

RUTH: REDEEMING THE MESS

ruth 2.14-23: there is a redeemer

Questions for Personal Study

Read the entirety of Ruth 1 and 2. What is your impression so far?
Why is Naomi so excited about Boaz? Why does she suddenly have hope?
Why is the concept of the “next-of-kin redeemer” not introduced earlier?
Recount the kindness of Boaz to Ruth. What impresses you about him?
Read 2.20. Whose kindness is Naomi grateful for? How do you know?
What are the implications of Boaz & Yahweh being so closely connected?

Questions for Study in Community

Discuss the concept of the “next of kin redeemer.” See Deut 25 & Lev 25.
Is Boaz obligated to do this for Ruth? Why or why not?
Do you think - judging by the story thus far - that Boaz will do it?
In what ways does Boaz point us to our Redeemer, Jesus Christ?

Questions for Staying on Mission

Share about how the “intentionally bless 3 different people this week” went.
Boaz “does hesed” to Ruth. Discuss what that looks like in the story.
List out actions he takes that could transfer as principles into our day.
What might it look like for you to “do hesed” with your neighbors?
Plan some summer activities that could promote mission with each other.

Thoughts for Parents

Each night this week, either around the dinner table or before bed, take some time to read and explain the story of Ruth 2.14-23 to your kids. Here are some ideas for discussion and teaching. As always, be honest about your own failings, pray fervently for your kids, and keep pointing them to Jesus!

How does Boaz treat Ruth? Talk about how boys should treat girls.
Talk about the fact that Ruth’s daddy isn’t around to grill Boaz.
Discuss Boaz’s generosity to Ruth. How is he like God (1.6)?
What is a redeemer? Talk about what that means for Boaz.

How does Boaz point us forward to Jesus? How does Jesus redeem us?
Parents, consider the work that went into raising a Boaz!
Also, be encouraged by how well Ruth turned out despite pagan parents!

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A Budding Love Story

As we reach the half-way point in our study of Ruth, we’ve begun to see how the tragic start of chapter 1 might become something beautiful by the end chapter 4. After the death of her husband and 2 sons in the land of Moab, Naomi has returned to Bethlehem full of bitterness at God for the way he has seemingly ruined her life and left her with nothing but a recently converted daughter-in-law to comfort her. By the end of chapter 1, Naomi has almost completely given up hope and certainly oblivious to how God might be at work in and through her tragedy to bring about surprisingly good purposes.

Fortunately for Naomi, the young Moabite Ruth has not given up hope and sets out in the beginning of chapter 2 to glean in the fields in hopes that God will show himself faithful in her obedience. Because Ruth trusts that God has not given up on them, she chooses obedience, and soon finds herself in the field of the godly, masculine, well-respected, and single Boaz. Boaz displays his righteous character in his strong-yet-tender care for Ruth; Ruth displays her righteous character in her courageous service of Naomi and humble response to Boaz’s kindness. In a turn of events that seems almost too good to be true, the misfortune of Ruth and Naomi seems about to be overturned by the gracious providence of God in the protection and provision offered by Boaz.

From Law to Grace

At noontime, Boaz invites Ruth to eat with him: “Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine.” Last week we watched how Boaz honored and protected Ruth and now - in this meal - he is going above and beyond all that to serve Ruth in a most sacrificial and beautiful way. She likely has not eaten a full meal like this in many weeks, and now Boaz is seating her at his table, preparing a meal for her, and personally serving her the bread, wine, and roasted grain.

God’s law commanded that a man like Boaz leave a small margin unharvested around his field in order for the foreigner or the poor to glean and make a subsistence living. Boaz is a picture of a man who not only obeys the Law of

God but *delights* in it. In chapter 1, the narrator told us that “the Lord had visited his people and brought them bread,” and what we see in Boaz in the acknowledgment that God’s blessing on his life leads to greater and more joyful obedience. Rather than Pharisaically trying to decipher the letter of the Law, Boaz has embraced the spirit of the Law and serves Ruth a spread that leaves her satisfied and with left-overs.

