Ruth's Journey of Faith — Delivery Transcript

Ruth 1–4 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, December 8, 2024 · *Advent 2024*

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Pretty pretty good. If you have your Bible, you can open it to the book of Matthew. If you don't have a Bible, there should be one on the chair in the seat in front of you. If you don't have a Bible, be sure you c take one of those. It's our gift to you this morning. We typically preach through books of the Bible in our church, but for the last couple of weeks we pressed pause on a on a big journey. We had been taken through the book of Genesis. Actually we didn't press pause, did we?

We finished that booger. But before we step into our next big series, we are doing a kind of a unique series on the mothers of Jesus out of a genealogy in Matthew chapter one. Now most people skip the genealogies when they're reading the Bible in like a devotional time if you do that on a regular basis. But in the ancient world the genealogies were very rarely skipped because the genealogies were extremely interesting to an ancient reader because it gave you a reason why the person under consideration was worthy of your consideration.

And so when Jesus' genealogy is established in Matthew chapter one or Luke chapter 2, whichever one you're reading. The names that are mentioned are actually pretty important. And what's even more interesting is that in the genealogy of Jesus there are four women mentioned. And his genealogy and most women weren't mentioned in genealogies unless it was a very kind of important individual person with a very important kind of pivotal story. To the to the person under consideration. But in Jesus' genealogy, not only is there one woman mentioned, there are four women mentioned.

And not only are they four women mentioned, none of them are Jews, none of them are all that what you might say, insider, they're all Gentile, outsider, alienated, and in and demonstrated incredible faith, and as a result it put 'em in a position for God to use them mightily, not to just kind of sort of advance his plan, in forward in the Lord Jesus, but they were extremely central and foundational to God's redemptive plan through the Lord Jesus Christ. So that's what we're doing this morning in the next couple of weeks.

And in Genesis, and I'm sorry, in Matthew chapter one, the woman we're considering today is a woman by the name of Ruth. And her life, I think, powerfully represents the second week of Advent, the candle of the Bethlehem candle. So let's read Matthew chapter one, starting in verse one, an account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. So it kind of gives you the big idea up front, two big names, two big men mediating two big covenants, both fulfilled in Jesus Abraham fathered Isaac fathered Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers, and Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar.

That's the first woman mentioned. Canaanite woman, Genesis 38. Played the prostitute, had Judah make a baby with her name Perez and Zerah, advanced gods redemptive line through Judah, big crazy story. I encourage you to read it on your own time. Perez fathered Hezron fathered Aram fathered Amminadab fathered Nahshon fathered Salmon, and Salmon fathered Boaz By Rahab Now Boaz is an important character, and we're going to see him today in our story of Ruth. But Rahab fathered Boaz, and Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth, and Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered king David.

And on and on it goes. We're not going to read the entire genealogy, but those are the four women that are mentioned. And the last woman mentioned, as you can see, has a direct bearing. On king David, who is the second big name in the genealogy of Jesus. He's directly dependent on a guy named Jesse, who was dependent on a guy named Obed, who was dependent on his mom. Named Ruth and Ruth's story is what we're going to look at today. Now why Ruth for the second week of Advent? Because I really did grapple with should it should should we do Ruth or someone else?

And the reason that I landed on Ruth for the second week of Advent is because the traditional name for the second week of Advent isn't love or peace or faith. It's actually called the Shepherd's candle. The first week of Advent is called the Prophet's Candle, talking about hope, anticipated in the Old Testament prophets. The second candle is about the journey that Mary and Joseph took from their little small hometown of Nazareth to Judea to the big city of Bethlehem, which is the city of David. And that journey was fraught with all kinds of difficulties, as you can imagine, because Mary was a teenage girl who was pregnant even though she was betrothed and had never had sex with another human.

That's a complicated situation. Can we agree on that? And so it messed it was complicating their engagement. It was complicating her pregnancy, she had people talking and now not only do they have to take a trip, a long trip, on camels or horses or whatever they were on. When they get there, they got no place to lay their head. There's no room for them. So they push them out into the inn, and you know the you know the story of the Christmas story. That's an interesting story, but there's another story about another woman who also takes a trip from her hometown to Bethlehem.

A trip that was characterized by complicated context and required great faith and love and loyalty to the person that they were going for, and that person's name was Ruth. Ruth was a Moabite woman. Who lived in Moab, who left Moab for Bethlehem because her mother-in-law, Naomi, was going back home. And her story powerfully illustrates the central truth of the Bethlehem candle, which is the power of faith. It represents the journey of faith and what it unlocks for those who travel. Now you've heard me talk about faith a lot because in Genesis we looked at the life of Abraham and life of faith and what it is and what it isn't and we've we've we've maybe over discussed the topic of faith but what you see in Ruth's story is what faith unlocks for those who are willing to travel.

And her story is beautifully written. Even if you don't like the Bible or you don't believe in God or Christianity, the story of Ruth, just as a literary phenomenon, is worthy of respect because it is it is and those of you who are English teachers will know what I'm saying by that. But add to that the theological truths that are embedded in the book of Ruth as it relates to the gift of faith and what it unlocks and it's even a greater gift in the season of Advent. So if you're new to the book of Ruth, you can turn there.

