

Good morning, friends! Welcome to Foothills Church. My name is Phil and I'm one of the pastors on the team. It's a privilege for me to worship and spend time in God's Word with you today. If I haven't yet met you, I'd love to. Come up and say, "Hi" before you leave. It would be great to meet you.

We're looking at chapter 4 of Ruth, and today is going to be fun! This morning's text delivers the good stuff we've been waiting for. Here's where we've been as we've journeyed with Ruth so far...

- Providentially, God brought a young widow into a foreign land to start a new life.
- Providentially, Ruth began working in the fields of a man named Boaz.
- Providentially, Boaz took notice of her, blessed her and invited her to remain in his fields to glean the harvest.
- Naomi told Ruth that Boaz is a kinsman redeemer, a relative of her late husband, Elimelech, who can help them, and that God is behind their meeting.
- Naomi saw how Boaz blessed Ruth and how Ruth responded to Boaz. So, she encouraged Ruth freshen up, change out of her widow's clothes, put on perfume and present herself to Boaz not as a widow but as an eligible, single woman.
- In a bold and risky move, Ruth went off script and approached Boaz at night to respectfully propose that he be her kinsman redeemer.
- And Boaz accepted! But he told Ruth that there was a closer kinsman who must first be given the option to redeem. He promised to help her, blessed her with more grain, and she returned home to tell Naomi everything.

That's where we wrapped up with Doug last week. The unexpected dream of being redeemed by one of the finest men in all of Bethlehem might

just become a reality for Ruth. **Look at the very end of chapter 3, verse 18.** Naomi says, "Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today." Just wait. That's one of our favorite things, isn't it? Boaz doesn't wait. Look at the first two verses of chapter 4. I'm reading from the ESV. [READ]

Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend; sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. ² And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down.

Mr. So-in-so (v 1-8)

The Gathering (v 1-2)

Late last night, while it was still dark, Boaz told Ruth that he would take care of everything. If the first-in-line redeemer wanted to redeem, then he would make it happen. But if the first-in-line redeemer wouldn't do it, Boaz would do it himself. Either way, Ruth (and Naomi) would be cared for.

And, just like Naomi told Ruth at the end of chapter 3, Boaz didn't waste a moment. He was at the city gate right away, ready to make everything official once all the people necessary were present. The city gate was more than just an opening in the city wall. The gate usually had a large area with a bunch of small alcoves and benches.¹ Like a lot of modern town squares, it was both a marketplace and a civic center.

Many people would exit the city through that gate to go to work in the fields or do other business, and Boaz knew that if he could find the first-in-line redeemer they could do their official, legal business right then and there, at the gate.

"And behold...the redeemer came by" The Hebrew points more toward, 'just then...' Just as Boaz sat down the first-in-line redeemer came by. What a surprise! Again, no coincidence. God was working behind the

¹ Hubbard, Jr., Robert L. *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Ruth* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1988), 233.

scenes to coordinate this encounter. And Boaz says to him, 'I know you're on your way out, but I'd love it if you'd change your plans for just a few minutes. Turn aside, friend.' Now, this is interesting. The Hebrew word translated as 'friend' is better translated as 'so-in-so.' The name of the first-in-line redeemer is intentionally left out by the divinely inspired writer. Certainly, Boaz knew his name, they were related, but for this part of Ruth's story, the 'name' of the first-in-line redeemer was 'Mr. So-in-so.' So, Boaz says, 'please have a seat, Mr. So-in-so,' and the guy sits.

Then he starts his search for ten of the city's elders. There were more than ten elders in Bethlehem, and the presence of two or three elders would have satisfied almost any legal scenario. Some scholars think that *ten* was a local custom for redemption or marriage. Whatever the reason, Boaz didn't want to leave anything to chance: ten elder witnesses to what was about to take place would be more than enough to satisfy anyone, in the moment or in the future. So, he gathered the elders and asked them to take a seat as well. Boaz has interrupted the lives of eleven men who were on their way to do other things, not expecting to sit at the gate for a legal proceeding. But they did! Boaz was an influential and respected man in Bethlehem. The guy had some clout.