As if the meal was not enough, Boaz then instructs his reapers to allow Ruth to glean “among the sheaves” and to pull some grain out of their own bundles in order to leave it for her to pick-up. Boaz is ensuring that Ruth will glean more than enough for herself and for her mother-in-law. In fact, by the time Ruth is done gleaning that evening, she walks back into Bethlehem with more than 40 pounds of grain and a doggy-bag of leftovers from lunch to share with Naomi. The equivalent would be making more than a week’s wages in one day of work. In other words, by the time the barley and wheat harvests are finished 8 weeks later, Ruth will have gleaned enough from Boaz’s fields to support herself and Naomi for an entire year. Boaz is a man who understands - and demonstrates - the lavish grace of God.

Abundant Kindness

When Ruth finally returns home, Naomi instantly realizes that something significant has taken place: “Where have you worked?!” Suddenly, the bitter Naomi is finding hope again, and utters what is almost a prayer for the man who has made this possible for Ruth: “Blessed be the man who took notice of you!” Ruth responds with the good news that the man’s name is Boaz, a reply which catapults Naomi out of her bitter old hag routine and into full-on worship of God: “May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!”

In Boaz’s abundant provision for Ruth and herself, Naomi sees once again the invisible hand of God’s providence. She recognizes in this abundance the kindness (*hesed!*) of God to her despite the loss of her husband and sons, and is thanking God for a man like Boaz who models his character on the *hesed* of God. Naomi then makes a connection that Ruth has been ignorant of to this point: Boaz is a “close relative” and a “redeemer.” Though the narrator has told us that Boaz is somehow related to Naomi through her dead husband’s family, Naomi’s comment brings out the main theme of the book of Ruth and sets us up for what is to come in the final 2 chapters.

A Redeemer

Considerable time has been taken by our narrator to get us to this significant bit of information. The whole of our story hinges on whether or not there will be a hope and a future for Naomi and Ruth. Having lost everything in a whirlwind of foolishness, sin, and tragedy, can God make it right? And if so, how?

The concept of “redemption” comes from the Old Testament story of the Exodus. God’s people were slaves in Egypt for 300 years before they cried out to God for help. God then judged the sin of Egypt through a series of devastating plagues, culminating in the death of the first born in all of Egypt, but made gracious provision for his people by instructing them to smear the blood of a lamb over the doors of their houses. The message was simple: the lamb would be the substitute for the first born in the houses of Israel, and the blood of the lamb would be the sign for God to pass over the sins of his people. In this way God rescued his people out of slavery and drew them to himself to be his special possession. They were a “redeemed” people, bought out of slavery at the cost of a substitutionary lamb.

The concept of a next-of-kin redeemer finds its roots in this picture. The redeemer was a man who could, in the event of a loss of land, livelihood, or lineage, step in and buy back the lost land, provide for the lack of livelihood, or marry a widow in order to perpetuate the lineage of her dead husband. When Naomi realizes that Ruth has been served by a possible next-of-kin redeemer, she acknowledges a hope that Boaz might be willing to marry Ruth and redeem what has been lost through the sin, folly, and death of their husbands.

Once again, the story of Ruth points us forward to the ultimate Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Just as Boaz was “next-of-kin” to Naomi, so God became a man in order to be “next-of-kin” to humanity. And then, at great cost to himself, God redeemed us from sin and shame by giving up his beloved Son on the cross. Jesus was the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” the ultimate servant who gave his life as a ransom for many. C. H. Spurgeon called Jesus, “Our Glorious Boaz,” expressing his deep love for a Savior who would identify himself with us, take upon himself the mess of our sin and foolishness, bear the punishment of death we deserve, and rise 3 days later to make all things new.

Sadly, chapter 2 ends without resolution. The harvest is coming to a close, Ruth still lives with Naomi, and Boaz has apparently not made any further move toward her. What will happen next? Will Boaz redeem Ruth?