Let me give you a big bird's eye view. Chapter 1, verse 1 says it was during the time of the judges that there was a famine in the land. And so a guy left Bethlehem and Judah with his wife and two sons to stay in the territory of Moab for a while. I don't think I have that verse on the screen, but it's really important to kind of orienting yourself to the story of Ruth. Chronologically, it was during the time of the judges. If you're not familiar with Old Testament chronology, the time of the judges was a time period where Israel had no king.

Everyone, according to judges 21:25, did what was right in their own eyes. So it's very similar to the West in that there was a moral relativism. A relativism when it came to truth claims and what is and isn't real. All of that was in the eye of the beholder in that time period of the judges. And instead of having a king, Israel would have judges who would rise up, and the judge would oversee a process that had four basic stages. Stage one was God's design and the people living by God's design and experiencing prosperity and blessing.

But then they would deviate from God's design and disobey God and engage in idolatry and sins of various sorts. And after they engage in idolatry and sin, God would punish them. Or discipline them through various different things, famines or you know, battles or all sorts of stuff. And then after the discipline they would be restored or they would repent and be restored into God's design and do things the right way which would result in their prosperity and blessing. And those four things happened in the book of judges over and over.

And over and over and over again. And the judge would kind of preside over whatever chapter they happened to be over. And in the case of the book of Ruth, the fam the discipline that God was using was a famine. And the famine was so bad that one of the people in Bethlehem by the name of Elimelech said, I can't stay here any longer. I'm going to have to,

I've got to put food on the table, so I'm going to Moab. What's ironic about that is that guy's name was Elimelech, and the name in Hebrew literally means my God is king.

But even though his name said God is king, he left the promised land in Bethlehem. And he went to Moab. And if you know anything about the Old Testament book of Genesis, you know that Moab was founded by the descendants of lot and his daughters. And when I say descendants, I mean lot and his daughters had sex. Which is really gross, and they had babies, and part of the children that they had formed the Moabite people. And the Moabites, as you might imagine, as coming from an incestuous kind of relationship like that, were marked by gross sin, immorality, sexual perversion, and violence and hostility.

So Elimelech, who says, my God is king, leaves the promised land to go to Moab, and things literally go from bad to worse. He has two sons. One's son's name is Mahlon and the other son's name is Chilion. And I have no idea why Naomi, who is the mom, named her two sons by those names, because it's the two names mean sickness and wasting away. If you're going to name your children, I wouldn't name them sickness and destruction or wasting away, but that's exactly what she names them, and that's exactly what happens.

They get to Moab and shortly thereafter Elimelech dies. So Ruth is a widow. And Ruth has two sons who married Moabite women, one woman named was Orpah. Whose name means back of the neck. And then the other son married, Mahlon married Ruth, which means loyal friend. And then those two boys died. It was like they were destined to die. Sick and destruction were destined to die. So within ten years they died. So you have Ruth and Orpah, both Moabite women, along with Naomi, who is a Jewish woman, or Jewish woman living in Moab.

Widowed, childless, left to fend for themselves in a very dangerous, violent culture. And it wasn't good. It was terrible. In fact, it was so terrible that nay that Naomi, whose name means pleasant, literally said, I'm changing my name from pleasant to Mara, which means bitter. I no longer want to be called Naomi. From now on, call me Mara. Because my life is bitter because God has turned against me. Now she never loses her faith, but she does believe God hates her guts. And in a way, it establishes the primary enemy of faith in our life.

Really, chapter one highlights this beautifully. The chief enemy of your faith and my faith is suffering. And this world is full of suffering. Whether you like it or not, whether you're a Christian or not, you will suffer in this world because this world has been compromised because of sin. And disobedience to God. Sin literally means to miss the mark in the Greek. And when we deviate from God's design or when we miss the mark. It invites brokenness and decay and suffering into this world. And you have enough suffering strike you will, like Mara, have the potential of becoming a very bitter, sour person.

Now, some people suffer and don't become bitter or sour. Mara or Naomi was not one of those people. The suffering in her life soured her very sweet, pleasant heart. She gets word that things are getting better in Bethlehem, so she says, you know what, it's not wise for me to stay here in Moab as a Jewish widow. I'm going back home. At least I have a network of support there. And as she goes, her two daughters-in-law, Orpa and Ruth, say, we want to go with you. And in some ways, this is a credit to Naomi, who obviously was a very loving person, a very faithful person, a person that was worthy of kind of being followed and demonstrated loyalty, a person who was demanding of loyalty.

These two daughters are illustrating that. But when she finds out that the two women are going with her back to Bethlehem, she tries to discourage them from doing so. She says, you girls are crazy if you're going to go with me back to Nazareth. You think Moab is bad. You're Moabite women, you're widowed Moabite women, and we're going into a culture that is everyone does what is right in their own eyes sexual perversion, sexual violence, you're going to be raped or sexually abused or worse. You're going to be poor. I don't have any land.

I don't have any money. I it's not like I'm going to a good thing You should go back home. She tells him three times, go home, go home, go home. This is not good for you. And she says in chapter one, verse thirteen, this is like a beautiful summation of the whole thing even if she says, I had a husband right now and we made a baby right now and he was a son, and would you still be willing to wait for them to grow up? Would you restrain yourselves from me remarrying?