Now that everyone was in their respective places, Boaz can begin the negotiation. Look at verses 3-8 with me. [READ]

The Negotiation (v 3-8)

Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. ⁴ So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you." And he said, "I will redeem it." ⁵ Then Boaz said, "The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance." ⁶ Then the redeemer said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

⁷ Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. ⁸ So when the redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself," he drew off his sandal.

The Details (v 3-4)

The legal proceedings begin, and Boaz gets right to it. Naomi has Elimelech's property, and it needs to be redeemed. There's a good chance that Elimelech either sold it for food during the famine or sold it as he was leaving for Moab—we're not sure. Whatever the reason, this property needs to be redeemed because there is no male heir attached to the land. Chilion and Mahlon didn't have kids. There was a risk that the land would permanently end up as part of another family and the family name of Elimelech would go extinct. Keeping the clan whole was crucial to the Israelites and to let this land go to someone else, permanently, was unthinkable. That's why a kinsman (family member) redeemer was so important. A family member needed to redeem the land to keep the clan whole. So, Boaz suggests to Mr. So-in-so, since he's first in line as redeemer, that he redeem the land.

I'm in! (v 4)

Here's where it gets interesting. Mr. So-in-so knows Naomi; she's extended family. He knew when she came back to town, and he knows her situation. Everyone in town knew (1:19)! Mr. So-in-so also knew that he was a kinsman redeemer (even if he didn't know he was first-in-line –but he probably knew that, too). As kinsman redeemer, he didn't lift a finger. Mr. So-in-so did *nothing* to help his family. But when Boaz presented the opportunity to redeem the land, which could have benefitted him significantly, he found himself interested.

If Mr. So-in-so can avoid the voluntary family responsibility to marry Ruth and produce an heir, then the property and its fruitfulness will more than pay for itself—quickly—even if caring for the aging Naomi is part of the deal. And that property, without an heir, would become a permanent part of *his* family estate. Mr. So-in-so sees lots of potential in his plan...lots of big 'wins' for him. So, he eagerly responds to Boaz, 'I will redeem! I'm in!'

It's like an impulse buy...He's first in line and he doesn't want to miss the chance.

But that dude is slippery. He's not honorable. He's the opposite of Boaz. He knows Ruth is out there, and like all the other townsmen, he knows that she's a worthy woman (3:11), which Doug talked about last week. He's hoping to dodge the moral responsibility, the clan duty, to preserve Elimelech's name and just get the land for himself. Do you see why the guy is called Mr. So-in-so? He has no integrity. He's selfish. It's all about him. He doesn't want to secure Elimelech's name, so it's not even worth knowing his!

I'm out! (v 6)

Boaz's approach with this guy is brilliant. He talks about the land first, then Ruth. Again, this puts Boaz above reproach. If he brings up Ruth first, Mr. So-in-so could say, 'I'll pass,' without hearing anything else. Then Boaz gets Ruth *and* the land. Boaz's motive could then be suspect to the witnesses and, especially, in the future. People murmuring about Boaz's *shady* redemption deal wouldn't be helpful. So, Boaz makes sure the whole deal is 100% above board. 'There's land that you could redeem, which could benefit you greatly. And there's Ruth (with a potential heir), which will come at significant cost to you.' It wasn't a legal obligation to redeem Ruth with the land.² But Boaz was appealing to the heart of the situation. He was calling for lovingkindness and goodness. Boaz was challenging the first-in-line redeemer to do the right thing.

Just as quickly as Mr. So-in-so says, 'I'm in!' he says, 'I'm out! Ruth is too high a cost for me. I waive my right to redeem. You do it!' Mr. So-in-so \ does *not* want to exercise his first-in-line right to redeem. It'll ruin his plans. We don't know what those are. Maybe he already has sons, and their inheritance is already settled. If he has a son with Ruth, then the redeemed land won't be his but still tied to Elimelech with the Ruth's son. Any future children Mr. So-in-so has with Ruth would water down the

² Younger, Jr., K. Lawson. *The NIV Application Commentary: Judges/Ruth* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2002), 477.

inheritance available for the sons he already has. It would be very expensive for him to take Ruth. And don't get him started about caring for Naomi. Mr. So-in-so is the opposite of Boaz in every way.

