

Ruth Sermon 3

Intro:

Different people like different sorts of movies/TV shows.

Let me use my wife Heather and myself as an example.

I watched a Liam Neeson movie on Friday night called Unbroken – great movie. Action, suspense, thriller, lots of car chases and fight scenes. An interesting twist at the end. My kind of movie.

Heather on the other hand prefers shows like The Farmer wants a Wife and The Bachelor, although even she got disillusioned with the last season of The Bachelor. And to be fair, she also likes renovation shows like The Block and Homes Under the Hammer.

It's good that there are different sorts of shows that appeal to different sorts of audiences.

The reason I bring this up is that we are looking at the book of Ruth. Ruth is a great story on a number of levels. But today we are looking at Ch3, which is the chapter for the romantics. Think The Farmer Wants A Wife rather than a spy movie.

Context – Story so far

Naomi and family move from Bethlehem to Moab due to famine

Naomi's husband dies. Sons marry Moabite women. Son's later die

Naomi heads back to Bethlehem when she hears that God has provided food for his people

Convinces one of her daughters in law, Orpah, to stay in Moab, but Ruth wants to go with Naomi – Ruth has become part of God's people (converted)

Once back in Bethlehem, Ruth goes out into the fields to pick up the leftovers after the harvesters have been through

Ends up in Boaz's field – a relative of hers

Boaz shows Ruth great kindness and she ends up with heaps of food – God has worked through lots of different circumstances to make sure Ruth and Naomi have all the food they need – he has shown them great kindness (Hesed).

Body – What happens in this episode?

Ch3:1 – Being a widow in those times was harsh – no social security, no pensions, and if you didn't have someone to look after you and you couldn't find work, you would

have to beg for money or become a slave. Naomi is seeking the best for Ruth – to be part of a family – and in this culture that meant Ruth getting married again.

This is where the story gets weird, and seems most like a TV show (A Farmer Wants a Wife, or the Bachelor) – we seemingly have the scheming of Naomi, the setting up of a drunken Boaz, secrets over what has happened in the night and the tension that perhaps Ruth and Boaz won't get together after all because of another prospective husband.

Yet even in this, God is at work, and it is not as sordid as it seems. Let's take a closer look at it to work out what is going on.

As I said before, Naomi is seeking the best for Ruth – she's not just meddling. And in Ch 2:20 Boaz is described as a kinsman-redeemer.

Kinsman-Redeemer

In the Old Testament the kinsman redeemers were relatives who protected the needy members of their extended family. They could redeem (buy back) . . .

- A relative sold into slavery (Lev 25:47-49)
- Preserve the family lineage of a deceased male by marrying his widow and providing an heir. (Deut 25:5-6)
- Land a relative had sold outside the family. (Lev 25:25)

In order for the kinsman to redeem persons, land or lineage he must fit these qualifications.

- Must be a blood relative.
- Must be able to redeem.
- Must be willing to redeem.

So this whole incident must be understood in the context of Ruth and Naomi calling on Boaz to fulfil his duties as a kinsman-redeemer.

Boaz is involved in the harvest and Ruth goes to the threshing floor where he is to sleep.

V7 – Boaz in good spirits means he was contented with what was happening and that he had enjoyed his meal, not that he was drunk – perhaps a better translation was that Boaz was satisfied.

V7-8 –Uncovering his feet and lying at his feet seems strange to us, but apparently it was their custom. Ruth is showing her humility to Boaz, by lying at his feet, as is shown by her calling herself his servant in v9, and is showing him that she thinks he is suitable for marriage.

This seems weird to us, but our ways would seem weird to them too – how does a woman show that she is interested in marrying a guy these days? (Get answers from the audience)

- Making eye contact and smiling
- Laughing at his jokes
- Asking his advice
- Spending hours watching sport with him
- Trying to get into photos he is taking
- Claiming you are cold and borrowing his jumper

- Making food for him
- Fluttering your eyelids at him
- Tapping your ring finger on the table

Maybe we should go back to the old ways – it seems much similar – be careful guys, you might end up with a woman lying at your feet one night.

Okay, she is lying at his feet and he wakes up and asks who it is. She answers

(Read v9)

Spreading the corner of his garment over her was the way he showed that he was prepared to marry her – either in order to fulfil his role as a kinsman-redeemer, or just because he likes her, or both.

Notice here nothing happens – they don't sleep together, and the reason he doesn't want anyone to see her in the morning is that they might get the wrong idea. Also, worship of false gods at that time meant fertility rituals, especially around harvest time, and it might have been assumed that Ruth and Boaz had slept together as part of the worship of false gods.

V10 – He responds that she has shown great kindness – greater than she had shown before.