No. My daughters, my life is much too better for you to share because the Lord's hand has turned against me. So Orpah Shows the back of her neck, which is what her name means, and she says, good point, lady. I'm out of here. And she goes home to her father's house and marries another man and worships her old God. But Ruth refuses. And she says, don't ask me to leave you. Don't you ever say that again. And it's the most famous passage in the book of Ruth. It's put in poetic form.

Verse 16 of chapter 1. Ruth replied, don't plead with me to abandon you. Or to return and not follow you, for wherever you go I will go, and wherever you live I will live Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord, notice that she uses the covenant name of God Yahweh, may the Lord Yahweh punish me and do so severely. If anything but death separates you and me. That's like a wedding vow toward your mother-in-law.

Any of you guys ever put a wedding vow on your mother-in-law? Probably not. She was one special lady on both ends. Now what is she doing? Ruth is looking at her future soberly, I'm sure she recognized Naomi's not lying. She wouldn't lie to me. Of course it's going to be dangerous. And there's all sorts of potential for me to be harmed or have a destitute life. But

one thing I know that I can't unknow is I love her. And I am loyal to her. And whatever God she worships and whatever God she believes in, that's the God I want to believe in.

It's almost as if n Ruth is converting in this speech to believe in Yahweh and the covenant kindness of God because she had seen such a powerful example in the life of Naomi. And you see this incredible contrast between Naomi's bitterness and sour heart and Ruth's incredible faith and positivity. It's like you know those little chihuahua dogs that are just Yep, always so energetic and happy next to a lazy old decrepit Labrador retriever. That's what I think in my mind's eye of these two women. And it says in verse 18 that when Naomi heard Ruth make that big fancy speech, and she saw, notice the phrase, that Ruth was determined to go with her.

She said no more. She's she stonewalled her. Well if that's what you think, we're done talking. Now I don't know if she's stonewalling because she's mad or you know she's she was a sour, bitter old woman. Maybe she's stonewalling because she's so overwhelmed. She's choked up. I can't believe that you would love me like this. And so it's a positive thing. I kind of think she's she's silent because this word here determined. When you think of determination or a determined person, I think of a person who may be open-minded for a stage or for a season, but once they make up their mind, their mind is made and there is no changing it.

Maybe you married a person like this. It reminds me of the Star Wars character on the Mandalorian. I have spoken. And then once there's spok he's he's spoken his spoke he's spoken to speak and it's done and there's no Discussing it. It's like why spend a bunch of energy trying to move a rock out of the ground that cannot be root cannot be moved? You're wasting your time and energy and Naomi saying I'm wasting my time and energy to try to talk you out of it. You are determined and so we'll just go.

And you can imagine what that journey would have looked like. But it illustrates the power of faith and what it unlocks for those who are willing to live by faith, and that is that faith unlocks determination. Faith unlocks determination that will silence unknown fears. Now I say silence unknown fears. It's not as though Ruth didn't see. What could be. She saw the danger. She saw the potential hostility and destitution and all of those things. But what faith does is it enables you to see things that otherwise you wouldn't have been able to see that are greater or weightier realities than the potential dangers and hardships and things of that nature.

Another way to say it. A lot of people are called by God to live by faith, to step out, take a journey, go on the adventure, and they say, well, if I do that I don't know if I'm going to make any money, what if I don't meet a pr what if I don't get married? What if I fail or I don't get the right grades? And you could use any number of examples. And what happens is

fear and unbelief is so loud in their ear that they are unwilling to actually take the initial step of faith.

For God to do something great in their life. But when you have faith, what it does is it gives you determination. I think of determination as future focused energy around an uncertain outcome. When you're a determined person, it's not that the things that you're doing are guaranteed to bring success. You don't know that in your determination. You're just acting as though if I push against this hard enough, long enough the potential of what might be will finally materialize to what it should be. And that's what that's why determination is such a gift.

It takes what isn't. And it brings it to a place of being what is through determination. And that's what that's what Ruth has. She has determination that silences those unknown fears. And it produces two things in her life. Two things that Naomi desperately needed. Number one, it helped her to see what was hidden. Faith gives us vision to see what otherwise we could not see. The second thing faith does, or determination does, is that determination gives us friends who can strengthen what is weak. One of the most important reasons that you should demonstrate faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is because when you become a faith follower of Jesus He doesn't leave you to live the Christian life in isolation by yourself.

He brings you into a family of brothers and sisters. In the Lord to walk with you and help you on that journey of faith. And the reason that's so important is because there will come a time in your life where suffering. Will slap you upside the face one side and the other and it will leave you struggling with bitterness and unbelief. And it will weaken your resolve and your determination. And when you find yourself in a moment of weakness, what is needed is for people who can surround you, know you well enough to know what to say and how to say it and when to say it, and they will in effect believe for you because you can't believe yourself because of the grief or the whatever the case may be and you're just I don't want to go to church anymore, I don't want to believe God anymore, I don't want to I don't even want to see people anymore.

