



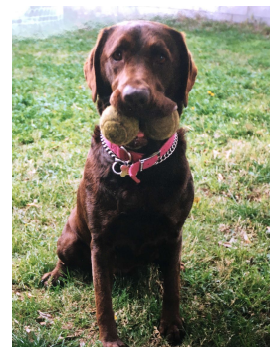
Ruth 4
A Hollywood Love Story: Ruth
I Can See Forever In Your Eyes

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So this morning we wrap up the series we've been in the last few weeks in the book of Ruth. Next Sunday is the first Sunday in Advent, leading toward Christmas and our celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. We'll talk about that a little more later on in the sermon...but I'll let you know that our series for the next several weeks is titled "What's Under Your Christmas Tree?" and we'll focus on the themes of Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace, and then on Christmas Eve, we'll focus on the birth of Jesus: why it's important, and how Jesus impacts our lives.

But today we finish up Ruth. Now, before we get to the passage, I have to confess that there is one thing I've been waiting to share with you about Ruth, that is very personal for Gwen and me. In fact, I might get a little emotional about this, and if Gwen were here sharing this she definitely would. Gwen and I had a Ruth who was a part of our family who we raised up during the first 9 years of our marriage. She took after Gwen in that she was a beautiful, brown-eyed brunette. Like the Ruth of the Bible, our Ruth was faithful and kind, and brought us much joy, abundant life before she passed away in the fall of 2006. Here's her picture.

As you can see, she's a chocolate lab. Gwen got her when she was just a few weeks old, only a couple months before we met, so I became an adoptive dad right off the bat when we got married. Ruth lived up to her namesake, and she was a faithful friend until the end.



Now, as you may recall, last week we were left hanging with whether or not Boaz would be able to step in and be the hero of the story and redeem Ruth and Naomi, and marry Ruth, because there is another relative who was "in line" ahead of Boaz to be that person. And Boaz told Ruth he would go and talk to that person first thing in the morning.

So let's pick up with where we left off, and see if Boaz is a man of his word,

and see how things proceed, as we get into Ruth 4. It's on the screen, or in your Bibles, or the pew Bibles on page 415 of the OT. **Ruth 4 Here.**

So right off the bat, we see that yes, **Boaz is a man of his word.** He goes and chats with the guy who is ahead of him in the pecking order for helping out Naomi and Ruth as the guardian-redeemer...or kinsman-redeemer.

They meet at the city gate, which was the equivalent of meeting in the public marketplace, the place where everyone hangs out, where business deals get done, where locals hang out to socialize, elderly men sit at tables and play chess, where people gather to talk about the recent election or the upcoming apple cup...or barley bowl...or whatever.

So Boaz meets up with the guy there, and he gathers 10 elders: 10 respected, trusted guys who are community and religious leaders, so they can witness the conversation and whatever its outcome is.

Now, I have to tell you that the Hebrew in verse 3 is a bit confusing, because the word that's translated here as "selling" (when he says that "Naomi...is 'selling' the piece of land that belonged to...Elimelech") ... "makar" ... **This word, in Hebrew, is in the perfect tense, which normally indicates an action already completed.** It's partly why I mentioned a couple Sundays ago that Naomi and Elimelech had probably sold the land when they left Israel about 10 years earlier. And yet you see here that the NIV, and most other translations, give us the word as an active verb, something she's currently doing – she still owns the land, but is selling some of it out of economic necessity.

I mentioned before that the idea of a relative – a kinsman – redeeming the person and redeeming the land comes from a couple verses in Leviticus 25, which reads, **"If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem *what they have sold*. If, however, there is no one to redeem it for them but later on they prosper and acquire sufficient means to redeem it themselves, they are to determine the value for the years since they sold it and refund the balance to the one to whom they sold it; *they can then go back to their***

own property” (**Leviticus 25:25-27, italics added**). So as I mentioned earlier in the series, the idea here is that a piece of property is already sold out of economic necessity, probably a few years earlier, and later the original owner is in a place to manage the property, but needs some financial help to acquire it. So a Kinsman-redeemer, or guardian-redeemer, helps redeem the land, by bringing it back to its original owner.

