

Series: The Redeemer

Sermon: “Whose Young Woman Is This?”

Scripture: Ruth 1:22; 2:1-14

²² So Naomi returned, and Ruth the **Moabite** her **daughter-in-law** with her, who returned from the country of **Moab**. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. ¹ Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. ² And Ruth the **Moabite** said to Naomi, “Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor.” And she said to her, “Go, my **daughter**.” ³ So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she *happened* to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech.

⁴ And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, “The Lord be with you!” And they answered, “The Lord bless you.” ⁵ Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, “**Whose young woman is this?**” ⁶ And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, “She is the young **Moabite** woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of **Moab**. ⁷ She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.’ So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest.” ⁸ Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. ⁹ Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn.”

¹⁰ Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?” ¹¹ But Boaz answered her, “All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. ¹² The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be **given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!**” ¹³ Then she said, “I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants.”

¹⁴ And at mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine.” So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over.

[PRAYER]

INTRO: Going on a bear hunt (COVID)

We're going on a bear hunt. We're going to catch a big one.

What a beautiful day! We're not scared. // Oh oh, a forest! A big, dark forest.

We can't go over it. We can't go under it. Oh no! We've got to go through it!

- I. Leaving and Cleaving
- II. Reaping and Grieving
- III. Believing and Receiving

Leaving and Cleaving

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her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz; ² And Ruth the **Moabite** said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my **daughter**."

Setting: What the harvest promises

- Bethlehem – house of bread –
- Beginning of the barley harvest - Barley is the food of the poor – late April, beer making.
- Leviticus 19:9 *"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest.¹⁰.... You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God.*
 - First fruits = resurrection. There's foreshadowing here, but not yet.
 - We are between Passover and Pentecost here. Resurrection and Empowerment
 - Barley is planted mid-December. The darkest time of year.

John 12:24 - ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

- "Love is death and resurrection" – Jim - Expect to see both here.
- We don't know the timing or the shape of our resurrection – all we know is we must die and that if we do, we will rise. What does death look like for Ruth?

Leaving and Cleaving – one thing to make the vows and another to live them out.

- Having a wedding/married. Enlisting/taking a bullet. Joining the church/community group.
- Here, we see Ruth's earnestness in her vow.
 - Naomi knows there is a real risk. – "Lest you be assaulted" - Judges era Bethlehem - most terrifying time to be an unwed female foreigner in history.
 - The attributes that make her qualified to glean also make her vulnerable to abuse.
 - she needs a patron. She is bold, not impetuous. I'm going to get food.
 - Her going out into this field is the most courageous thing you'll read about.
- Ruth's potentially idealistic notion of loving Naomi becomes a concrete 16-hour workday in service of a severely depressed person.
 - *"The central business of adulthood: finding serious things to tie yourself down to."* David Brooks. "It's Not About You." NYT May 30, 2011
 - Our world may be ambiguous, but our way is not. Love gets up.
 - *"...for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs."*— George Eliot, *Middlemarch*

Picture: Baptism and Membership Dead Sea → new life. Vows to a new God and a new people.

- left everything behind. meant it. got up the next morning and worked to keep vows. was hard. Naomi incapacitated by grief and depression. white knuckle it through against great odds. bold. But, make no mistake: it is not enough. She can choose to die, but she cannot choose to rise again. Death is about losing control. She's striving, like a good stoic. You can choose to die, but you cannot choose to rise again.

Pause: What have you been tied down to? Maybe a rash youthful vow, maybe circumstantial.

- unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone

Reaping and Grieving

³ So she set out and went and **gleaned** in the field after the **reapers**, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech. ⁴ And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the **reapers**, "The Lord be with you!" And they answered, "The Lord bless you." ⁵ Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the **reapers**, "**Whose young woman is this?**" ⁶ And the servant who was in charge of the **reapers** answered, "She is the young **Moabite** woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of

Moab. ⁷ She said, 'Please let me **glean** and gather among the sheaves after the **reapers**.' So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest."

Reapers is being used here quite a bit. What is Ruth reaping?

- "In every story, in every life, there are moments of death that take away our name and rename us as strangers, orphans or widows. At the moment of being unnamed, we are thrown into our story. We lose the name Friend and are given the name Reject." - Dan Allender, *To Be Told*
- She's reaping the fruits of abandonment, social strata, political tensions
 - Trifecta = Orphan, a widow, and a foreigner.
- Seeds sown on her behalf for generations back:
 - Why repeat **Moab** so much? I'm picking up really sketch vibes.
 - defense of the Moabite blood in David's heritage?
 - 11th c. Moabite is the equivalent of 1st c. Samaritan. – unwanted cousins.
 - Deuteronomy 23: 3 "No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the Lord forever... 6 You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever."
 - sexual scandal; refused safe passage; hired Balaam; women seduced.

Moab – who is your father?

- Whose young man am I? Is it harder to realize that when I'm the one in power?
- Seed – buried shame and pain.
- But Judah is on the other side of death's sea from Moab! It doesn't matter, it's in the past!
 - "The past is never dead. It's not even past." - William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*
 - Between Leaving and cleaving is often grieving – reckoning with that which was lost.

"We can be redeemed only to the extent to which we see ourselves." — **Martin Buber, I and Thou**

- Your redemption will take the shape of your suffering. A vessel is made to be filled.
- What are the buried seeds in this story? In Yours? But what do you need to grieve? What's dead and buried in your story that needs resurrection? Are you willing to let God address it?
- If ours is to be a story of redemption, then we have to take stock of the things that have been taken from us.
- "Behind every beautiful thing there's been some kind of pain" – Bob Dylan, "Not Dark Yet (But It's Getting There)"

Psalm 126

⁵ Those who sow in tear shall reap with shouts of joy!

⁶ He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

Believing and Receiving

⁸ Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. ⁹ Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn." ¹⁰ Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?" ¹¹ But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. ¹² The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be **given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come**

to take refuge!” ¹³ Then she said, “I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants.”

“Now, listen, my daughter, - deep breath. This is better than all we could have hoped or imagined.

- From orphan to “My daughter.” Soon, from widow to my bride. From stranger in the land to Forbear of its greatest Kings. Redemption for all of Moab.
- Ruth wasn’t looking for a happy ending - tonight’s meal - immediate needs.

³ So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she **happened** to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech.

- - the winking language of providence. – she’s not being manipulative or cunning. All she was looking for was subsistence, but what she got was so much more.
- She wasn’t looking for him, but he was looking for her.
- Ruth’s vows were meaningless unless the Lord kept them.

Proverbs 16: ⁹ *The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*

³³ *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.*

Donovan – how do we know God is here?

- ⁴ *And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, “The Lord be with you!” And they answered, “The Lord bless you.”*
- Casual greeting? Yahweh is here. His agents are human, but his activity his own.
- Deuteronomy 10: ¹⁷ *For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. ¹⁸ He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. ¹⁹ Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.*
- The Lord who loves the poor, who takes death and makes life. The one who gives the widow a family, the fatherless an inheritance, the stranger a people, makes heaven local through his people.
- Don’t jump - First we have to see ourselves as Ruth, the welcomed one.

¹⁰ Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?” the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!

- I am the bread of life – Jesus multiplied barley. He meets our poverty in all its forms.
- “That which is not assumed is not redeemed” – Athanasius of Alexandria.
- Jesus had to become the orphan, the widow, the foreigner: the rejected one. In order that we might be received in our receiving of him.

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