And you get surrounded by a community of faith that says I know you can't trust right now, but I'm trusting with you. I'm trusting for you. I'm going to call you on Sunday morning and shame you until you get in the car and come and sit by me at church. And that's the people you need in your life if you want to if you want to unlock the reward of faith. It reminds me of Mark chapter two. We did this lesson in men's breakfast a while back. Crippled man in Mark II had four friends who picked him up on that on that whatever he was on that cot.

He was paralytic. He couldn't move, so they moved him. For him because he couldn't do it for himself and he got him up on the roof and dropped him so that Jesus could heal him. You need some friends like that. And that's what faith unlocks. Faith brings you into a community. That's why we're so keen on small groups in our church. And I know not

everybody's in a small group, and I'm not trying to shame you if you're not in a small group, but if you're not in a small group, shame on you.

And I mean not like shame on like if you're not in a Sunday morning small group, characterize this on the website and publicize. I don't care about that. But the fact that you would have people, whether it's official or not official, the fact that you have brothers and sisters in the Lord who know your name, who know your struggles, who know what to say and when to say it and how to say it so that when your faith gets weak they can say, I'm here for you. If you don't have those people in your life, it is a tremendous deficit.

And you need those people in your life because that's what faith Demands. By the way, just quick infomercial. I probably don't have time to talk about this. This is one of the reasons we do spiritual growth campaigns in our church. Where the whole church does the same study. The kids, the preschool, the students, all the adult small groups, they do the same study. And we do that for a couple reasons. One, it enables our whole church to focus on one thing for a for a definite period of time to really drill it down home the other thing is that it's an excuse to start new groups.

And a lot of groups will say, a lot of people say, hey, I'll lead a group so long as it's only six weeks or only eight weeks. And I'm fine with that, you know. And so in January we're starting a spiritual growth campaign in the Psalms tackling the most common mental health struggles that people have, or the common most common anxieties or fears that people struggle with. And we're addressing fears in the face of God. So we're looking at the truths about God from the Psalms that address our fears. And we're going to do it for eight weeks.

And I want to challenge some of you to step up and lead a group. Even if it's just you and your spouse or your friends or your neighbor and there's only like four people, four people is enough. All you need is more than you. All you need for a community of faith is like you and maybe two or three others. And if you don't have that, you can surround yourself with that. And if you do have that, imagine the gift that that could be for somebody else who doesn't have that.

And there's a lot of people in our church disconnected from community who on January fifth when we start that campaign they say, you know what, I'm not going to join an established group where everybody knows everybody. But I'll do one of these new ones where it's only eight weeks and I can kind of test the waters and you'll be amazed at how when you begin to connect relationally, how those people begin to become the grace of God in your life to strengthen you in your week because that's what faith does.

It silences unknown fears. It helps you to see what fear and unbelief shield from your view, and it surrounds you with people who will believe for you when you can't believe yourself. And that's what Ruth needed. That's what Naomi needed. And that's what Ruth was. You

know what Ruth's name actually means? It means great friend. And she was a great friend to Naomi. And you may be the same for somebody else. So they get to Bethlehem, all the people are super excited to see Naomi. Hey Naomi, I can't believe you're here, and she's like, don't call me Naomi, call me Mara.

My life is terrible. God hates me. And they were like, just let her cool off. And it was the barley harvest. Now remember Naomi and Ruth are widowed, they have no land, they have no money, they have no potential for prosperity, so they are poor and needy. And so verse one of chapter two introduces the next big character, which is a guy named Boaz. We don't see him actually show up in the story till later, but Boaz is a prominent man, which means he was wealthy, and he was a noble man, he had noble character.

So the thing that they needed the most, the author of Ruth is saying, Boaz, is that criteria. And then Ruth says to Naomi in chapter 2, verse 2, hey, let me go into the fields and gather fallen grain. Behind someone with whom I find favor. Do you mind? And she said, no, go ahead, my daughter. Now this phrase, gather fallen grain behind someone with whom I find favor, that's actually hinting at an official provide for themselves because of whatever may have happened. The Lord in the law in the Old Testament said, we are going to take care of those people.

And here's how. So if you own land, you were not allowed to harvest the edges of your field. This is all in Leviticus 19, if you want to look it up. I think it's Leviticus nineteen. Y y you just Google it. You cannot harvest the edges of your field. And the other thing is that when barley when the stalks of grain fall to the ground, you can't go back and pick them up. You have to leave them on the ground. And what that did is that after the harvesters went through, the gleaners could come back, the poor, the needy, the widow, the orphan could come in pick up the barley that fell on the ground and harvest the edges of the field and they could keep food on their table during the harvest season.

A beautiful demonstration of God's care for the marginalized and God's heart for justice and even welfare for people who can't provide for themselves but also was a beneficiary for Ruth and Naomi. So she says, yeah, go for it. And she does. Ruth left she goes into the grain field she goes to gather grain behind the harvesters but she just happened to find the field of Boaz who was from a Limelex family and she starts harvesting Boaz's field and she is so diligent and industrious that Boaz is like, I got to learn about this girl.

So he goes up to his male servants and says, who is that woman? She is one hardworking woman. And they said, oh, that's Ruth. She's with Naomi. You remember Naomi, Elimelech's widow? Well they left Moab, they came back to Bethlehem. And she's like going to town. She is providing for her and Naomi. She gets here early, early in the mornings and she stays till super late at night. She barely sleeps at all, she's she's she's outworking everybody else and Boaz is like that's incredible, I got to talk to this girl.

