have seen and as we will see throughout this book, that both Ruth and Boaz are not like their ancestors or like those who live around them in Moab or Israel.

And actually, it's best to see that this is a bold plan of a humble woman and her desire for Ruth to have Boaz marry her and protect her. And this is an invitation of love.

And it can make us a bit uncomfortable. But the tension is important because this is a story of love and also because it highlights that in a day where everyone does what they think is right, we have these two people, Ruth and Boaz, who are faithful.

It's an example of godliness. See, this uncovering of her feet is a way of ensuring that he will stir in the coolness early in hours and notice her.

[ 16 : 57 ] And this washing and clothing to change and her perfume, that it's actions of someone who is coming out of her mourning. She is ready to remarry.

She is showing her period of mourning is over for her deceased husband and yet she is still taking this risky option as a foreigner and a lowly woman to come and take this initiative.

It's not a guide to get a husband or something that to be emulated day but this is her reaching out in faith in the way she can to receive from God his good promises for her.

For a redeemer for these two women who are expectant and who trust in God. And we see that Boaz responds and he tells her not to fear. He will do as she asks.

He tells her in verse 12 and now it is true that I am a redeemer. And just as we're letting our hearts fill and our eyes are beginning to tear Boaz goes on to raise a snag in this romance.

[ 18 : 06 ] That's not how we see the story going. He throws a spanner in this hope of marriage between them. He says in verse 12 again yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. This other man has the responsibility and right to redeem you first.

This is not what we want as we read through the story but even here we see his character. He wants to do what is right. He wants to go about this in the right way and far from anything untoward happening he is honourable.

And for us who've watched far too many romantic comedies we almost want him to disregard this. We want him to grab her run off into the sunset and live happily ever after.

But this is not who he is. This is not the man Boaz is. But he does give her security and a promise. He calls her to stay there under his protection from now until the morning.

And he goes further to say he wants to protect her from scandal. He wants no one to know of her visit in case they were to imply anything untoward. And she arose in verse 14 before anyone could recognise another.

[ 19 : 21 ] And we are told here that everything has been done decently and discreetly and in bounds. to reach out in faith to Boaz has been a success.

She's been promised a redeemer but this news of the other man has left us wanting certainty for Ruth and Naomi. And so now that we've seen this plan and this proposal that went a bit awry now our final point the promise which comes in the morning before the people woke up and we will hear it again repeated to Naomi from Ruth.

What we find in verse 16 is when Ruth returns Naomi asks how did it fare my daughter? But literally she asks who are you my daughter?

It's the same question that Boaz asked Ruth in verse 9 and obviously she's not forgotten who Ruth is but it points to what Naomi desires to know about Ruth.

Has her status changed? Did the plan work? Are you going to be his wife? Is Ruth still a Moabite widow or set to be redeemed by Boaz?

[ 20 : 37 ] He's asking has everything turned around for us? And so we hear that Ruth told her all that this man Boaz had done for her his plan to ensure that she would have a redeemer.

what we see is that Boaz promises that if this man who's closer than him will not redeem her as he should Boaz swears that he will redeem her.

She will not be left. She will not face abandonment. She will be provided for. He says if he will redeem you good let him do it but if he is not willing to redeem you then as the Lord lives I will redeem you.

Boaz will press on him and make sure this happens but if he rejects her he will step in. But we also see the security in how she leaves.

She doesn't leave empty handed. We see that in verse 15 that in the morning as Ruth has been sent off discreetly by Boaz before she can leave he calls her to himself.

[ 21 : 47 ] He asks her to hold out her garment and he pours into that garment a huge amount of grain. So large we are told that Boaz has to put it on her.

And it would translate about 40 kilograms of grain. That's the weight of 40 bags of sugar. And she carries it all the way back into the city. All the way back to her mother-in-law.

This is no weak woman or a damsel in distress. This is a strong woman of God who puts the weight of that on her back and takes it to her mother-in-law. And just like at the end of chapter 2, chapter 3 ends with Ruth bringing this incredible amount of grain home to Naomi.

She's come home with provision that will feed them to survive till the following harvest. But she comes with this promise from Boaz, as the Lord lives, I will redeem you.

And this worthy man we have seen is honourable to his word, but he also sets his promise on the sure God that they both trust in.

[ 23 : 00 ] This man who we can trust in his word has both the determination and the means to deliver this rest for Naomi. And this grain he gives her is a bit like an engagement ring.

It's the anticipation of marriage. And Ruth includes something that we didn't see in the first time when Boaz gave it to her.

Boaz's gift of grain to Ruth was intended to bless Naomi. Boaz is serious about his pursuit for Ruth, so serious that he will involve caring for her mother-in-law too.

And we see this in how Ruth highlights the grain to her mother-in-law and the words that Boaz has spoken as he gave them to her. We see this in verse 17 when Boaz said, you must not go back empty handed to your mother-in-law.