And yet **Boaz says very clearly in verses 5 and 9 of today’s passage that Naomi still has the land, and she’s selling it**. So given the clarity of Naomi still having the land, and Boaz’s eventual proclamation to everyone that he is purchasing it *from her*, it seems pretty clear that that is in fact what’s going on, even if it deviates of the Kinsman-Redeemer role outlined in Leviticus, and goes against the tense of the verb here. The point is in all of this, that Boaz is a relative trying to help out her and Ruth in their time of need.

So, Boaz and the guy talk, and initially the other guy says, “yes” he’ll do it. And our hearts kind of sink, because it looks like everything we’ve been hoping for is all about to take a big change.

But then the guy finds out that Ruth is a part of the deal, and as occasionally happens to some guys when they start talking marriage, he gets cold feet. When Boaz says in verse 5 that he will “acquire the dead man’s widow in order to maintain the name of the dead with the property” he’s speaking of Ruth, not Naomi, even though Naomi is the one who’s husband owned the land. So Ruth is sort of a “stand-in” for Naomi here, partly and obviously because Boaz and Ruth are the ones with the relationship, but also because she’s the one who is still of child-bearing age and able to have kids that would keep the land in the family, which would be a goal to try and achieve.

And this other guy decides that he can’t do all that. It puts him at too much financial risk, the land wouldn’t go to his own children that he already has, but to Ruth’s...and he just isn’t willing to do this. So that opens the door for Boaz. And so the two guys, with the ten elders as witnesses, and probably others who would’ve stopped to watch and see what was going on...they seal the agreement with an ancient Jewish equivalent of shaking hands, and they

exchange sandals.

And so, at long last, Boaz lives into his role as kinsman-redeemer. Ruth and Boaz are brought together in marriage, they give birth to Obed, and we might say that everything ends “happily ever after” though undoubtedly they had their challenges and their disagreements, and times of sadness and so forth that everyone experiences in marriage and in life.

And there are several things that really strike me about Boaz in these events. **First, we see in verse one that Boaz takes things into his own hands.** He doesn’t force the situation...he doesn’t coerce the other guy...and so he’s leaving the *outcome* in the Lord’s hands. But he gets up the next morning, after a long day of work that was probably the last of many long days of work in the harvest season, and he does what he said he would do. He doesn’t let a potentially difficult or awkward conversation, or a conversation that might have an outcome different than what he’d like, slow him down. He simply does what he needs to do.

Second, in verses 8 and 9 we see that he pays the price that needed to be paid. He doesn’t quibble, doesn’t try to reduce it, doesn’t complain...he simply pays it, because Ruth and Naomi couldn’t. They couldn’t do what needed to be done in order to keep the land. They needed a redeemer to step in and help, even though there was a price for him to pay, and Boaz did it. He paid the price.

Third, he publicly announced what he had done. He publicly claimed that which was now his: the property that he bought, and the woman who was now his wife. He didn’t hide it, didn’t shy away from it – which given that Ruth was a foreigner and even though she’s earned the respect of many in the city – this would still have an element of courage needed that otherwise might not. But the point is, he did this in a public declaration for the world to know.

Fourth, he completely changed the trajectory of Ruth’s and Naomi’s lives. Where a future of almost certain financial ruin once laid before them, and certain family ruin with no “next generation” to pass things on to, they

instead have a future that is filled with hope, joy, family relationships, and a new generation in Obed. They didn't have any of that until Boaz changed that for them. Their lives are radically changed.

Fifth, and connected to the previous one, he restores and sustains Naomi (and Ruth) through the birth of Obed. This is emphasized in regards to Naomi in verse 14 and 15 when the women hear their words of encouragement and praise on Naomi for the blessing Obed is to her. Beyond the physical blessing of having a grandson, Boaz brings her honor and dignity, and a family to support and encourage her.

And the thing is, none of these things would have come true for Ruth and Naomi if Boaz had not stepped up and done what he did. **They were completely powerless to bring any of these things to fruition on their own.** They couldn't make them happen, they couldn't buy them, couldn't earn them, they couldn't do anything except trust God to work everything out in His providence and grace. And through Boaz, that's exactly what happened. Boaz was God's answer to all their fears, all their uncertainties, all their questions, their doubts, their hopes, their dreams, their prayers, and more.