So, as was custom at the time, Mr. So-in-so removed his sandal and handed it to Boaz, much like signing a contract. The sandal swap symbolized the transfer of the right of redemption from Mr. So-in-so to Boaz. 'The right to redeem is yours.'

Redemption at last (v 9-12)

Boaz doesn't waste a second. Look at verses 9-12. [READ]

Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. ¹⁰ Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day." ¹¹ Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, ¹² and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman."

Declaration (v 9-10)

Redemption is a legal transaction.³ That's why Boaz is at the city gate taking care of business. He couldn't do it on the side or privately. To redeem the land and Ruth the law couldn't be bypassed, and the transaction had to be announced and witnessed. Twice Boaz declares, "You are witnesses..." 'You saw Mr. So-in-so give me his sandal. I have the right to redeem and I'm exercising that right to 1) Redeem all the property of Elimelech and his sons, 2) Redeem Mahlon's widow, Ruth, the Moabite, so that 3) the name of the family will remain alive and never forgotten. You are witnesses!' That move assured that the clan of Elimelech was secure. It was a sacrificial move. It was costly for Boaz.

³ Prime, J. (2007). [*Opening up Ruth*](#) (p. 82). Day One Publications. This source was key for all three redemption points cited.

Redemption is costly. It's a price Mr. So-in-so wasn't willing to pay but Boaz was. He was purposeful, faithful and selfless about it. "[T]he redemption of the property would become more of a burden of love and compassion—self-sacrifice—rather than a means of personal gain."⁴ And Boaz was willing to handle that burden and pay that price.

Prayerful Blessings (v 11-12)

After Boaz's declaration the crowd that gathered *and* the elders all said, "We are witnesses! The deal is done." It was like a corporate cheer, "So be it!" The people applauded Boaz's intentional display of lovingkindness. People celebrate when the right thing is done—especially when it's not required.[pause] Then the community began to pronounce blessings over Boaz, and Ruth—even though she's not there.

May Ruth be fruitful just like Rachel and Leah, the mothers who raised the sons that became the 12 tribes of Israel. May Boaz be blessed by a *huge* family. May Boaz's prosperity and reputation bring glory to God. In other words, may the Name of God be glorified in all you do. That's something to think about: Is the Name of God glorified in all I do? Does my reputation bring honor to God?

The final piece of their prayerful blessing refers to Tamar (also a foreigner) who had to get very creative to keep her husband's family name from extinction (Genesis 38). She had twin sons with Judah, one of whom was named Perez. And the clan of Perez became a leading house in all of Judah and were the ancestors of the people of Bethlehem. Basically, the prayer was that Ruth would preserve Elimelech's line (as Tamar did for her husband) and that her family line would become known and important as the line of Perez. Brian will talk more about that next week!

⁴ Brandt, B. & Kress, E. *God in Everyday Life: The Book of Ruth for Expositors and Biblical Counselors* (Kress Publications, Woodlands, TX, 2007), 121.

The people are aligning Ruth with some incredible women in the history of Israel, and she hasn't even had a son yet! But that speaks to an incredible reality in the minds of the people of Bethlehem: Ruth is no longer 'the Moabite.' Having been redeemed, she's an Israelite now...with all the rights, privileges and blessings that go with it. Redemption transforms. Once you were *this*. Now you're *this*. Like Boaz said last week, 'everyone knows what a worthy woman you are.' Ruth's character, diligence, persistence & faithfulness, have won the hearts of the people and this redemption reveals what God wants for her. These words of blessing aren't just from the people, they're from the heart of God.

Married (v 13)

At long last, redemption was made. The beginning of verse 13 says, "So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife." Notice that she's not longer called the Moabite. Boaz did all that he told Ruth he would do. He swore before God (3:13) that he would take care of everything...and he did. God used Boaz to accomplish His purposes. God was working behind the scenes, while Ruth and Naomi waited, to put things in place so He could accomplish His purposes not just for the moment, but eternally. This redemption points us to the redeeming work that Jesus did. More about that next week.

Close

If you know Jesus, if you've been redeemed, then you've got to know that, even while you wait, God is working all around you to accomplish His perfect purpose your life. Trust Him. He's got you. He loves you. He sees you. He knows you. And He wants to take care of you. He's done everything needed to make it happen.