And in this Ruth understands what Boaz is doing. The word empty handed is literally just empty. You must not return empty to your mother-in-law.

[ 24 : 08 ] It's the same word that Naomi had used in chapter one to describe her condition and what she felt as she arrived back in Bethlehem. And here we're being told that Ruth is no longer empty as she returns to Naomi with this.

And it's a symbolic provision of what Boaz promises as he hopes to banish emptiness from them. Because when Naomi said to the people in her village that she was empty, she was both physically hungry and childless.

And Boaz as its redeemer is laying his promise that our emptiness is going to find fullness. And what is clear is that we are witnessing Naomi's journey as she begins this journey towards fullness.

And through the actions of Ruth and Boaz her days of emptiness are soon to be over. And Naomi sees this. She sees in hope.

She sees that Boaz's serious commitment will lead him to meet with this closer relative. And her advice to Ruth is to wait but to wait expectantly.

[ 25 : 30 ] She says in verse 18 wait until you learn how this matter turns out. For the man Boaz will not rest but will settle that is to accomplish to finish this matter today.

See Naomi understands the promise of this man of Boaz is he is going to deal with this as soon as possible. He's going to deal with this today. And we are left like Ruth and Naomi expecting and hoping that indeed it will be Boaz who gives Ruth and Naomi the true rest and fullness from God that they seek.

But for that we have to come back next week. And we're left deliberately hanging wanting to know. And see because in this story we're going through the journey of their life and seeing as God works and seeing God's provision and his promises.

And for us today we see in this chapter Naomi having her hope and her trust in the Lord rekindled into a burning fire.

And we see a beautiful picture of Ruth reaching out in faith to a redeemer. She had seen his character in chapter 2. She has seen that this is a man after God's own heart.

[ 26 : 50 ] This is God's man and she wants him to redeem her. And she comes expectantly to him. And we see that in chapter 3 she wants to come under this man's care.

One harvest was not enough. Ruth wants lifelong provision from a redeemer to care for her in all the areas of her life. See she trusts him and she lay herself humbly and helplessly at his feet.

See Ruth came to Boaz and asked him to be what she needed a redeemer. And Boaz promised her this marriage but also provided for her in the meantime.

And this story has more for us to say than just a hope in the past but it points us all to our redeemer. A redeemer that's available to everyone who likewise offers us rest.

Rest for our souls and redemption as our redeemer, our great redeemer. So that just as we are left at the end of this chapter longing for this redemption to come, longing for that marriage that would come and that we're going to see in chapter four, the Old Testament itself leaves everyone longing for a great redeemer to come.

[ 28 : 17 ] Not just for one family but for all people from Israel, from Moab and all the nations of the earth. We're left with this great longing of when will he come?

And then finally the New Testament breaks open with saying he has come. There's greater than Boaz steps onto the page. God himself takes on human flesh.

As you read and as you see the life of Jesus in the eyewitness accounts, you see his character and you see his kindness. You see how he likewise cares for the poor, the vulnerable, the widowed, the helpless.

Also how he cares for his enemy, for those who oppose him, how he loves them, how he desires none of them be lost, who he lays down his life for, who provides for their greatest needs, for their soul and for their spiritual emptiness and the separation from God, who welcomes all people to come into his family.

See, the rest we need, the help that we need, will not come from our status, our family, or our friends, or even a marriage, but can come only from God.

[ 29 : 50 ] See, it's Jesus who comes into this world and says to everyone, come unto me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. See, Jesus sees our need, sees our loss, our emptiness, and offers us fullness in him.

So that even if you were once an enemy to God like Ruth, or someone who walked away from God like Naomi, Jesus promises that anyone who comes to him will find this rest.

He'll offer a covering under his wings, a covering for our shame, our fears, and our nakedness, the one who is God's kindness to us, the one who offers and leaves all of us with a certain hope of our redemption that we're still waiting for, we're waiting for that day when he will return.

But we, like Ruth, are left with this call to come in faith, to reach out and receive from Jesus.

Jesus. And as we do, we'll see that it is him who's been at work all along, wooing us and drawing us to himself, showing us who he is and what he is like.

[ 31 : 18 ] So we are left with, will we reach out? Will we ask him to spread his wings over us for the first time or once again this week? To ask for him to lay his care and his protection upon us?

And for us to long that he will give us his rest now and his rest to come. And so let's pray and seek that help.

Lord, we thank you for your goodness. We thank you that as we see here in the book of Ruth, that you provide for your people.

That Lord, help us to see that you are there and your arms are open. That there is nothing to keep any of us from coming to you. There is no barrier, there is no hindrance because you broke it all down.

Lord, help us to come and seek your care, your provision and your help. Help us not to be proud, help us not to put you off, but to see that your arms are open to welcome us into your family as our redeemer.

[ 32 : 36 ] So Lord, bless us this week. Send us out of here knowing this care and knowing your provision. Bless us and keep us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.