So he goes and he Enters into conversation with Ruth and he's like, you're amazing. You know, the loyalty that you have for your mother-in-law is in is incredible and he blesses her and says you are to be commended for putting yourself underneath the wing of the Almighty, the fact that you would trust the Lord even as a Moabite, I just I can't get enough. So would you come and have dinner with me and Bruce is like, well yeah, I mean I'm all for a good meal, free meal, let's go. So she goes to dinner and they dip in the vinegar or whatever they do.

And Boaz gives her more than enough food at dinner time. And then not only does he give her more than enough food at dinner time for her and for Naomi, he tells his male servants. Who remember otherwise a lot of the male servants would rape and sexually violate the women who were gleaning the fields He tells his male servants, if you touch her, I'll kill you. He doesn't say that, but basically says that do not touch her, do not shame her do not harm her in any way and not only let her glean, but I want you to let her take from the actual stalks.

I want you to give her access to the best, best grain, as much as she wants. And it is a an illustration of God's provision for those who walk by faith, which is the second thing that faith unlocks in and the in the story of Ruth. It unlocks courage, it unlocks determination to silence unknown fears, and it unlocks God's provision to satisfy unmet needs. And a lot of people don't have because they don't ask. It's because they don't have faith enough to trust God to do what only he can do.

Now notice Ruth is not just praying, God, please put food on the table, please put food. She's not doing that. She's getting to work. She showed up. She's doing hard work. She's diligent. She's industrious. But God used that diligence and industry to provide for her. And not just to provide. A little notice what verse chapter two verse seventeen. Ruth gathered grain in the field until evening. She beat out what she had gathered, and it was about twenty-six quarts of barley. I did the math on this. That's like thirty pounds of grain.

She picked up the grain, went to town where her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned, and she brought out what she had left over from her meal and she gave it to her. So not only did she get food from the meal and barley for herself, she had more than enough to share with Naomi as well. God's provision is more than sufficient. And I know some people say, well, if I trust God, I may starve. You'll not starve. You'll have not only what you need, I found in my life more than enough.

For my needs to be met because God's provision is more than sufficient. But it's not just sufficient when she tells Naomi what's that Boaz was the man that she was working for. Naomi goes from bitter to believing in an instant. Her mother-in-law said to her, where did you gather barley today? Where did you work? May the Lord bless this man who noticed

you. I got to know his name. And then Ruth told her mother-in-law, whom she had worked with, and said, the name of the man I worked with today is Boaz, which means strength.

Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, may the Lord bless him, because he has not abandoned his kindness to the living or the dead. And Naomi continued, the man is a close relative. He is one of our family redeemers. Your translations may say kinsman redeemer. You need to underline that phrase. That is key to understanding the entire story of Ruth. And you put on your margin of your Bible Leviticus chapter 25 and Deuteronomy. I don't know. Google it. Google family Redeemer. I can't remember. I think it's Levitic. I'm pretty sure it's Leviticus 25.

Actually, I know it's Leviticus 25. 25, 19. And maybe it's Deuteronomy 19. I don't know. But what the family redeemer was in the Old Testament, not only was there a provision for welfare, there was a provision in the Old Testament that if you were a widow, and your husband died and you lost your land as a result of your husband's death or because you fell into poverty, or maybe you got sold into slavery because you had to sell your assets to pay a debt or whatever. There was a provision in the Old Testament where if you couldn't pay to get your land back, one of your kinfolks could be your kinsman redeemer.

In other words, they would pay the purchase price to redeem you from your slavery or redeem you from your destitution. And Naomi is saying Boaz is a kinsman redeemer. Boaz is legally qualified to serve in this role. So what Ruth is, I'm sorry, what Naomi is starting to realize is God is not just providing for our immediate needs Ruth, God is strategically weaving things together so that our ultimate need can be met. I think God's up to something. And when you walk by faith, you will begin to see that God's provision is not just more than sufficient.

Oftentimes his provision is sovereignly strategic. So he gave you a job. Maybe you didn't pay as much as you wanted it to pay, but you met someone through that job that was central to God's overarching plan for your life 10 years, 15, 20 years down the road. Or I could give you a thousand examples of how God how God does this, but that's what faith unlocks. It unlocks God's provision that is more than sufficient. And sovereignly strategic and it takes Naomi from bitter back to believing. And so she changes her tune and in chapter three she tells Ruth, here's what you need to do.

I'm an old woman. I know how to get a man. Let's go Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, my daughter, shouldn't I find rest for you? Okay, she's justifying I'm going to play matchmaker right now. I don't I want you to be taken care of, you know, boass is our relative. You don't often hear that in dating someone. He is your cousin, you know, that's a that's a solid. That's a positive. He's our relative. Haven't you been working with his female servants? In other words, you know. Everything you need to know and this evening he's

going to be winnowing barley on the threshing floor, which was a big wide public place where they'd throw up the grain and Thresh the wheat.

