



Family Christmas (with Ruth)

Week 3 – Ruth

Praise to God for today: 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

Father, we thank You because of the grace that You have given us in Christ Jesus. For we are made rich in every way in Him, in all our speech and in every kind of knowledge — you enrich us with Your words and Your wisdom. Confirm the truth of Jesus Christ in each life here. Free us all from false notions of Christ. Give us a growing understanding of Your Son as He is revealed in Your word that we might truly worship Him. We pray that this church would not lack any spiritual gift. Strengthen us to the end of our lives. Thank You that because of Christ we are now

blameless before You. We thank You for Your faithfulness, Lord. Thank You for calling us into fellowship with Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer for the persecuted church:

We pray for the church in Venezuela. We pray for Christians there to communicate the gospel of Christ as people of peace who show the love of Jesus that they might heal the wounds left by years of oppression and violence.

Prayer for a local church:

This morning we pray for our brother Erick Cobb and Covenant Grace Church. We pray that You would help them grow and build one another up. We pray that they would not flinch from speaking the hard truths of the gospel, but that they would do so in love.

Closing

Introduction: God in human flesh

God became human while remaining God. So, Jesus Christ was not limited by His human flesh, but “continued to fill and uphold the

universe even while incarnate.” That’s an amazing reality. That’s why we don’t just pay homage to Jesus Christ. We worship Jesus Christ. He is our Savior and our Lord.

It’s been said this way, “The Son of God did not shrink down into a tiny embryo in Mary’s womb, leaving his divine majesty behind him. Rather, he came to us while remaining all he is...” — fully God. All-knowing, all-powerful, everywhere at once God... in human flesh.

God entered history.

We know the end of His story, which gives us hope for the end of our story. And your story is not over yet.

Matthew 1:1-5

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, **3** and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, **4** and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, **5** and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,

So, here's the story. There was a famine in the land, so Elimelech who lived in Bethlehem and was of the tribe of Judah took his wife, Naomi, and they moved to Moab. In Moab, they had a couple of sons, but then Elimelech died. The sons then took Moabite wives.

There is some racial tension here. There is some religious tension here, also, because the Moabites were the product of incest.

If you remember the story of Lot, he fled Sodom and Gomorrah before they were destroyed. He fled to the mountains with his daughters and lived there. Now, because there were no men around his daughters got him drunk and slept with him so they could have children. This is where the Moabite people came from, so they had a bit of a stigma.

So, Naomi's sons marry Moabites. The names of her daughters-in-law are Orpah and Ruth. Then after about ten years, the sons die and Naomi is left with her widowed daughters-in-law barely eking out an existence in the land of Moab.

Then Naomi hears that "the Lord had visited his people" back in Bethlehem and "given them food." So, Naomi decides to journey back to Bethlehem, but she tells her daughters-in-law to go back to their people and their gods. They say they'll go with her, but she again tells them to go back because she has no more sons and she's old now. And she's a little bitter. Listen to what Naomi says to them:

Ruth 1:13

13 would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me."

Naomi is a woman who is bitter about life and believes that the hand of God has been against her, but she doesn't know the end of the story. She's going to be famous. She's going to be blessed because of her daughter-in-law Ruth. She doesn't know that God has blessings in the works, but she complains bitterly about how God is treating her.

At this point Orpah weeps and leaves, and Naomi tries yet again to get Ruth to go back to her people, also.

Ruth 1:16-17

16 But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”

So, they make it to Bethlehem. Now, remember that this is where Naomi is originally from, so when she gets back to town everyone is stirred up by her arrival and says, “Is that you, Naomi?”

Again, Naomi answers with a bitter heart:

Ruth 1:20-21

20 She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 21 I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?”

Again, she complains before she knows the end of the story.

Now, they arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Ruth 2:1-2

Ruth Meets Boaz

2 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.

15 When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. **16** And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her.”

So, Ruth goes back and reports everything to her mother-in-law. Naomi is very impressed with all that Ruth brought back and says, “Blessed is the man who took notice of you.” Ruth tells her it was Boaz. Then Naomi tells her that “he’s a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.”