2 reasons - by choosing Boaz rather than the younger men, she is fulfilling her obligation to Naomi's family by seeking the kinsman-redeemer to provide a child to carry on Naomi's family name. (See 4:5, 10)

And she is being kind to Boaz - choosing him rather than a younger man.

So it seems that everything will turn out for the best - Ruth and Boaz will get married, Naomi will get a grandson to continue her family line, and everybody will live happily ever after.

But there is a problem - a nearer kinsman-redeemer (v12). All could be lost! This is the crisis point of the story, providing the height of the drama. But Boaz is a man of action and determines to sort the situation out, to make sure that Ruth is redeemed by someone, even if it isn't him. He sends her home with a gift for Naomi and heads out to set the situation right.

Six Measures of barley – actually says 6 of barley. Measures not there. Best guess is 50 pounds (22.7kg) of barley. A lot of barley. So much that he has to put it onto her. She can't pick it up by herself. Shows his generosity again.

Ch4

Boaz goes up to the town gates and meets the other kinsman redeemer. In front of witnesses he talks through the issue with the man. Notice that the man is keen to buy the land at first, but when he realises that Ruth comes with the land, all of a sudden he isn't as keen. Why not?

Notice what he says: **6**At this, the kinsman-redeemer said, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it."

What I think is happening is as follows:

Kinsman-redeemer buys land from Naomi – therefore Naomi has enough money to live on. Part of the deal is that Ruth becomes part of kinsman redeemer's household –he marries her. Any children they have will inherit the land – it won't stay in the kinsman-redeemer's original family. So in buying the land, he is getting a wife to provide for and his original family (if he had one) won't get the land long term. No wonder the other kinsman redeemer says that he can't do it or he might endanger his own estate. Very costly exercise. Shows what sort of sacrifice a kinsman redeemer could be called on to make.

So they settle the deal with the exchange of sandals. Again this situation seems weird to us, but they might look at our way of doing things with lots of legal documents and lawyers bills and think we are strange too. The focus of the passage is that Boaz makes sure that Ruth is looked after-he does the job of the kinsman-redeemer, which the nearer relative seems unable or unwilling to do. And it costs him a lot to do it.

E.G. Costly sacrifice

Valjean in Les Mis. Feels responsible for Fantine because his factory fired her. Finds her daughter Cosette, pay 1500 francs to buy her from the corrupt innkeeper. When Fantine dies, he raises Cosette as his own daughter. Very costly sacrifice.

Sum Up: God uses (Boaz) the kinsman-redeemer to redeem Ruth

What do we learn about God and the way he does things from this part of the story?

Again we see God working at a number of different levels. He is the one who set up the kinsman-redeemer system in the first place, enabling the underprivileged i.e. Ruth to be looked after.

God is behind the scenes, making sure that Ruth is looked after. Even though there are problems, God is working to sort them out so that the best possible thing happens for Ruth. God is faithful to his people.

But especially we see that God works through individuals, especially through the one individual, to bring about the salvation of his people. Boaz is the kinsman-redeemer, who acts to save Ruth when others won't or can't. He redeems her from her hopeless situation and leads her into God's blessing.

What do we learn about God and the way he does things through Jesus?

And it's exactly the same for us today. We are saved by the one, the kinsman-redeemer, who acts on our behalf when we are helpless to save ourselves. Our kinsman-redeemer is Jesus, who saves us once and for all by paying the penalty for our sins and bringing us back into a right relationship with God.

All of us are in a hopeless situation, much worse than Ruth. We have all sinned against God and deserve death and judgment. Jesus comes and dies in our place, taking the punishment we deserve. He redeems us, not by buying land with money, but by buying our souls with his blood.

Jesus is our Kinsman **Heb 2: 13b** And again he (Jesus) says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."^e **14** Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the

power of death--that is, the devil-- **15** and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Jesus is our Redeemer

Ephesians 1:7 says, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."

Sum Up: God uses (Jesus) the kinsman-redeemer to redeem us

Application:

Know that Jesus is our kinsman-redeemer

Allow Jesus to be your kinsman-redeemer

Continue to trust in Jesus as our kinsman-redeemer

The story is told of a gentleman visiting a slave market, who was deeply touched by the mental agony of a slave-girl, who had been delicately reared and feared that she should fall into the hands of a rough master. The gentleman inquired her price, paid it to the slave-trader, then placed the bill of sale in her own hands, telling her that she was free, and could now go home. The slave-girl could not realize the change at first, but, running after her redeemer cried, "He has redeemed me! he has redeemed me! Will you let me be your servant?" How much more should we serve Him who has redeemed us from sin, death, and hell?