You know Boaz is going to be there. He would have been there to kind of keep watch to make sure nobody was jacking his product. And says when he's there, what you need to do is take a bath because you stink put on perfume and wear your best clothes. Okay, she would have been wearing widow clothes, which was like clothes of mourning. It was the same thing Tamar had on in Genesis 38. She's like, take off your crybaby clothes or your clothes, not the that's crass. She was not just a crybaby.

She was truly mourning the loss of her husband, but she's saying you need to stop w publicly keeping yourself off the market. You need to put yourself on the market. You need to take a bath, put on some good smell and perfume, and put on your party pants so that everyone knows you're available. And here's what you do. Don't bother him during the party. Let him eat. Let him drink. But after he's finished eating and drinking, I want you to notice where he lies down. And I want you to go and lie where he's lying, and I want you to uncover his feet and lie down next to him.

And then he'll explain to you what you should do. And so Ruth says, all right, I'll do it. Now in some ways this is Ruth taking incredible initiative because as odd as the instructions sound, and they are odd, you've got to give it to Ruth. She is she has a bias towards action. And that's the thing I love about her story in relationship to faith. A lot of people think about faith. I hear this phrase all the time. You know, you just got to let go and let God let go let God That phrase makes me sick to my stomach.

I'm sorry if you say that phrase. It is true in the sense that yes, you must let go to have faith. You got to surrender. You need to submit to God, but faith is not letting go and just sitting and waiting for magic. For God to just magically everything's fixed. That is not in the Bible. That is not the example of faith that Ruth demonstrates. She takes initiative. She shows up early. She stays late. And when she has a window of opportunity, take an old man and make her make him her husband.

She says, I'm go, I'm going to do it. I'm taking a bath, I'm putting perfume on, I'm changing my clothes, and I'm going to that threshing floor and I'm uncovering his feet she's demonstrating courage. And that's what faith unlocks. Faith doesn't just unlock determination to silence unknown fears. Faith doesn't just unlock God's provision to satisfy your unmet needs, the most powerful thing that faith does is it causes you to act when you otherwise would not act because of your fear. It unlocks courage to seize upon the opportunities that God has put in front of you.

And so many of you have so many opportunities. That God is put right in your right in your field of view and you think to yourself, well yeah but and what if and I don't know if I'm and

you explain it away and you miss the blessing and the gift of God in your life because you don't have faith to believe him. It's not just let go and let God and wait for magic to happen. You submit to God, certainly you surrender, but in surrendering the control you surrender your fear and anxieties and you act on what God has put in front of you.

And she does it. She goes she goes she uncovers his feet. I thought that was a sexual advance at first. So I was like uncover is what and cover his feet, but it was not. It was a culturally humble, submissive way of waking someone up from their sleep. And if you've ever gone to sleep outside and it's cold outside and you don't have covers on your feet, You will wake up. And when Boaz woke up, I don't know if it's because it was cold or because he had to go to the bathroom, but most old men get up in the middle of the night.

He gets up. He sees a woman there. He's like, whoa, there's a woman down beside me. Who are you, my dear? Now remember it's dark so he can't see. He's kind of like Jacob and Leah back in the day. So she says and this is chapter did we skip the notes? Yeah, it's I'm all the way in yeah, here we are. Chapter 9, chapter 3, verse 9. Who are you? I'm Ruth, your servant, she replied. Take me under your wing, for you are a family redeemer. Now she's using the same language he used earlier that you're to be commended for putting yourself under the Lord's wing.

When she says, take me under your wing, she's not just saying be my sugar daddy. She's saying I want to get married. This is her proposing to Boaz, which is incredibly bold. You know, used to you'd get down on one knee, will you marry me? And usually it was the guy doing it. She's a woman and she's uncovering his feet, saying, let's get married. And he's he's oh he's overwhelmed. He doesn't know what to do with it. He tells her in verse 10, may the Lord bless you, my daughter. You've shown more kindness now than before.

You have not pursued younger men. Which you obviously qualified to do. She was obviously a good looking woman. You haven't pursued younger men, rich or poor, so don't be afraid. I will do whatever you say. Since all the people in my town know that you are a woman of noble character, notice her faith transformed her into a woman of virtue because everybody knows you're a good woman and it is true I'm a family redeemer. I'm going to do it. But there is a redeemer closer than I am. So stay here tonight.

And in the morning, if he wants to redeem you, that's good. Let him redeem you. But if he doesn't want to redeem you, as the Lord lives, I will redeem you. Now lie down until morning. So not only is she taking initiative to seize the opportunity in front of her, when she seizes this opportunity, she kind of gets a curveball. Boaz says, I'm flattered, absolutely, I'm going to redeem you, but there's actually a younger guy who's closer in line than I am. So I'm going to ask him first. Now we don't know if Boaz says that because he's like a buy the book kind of guy.

I kind of get the vi the vibe that Boaz is a buy-the book kind of guy. Or maybe he was saying, you know what, I'm an old man. I've I can't have children. I'm a I'm an old man. I mean I got all these wrinkles. You don't want to be with me. You'd rather be with a younger man. And I don't know what Ruth's thinking in that moment. I'm sure Ruth was thinking, yeah, but you're so nice and I don't want the younger guy. I want you. But she's told by Boaz, wait for me to do.