A redeemer was a male relative who had the responsibility to rescue a relative who was in need or in danger or in trouble.

Now, when Naomi came back to Bethlehem, her husband was entitled to land as part of the nation of Israel. When someone sold a

property back then — and he probably sold his property when they moved to Moab — but when it was sold “to pay debts, or whatever” the transaction was really what we would call a lease, so the land could eventually return to the family that sold it. The agreement included the terms that a kinsman of the family could redeem the property of the family.

Since Naomi couldn’t afford to do this, she had to find a relative (a kinsman) who would purchase the land back for her, so to speak. In other words, she needed a redeemer to pay the debt she could not pay.

Now, the other aspect of this was continuing the deceased husband’s name. It was a shame, literally a curse, to have one’s name remembered no more or to have one’s name wiped out. This is why there was the custom of what is called the Levirate marriage, where the closest living relative (usually a brother) would take the widow as a wife if she could bear children. And the children would carry on the original husband’s legacy.

So, there are several aspects to being a kinsman redeemer.

22 And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted.” 23 So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

So, some time passes and it is now the season for winnowing the barley at the threshing floor, which was a big community event.

Naomi tells Ruth to get dolled up and go down there. They’re making their move to secure Boaz as their kinsman redeemer.

Ruth 3:7-13

7 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. Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. 8 At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! 9 He said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.” 10 And he said, “May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman. 12 And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. 13 Remain tonight, and in the morning, 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. Lie down until the morning.”

So, Boaz goes to the nearer relative, explains the situation. At first, the relative is interested in redeeming the land of Naomi’s dead husband, but then Boaz tells him about Naomi and Ruth. Now, with Ruth involved we have the issue of the Levirate marriage, of providing offspring to continue the family line and the memory of her deceased husband. At this, the nearer relative says:

Ruth 4:6; 13-14

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.”

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.

14 Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel!”

So Naomi is blessed. Now God had planned this blessing all along. So, if God has a blessing planned all along... are you not blessed? Even if things seem to be going badly now... you don’t know the end of the story.

15 He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.” **16** Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse.

17 And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

The Genealogy of David

18 Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, **19** Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, **20** Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, **21** Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, **22** Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

We know the end of His story, which gives us hope for the end of our story. And your story is not over yet.

Application Questions:

One thing you'll notice as God's plan of salvation unfolds, as events progress toward the first Advent of God's only Son, is that God keeps enfolded outcasts into His plan. Tamar was left on the shelf by Judah. Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute. And now we have Ruth who was a widowed Moabite.

1 Corinthians 1:27-28

27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the

strong; **28** God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,

Micah 5:2

2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah (EHF-ruh-thuh), who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

This prophecy was fulfilled seven hundred years later when Jesus – a descendent of Isaac, Jacob and Judah, and of Ruth and Boaz - was born at Bethlehem in Judaea (see Matthew 1:2 & 5 and Genesis 49:10).

The unfolding of Christ as Savior happened over a span of several thousand years. God has not left you guessing as to who you should follow. You can be like Orpah and run back to the comfort and ease the world has to offer. Or you can be like Ruth who gave herself fully to the God of Naomi and lived the adventure of faith.

Ruth and Naomi were in poverty. They could not redeem themselves, so they humbled themselves and Ruth placed herself at the feet of Boaz who redeemed her joyfully.

You are in spiritual poverty. You cannot pay the price of your redemption, but if you humble yourself before Christ, He will redeem you joyfully.

You will experience the risen Christ and say, like Ruth did:

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?”

Men, how are you treating the women in your life? Or the women you work with or who might work for you? In the reality of God's creation, men and women are different. They are different physically. They are different emotionally. You are to look out for them. You are to especially make sure other men don't mistreat them.

- **Pew study on marriage**

The fact remains that happiness is a byproduct of living life in line with the truth. God has revealed Himself to the world. He has defined reality. He has told us what will bless us and what will hurt us. Ruth could

have gone back to her world, but she left it all behind for the God of Israel.

16 But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.