But there's more to the story, and the story continues right on through the centuries to you and to me. The first way there's more to the story actually continues the story of Ruth the chocolate lab. When we were in seminary, our neighbors, who were also our landlords, and with whom we still keep in touch, got a dog. A male dog...a boy dog. And at our suggestion, they named their dog, Boaz. I kid you not. Ruth and Boaz didn't get married or have puppies or anything...in fact, if memory serves me right, they didn't get along real fantastically...but they were neighbors. We all thought that was pretty cute.

The second, and more profound way Ruth impacts us today is seen when we look at this genealogical record that closes things out. I know genealogies can be a bit boring, unless you're looking at your own. For instance, one of my family members traced our lineage back to William Bradford, the first governor of Massachusetts (Bradford is my middle name, and a family

name). We've had our last name, North, be traced back to Lord North of England, whom I remember once seeing mentioned in a history book in High School...which is all great, except Lord North never got married. Anyway, tracing a family lineage can be very interesting, and it is here, too. Now this is not a complete genealogy...there are some generations that go unmentioned. We know that because it lists Salmon (Salma), who was married to Rahab who lived when the wall of Jericho fell, and we know from that point until David, who's the last one mentioned in this genealogy, that there was about a 300 year span in there. And in this genealogy that 300 year span is covered in four generations. So, there were others. But these are the memorable men in this family tree.

And in the Gospel of Matthew we have a genealogical record that includes all of these same men, in the same order...and then Matthew continues the genealogical record all the way to Joseph, who was married to Mary, the mother of Jesus. **In God's providence, He brought Ruth to Bethlehem with Naomi, to meet and marry Boaz, so that some 1300 years later, just the right guy would be the earthly father of Jesus.**

And 1300 years after Boaz did these five things for Ruth and Naomi that they could never have done on their own – Jesus did the same thing. On his own volition, by his own initiative he did, and still does, what you and I cannot do. **Jesus takes things into his own hands; He pays the price that you and I can never afford; He publicly claims his people as his own; He gives us a future instead of ruin; And he restores and sustains us.**

Jesus has done that through his life, his death on the cross, and his Resurrection. You see, just like Ruth and Naomi: You and I cannot achieve everything we want, or that God is calling us to, on our own. On our own, we can't have unity with others as God calls us to have unity; On our own, we can't forgive the way God calls us to forgive; on our own, we can't be holy as God calls us to be holy; on our own we can't live as God calls us to live; On our own, we can't love the way God calls us to love; on our own, we can't have joy, we can't have peace, we can't have patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control as God calls us to; On our own, we can't have hope as God calls us to... **We can't have any of that in the**

manner and to the degree that God has created us to experience them. In fact, Jesus said, “Apart from me, you can do nothing.” Nothing! We will always fall short on our own, and we are completely dependent upon the grace of God. Ruth and Naomi could do nothing without God intervening in their lives and orchestrating everything just right to bring them to Boaz, who was their redeemer for their earthly lives.

And you and I can do nothing without God intervening in our lives and orchestrating everything just right to bring us to Jesus who is the redeemer of our earthly lives and our eternal lives. When Ruth and Boaz looked into each others eyes over a romantic, candlelight dinner, and said, “When I look into your eyes, it’s like I can see forever” (And, I don’t know if they actually said that, but bear with me on that, ok?)...and when they gave birth to Obed and were delighted to have the family name carry on another generation....Little did they know that 1300 years later, Jesus would be born and be connected to their family lineage through Jesus’ earthly father, Joseph. And when people gaze into the eyes of Jesus, they really can see forever. **When we take the time to look at Jesus intently and carefully and consider all that he was, all that he did, all that he taught, all that he gave...we see forever...we see eternity in Him.**

If you have never “gazed into the eyes of Jesus”...if you have never looked intently at the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, to see what sets him apart from everyone else in history, to see all that he has in store for you, to see all that he can do for you that you can never ever do for yourself...if you have never taken the time to genuinely look into Jesus, I pray you would do that starting this morning. Because Jesus stands before you, resurrected from the grave, ready to give you eternal life, to be your guardian-redeemer, to pay the price, claim you as his own, give you a future of hope instead of ruin, and restore you and redeem you, to transform you into what God created you to be, now and forever. We can’t do these things for ourselves. But Jesus has. It’s what he did then. It’s what he still does. And it’s what he’ll continue to do. And it can be true for you as well. May we all be in relationship with him, continually looking into the eyes of Jesus, our redeemer. Let’s Pray...Amen.