What I need to do. And that's what the Lord often does when you walk by faith and you seize the opportunity. He will ask you to wait for a season. With a spirit of submission. And this submission is necessary because a lot of times God will take you in a direction and you'll say, I don't want to go that direction. I don't think that was in my plan. That's kind of new to my plan. Just like Boaz is kind of throwing Ruth a curveball, but when you wait with a spirit of submission, faith will have its intended effect.

So she submits she waits, morning comes, she sneaks off. Before she goes, Boaz says, here, let me give you a sign that I'm truly committed. Back in the day they I mean today they give engagement rings. Back then they gave six measures of barley. I'm just kidding. That's what he does. He gives her six measures of barley into her shawl. She goes into town. And then she went to her mother-in-law. And she's obviously interested. Tell me what happened, you know. I say you're still wearing your dress. What happened, my daughter?

Then Ruth told her everything that the man had done for her and she said he gave me these six measures of barley because he said don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed. And Naomi said, that's all I need to see. My daughter, wait until you find out how things go, for he won't rest unless he resolves this today. So not only is Ruth having to wait with a spirit of submission, she also thankfully gets to wait with a sign of Boaz's commitment. And that's what the Lord often does with us as well.

When he makes his wait, he makes his weight with a spirit of submission, but he also gives us a sign of assurance. Or if you're a stickler on your S's, a sign of surety that he will deliver on his promise. And of course, Ruth is not just about Ruth and Boaz, it's about the larger kinsman redeemer. That redeemer, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ, who redeems us from our helpless estate and invites us to receive his love, but often we do so with a submissive spirit and with a symbol or a sign of his faithfulness.

And that sign for us isn't loaves of barley. It's the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. This is God's way of saying, I will do what I said I'm going to do and if you feel like you can't trust me all you need to do is look to this external display of my commitment and love in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you can trust me with your salvation through the death of Jesus on the cross, you can trust me that I'm going to finish the mission when he comes again.

And so she has a sign of assurance. And they wait. And while they wait, Boaz resolves all this tension in chapter four. And we're going to have to book it and hurry because we've got to resolve all these tensions. Boaz went to the I don't want to be like Lord of the not Lord of the rings. That had forever ending. Never mind, don't have time to talk about it. Boaz went to the gate of the town and sat down there. Soon the family redeemer Boaz had spoken about came by and Boaz said, get over here, you little young whippersnapper.

He sat down and then Boaz took ten men of the town's elders and said sit here and they all sat down. The reason he's getting the elders and this young guy and he's at the city gates is because that's where city business was transacted. It was at the city gates. I when I went to Israel, I went to the city gates of various different cities, and I was thinking like some big nice courthouse, you know, marble plaques it's just a bunch of rocks stacked on top of each other in a horseshoe where people would sit down and transact business.

So that's all it is, but it was important because it was legal. He has all the people there and he tells this young guy what's going on. He says, listen, to the redeemer of Naomi, verse three, who has returned from the territory of Moab, she's selling the portion of the field that belonged to her brother Elimelech. I thought I should inform you. Buy it back in the presence of those seated here, in the presence of the elders of my people, if you want to redeem it, then do it. If you don't, then don't but tell me so that I will know so that there because there isn't anyone other than you to redeem it, and I'm next after you, in other words, if you don't want to redeem it, then I'm going to redeem it.

And the young guy was like, well, I want to redeem it I mean Naomi's an old woman. She doesn't eat very much and that's a great property. I think I'd be a fool not to buy it. And then Boaz is like, and on the day you buy the field from Naomi, you'll actually also acquire Ruth the Moabitess. And I wonder if he did it like the Moabitess. The why he probably didn't do that. But that's what he would have heard. Ooh, Moabitus, the wife of the deceased man. Not only do I have to buy her I have to perpetrate.

I have to perpet perpetu I have to have babies with the man's name on his property. The redeemer replied, I can't redeem it myself. I will ruin my own inheritance. So you take my right of redemption because I can't redeem it. Now I don't know all the reasons why he can't or why it's going to mess up his inheritance. Probably something to do with a lot of things that are we don't have time to discuss. But one of the things motivating his rejection was the fact that Ruth was a Moabite Because the Moabites, there was incredible racial animus and prejudice between Jews and Moabites because of their history, and he's saying, if I do that, I'm going to muddy my name, I'm going to muddy my inheritance.

I can't take her, even though she may be attractive and I know it's a bad situation, but I'm out. You're in. So he takes off his sandal, which is how they made deals back then. He says, take my sandal and buy her. And Boaz said the sandal and said to all the elders and all the

people, you are witnesses today that I am buying from Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion and Mahlon, sickness and wasting away. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitus May Lawn's widow as my wife to perpetrate the dead man's name on his property, so that his name, notice this phrase will not disappear among his relatives or from the gate of his hometown.

You are witnesses today. Elimelech's dead, his two sons are dead, there's no one else to carry on the lineage. The lineage that was supposed to lead to David, which is supposed to lead to the Davidic king, if I don't step in and do this and continue his name, the seed dies, and so I'm taking responsibility. I'm buying the land, I'm taking Naomi, and I'm taking this Moabitus as my wife, and we will produce children that will carry on the name. And all the people not only said, we are witnesses, that's great, sign on the dotted line, but they offer a blessing and they say, may the Lord make the woman who is entering your house like Rachel and Leah.

Remember the two moms of the foundation Twelve tribes of Israel who together built the house of Israel. May you be powerful in Ephrathath, and your name be well known in Bethlehem, and may your house become like the house of Perez the son Tamar bore to Judah because the offspring the Lord will give you by this young woman. This is incredible. Kudos, Boaz, for you to take this strange foreign woman from Moab and redeem her. Graciously, even though she's undeserving. May this be like what Judah did when he married that Canaanite woman.

And she had those children that continued on his lines that the seed of promise can continue. In fact, not only do it be like Tamar, I want her to be like Rachel and Leah, I want this to be like Israel 2.0. I want this to be an entire people group who get included into the covenant of promise because of this incredible act of redeeming love. And that's exactly what the Lord does. And that's exactly what faith unlocks. Faith unlocks redeeming grace to reconcile or to unite and save unholy strangers.

And when I say unholy, I mean it technically she wasn't sinful and immoral. She was virtuous. She was a good woman, but she was unholy in the sense that she was not set apart. She was not Jewish. And the Jews saw themselves as those set apart by God for God, special people. And Boaz is saying she may not be biologically a child of Abraham, but she is just as much a child of Abraham because she has faith. To believe in the God of the covenant. And because of her faith, I'm going to save her and redeem her from her desperate situation.

And so he does, and then they live happily ever after the end. No, just real quick, I'm sorry. Chapter 4, verse 13, Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. She slept with he slept with her. And the Lord granted conception to her, and she gave birth to a son. And the woman, the women said to Naomi, Blessed be the Lord who has not left you without a family redeemer today. May his name become well known in Israel. He will renew your life, sustain

you in your old age. Indeed, your daughter in law who loves you is better to you than seven sons.

So incredible. What a statement. She has given birth to this son of yours, and Naomi took the child, placed him on her lap, and became a mother to him. And the neighbor woman said, A son has been born to Naomi, and they named him Obed. And he was the father of Jesse, the father of David. And then the book ends with the genealogy. Just very very quickly, Obed, the name Obed means to serve, it means servant. The name Jesse means generous gifts. Some say it means Yahweh is Yahweh truly exists.

Both of these men paved the way for king David, who was a man after God's own heart, who began to serve Israel as the first king the one who received the Davidic covenant that God said, of your kingdom there will be no end. How this points to Jesus, I think, is obvious because Obed was a promised son. That that continued the line of Elimelech so that the covenant promise of God could could continue. And so Obed was a servant in that he served the purposes of God in that way. But he didn't just point to David.

David was not the ultimate king. The ultimate king, of course, is Jesus. And you see that in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew chapter 1. And Jesus is the only king who, though he was a king, served his people. Kings have the right and the authority to serve themselves, to do whatever they want. But Jesus was not that kind of king. He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself and he took on the form of a servant. And he became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Jesus said the Son of man didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom. Jesus is our kinsman redeemer. He redeems our life from the pit of despair and the debt that we owed. God, because of our sin and our rebellion, Jesus comes and he pays that debt and he reconciles us to God, even though we like Rahab or we like Ruth are unholy strangers, foreigners to the covenant of grace. Because of our rebellion and unbelief, while we were yet sinners, Jesus comes and he rescues us.

He pursued us, just like Boaz pursued Ruth, and he said, I see your faith. And because of your faith, I'm going to save you from your desperate situation. And the same is true for you and me today. If you've never received Jesus into your life as your Reigning king, as your kinsman redeemer, then it may be this morning that the Lord is calling you to repent of your sin and put your faith in Jesus. The Bible says the righteous live by faith, which means our virtue and righteousness isn't morally because we're superior than another person.

It's because of an abiding trust that we have in Jesus for salvation. And if your hope of salvation isn't resting in Christ and Christ alone, then this morning maybe the Lord's calling you to repent of sin and put your faith in Jesus. For most of us in the room, I think it's more along the lines of you've been called to live a life of faith, and somewhere along the way,

bitterness and suffering slapped you upside the head, and you went from believing God to bitter. And you've allowed that bitterness to separate you from a community of faith.

You've allowed that bitterness to keep you from moving forward in what God has called you to do and to be. And this morning the Lord may be calling you to a point of repentance and trusting him. With a fresh abiding faith in the Lord so that he can unlock great blessings and great gifts in your life that won't be unlocked unless you decide to live by faith. So if I can pray with you or for you about any of those things, the altar will be open as we respond to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, we do thank you for this story. We thank you for your redeeming love. We thank you that you've demonstrated that love over and over and over and over again throughout the Old Testament, pointing us to the ultimate example. In our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for his mercy for taking strangers and foreigners and making them children of God. Not because we deserve it, but because he's such a loving. Because you are such a loving and gracious Heavenly Father. We worship you, we give you the glory and the honor and praise, and we ask that as Jesus demonstrated faith in his life and death and resurrection, you might empower us by your Holy Spirit to go and do likewise and to use that faithful obedience to unlock your generous provision and good plans in our life from this point forward.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.