

God's Redemptive Kindness

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- [0 : 0 0] Please take a seat. Well, it would be great if you could have your Bibles open at Ruth chapter 4, our last episode, this lovely story of Ruth.
- There's also an outline in the bulletin that you might find helpful as well. Let me lead us in prayer, just briefly. Heavenly Father, we do again thank you for your word.
- We thank you that you continue to speak to us through it. And so, Father, we ask this morning that you'll give us ears to hear and hearts to obey. We ask it in Jesus' name.
- Amen. Well, Ruth chapter 4 is a chapter all about redemption. The word redeem occurs about 11 times in this chapter alone, far more than any other chapter of Ruth.
- And we know what redemption means. Redeeming means to buy back or to pay off a debt. Often when we use the word, we use it in terms of redeeming ourselves.
- [1 : 0 5] For example, some years ago, my son Tim was about six years old, I think grade one or just finished prep. And he got in some trouble. And so, he was going to miss out the next day on the trip to the zoo.
- It was school holiday time. And so, that was his punishment. He had to miss out on going to the zoo. Such was his crime, so to speak. And then the next morning, my wife woke up with this letter on the slide next to her bed.
- It says, I love you, mum, so much. And it had little hearts underneath it. Now, I don't know what you think when you see that, whether, you know, I hear he is sucking up or what I think when I see that is how come his handwriting is so much neater back then than it is now.
- But for Michelle, she thought, how cute. And it was enough to redeem himself, to buy himself back out of punishment, to pay off his debt, so to speak.
- And in chapter four of Ruth, we again meet this idea of redemption. But Ruth and Naomi cannot redeem themselves as Tim did. No, they are dependent on another, such is the state of their poverty.
- [2 : 1 2] But you may have noticed that verse one there starts with the word meanwhile. And that's because we're in the middle of a story. In fact, it's the same day as chapter three ends on.
- So let me briefly recap for you and then give you one more piece of background information that I need to do. The story so far, as we've heard a little bit from the children's talk, is that Naomi returns to Israel with her daughter-in-law, Ruth, the Moabitess.
- And as we heard from the children's talk, Naomi returns bitter because in her words from chapter one, she says, I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Then in chapter two, we see God working behind the scenes sovereignly to bring Boaz and Ruth together and to provide through Boaz.
- So for example, Ruth just so happens to turn up in Boaz's field. And Boaz just so happens to turn up and see Ruth. And then Boaz is clearly attracted to Ruth and showers her with kindness.

And then last week we came to the marriage proposal. Naomi had a plan to provide rest for Ruth and it involved Boaz marrying her. For she saw in Boaz God providing for them because Boaz was a close relative.

[3 : 26] He was a redeemer. And so Ruth asks Boaz to spread the corner of his garment over her, which was like a proposal, you know, where a man would say, I want to take you under my wing.

And he would spread the corner of his garment over them. In fact, I was speaking to a friend a little while ago and we were talking about the book of Ruth. And he said that he was catching the train into work one day when a lady sat down next to him and the corner of her coat happened to flop across his leg.

And he wondered, had she been reading Ruth too? Anyway, that's the recap. As for the background information, I pointed out last week, Redeemer was a close relative who had obligations for their family.

And so last week we saw that if a woman was widowed, then her unmarried brother-in-law was to marry her and carry on the name of his deceased brother. But there was another obligation, not on just brothers, but on near relatives.

And this had to do with redeeming the land. You see, the land was very important. God had promised it to Israel. That was one of his great promises that he made to Abraham. And this land, now that Israel was in the land, it had been divided up among the 12 tribes and among the clans within the tribes.

[4 : 46] And it was still God's land, however, but he had given it to them. It was like a lifelong lease. But the point here is that land had to remain in the family, in the clan, because it was God's gift to them.

He wanted to make sure that each clan could continue to enjoy his blessing to them, just as he promised. And so in Leviticus chapter 25, we read this. So it'll come up on the slide.

Leviticus chapter 25, the land must not be sold permanently because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants, he says. Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.

And he continues. If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative, there it is, nearest relative, is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold.

And then it continues with a few other things. It says, if, however, a man has no one to redeem it for him, but he himself prospers and acquires sufficient means to redeem it, he has determined the value for the years since he sold it and refund the balance.

[5 : 51] And then he can go back to his own property. But if he does not acquire the means to repay it, then it's going to remain in the possession of the buyer until the year of Jubilee, which was every 50 years in Israel.

And then it will be returned to the original owner either way. You see, here was a provision for the land to stay within the family.

And that was very important because, as I said, God was keen for each family in Israel to enjoy his promised blessing. Now, because Naomi is poor, she has to sell her land.

And with that comes an opportunity for her nearest relative now to redeem it. And it's this nearest relative whom Boaz has gone to town to find because he also has first priority in marrying Ruth.

And so with this blossoming relationship between Ruth and Boaz happening, it could all come unstuck depending on what this other redeemer has to say. And so we're at point one on your outlines and verse one in your Bibles.

[6 : 53] Have a look there. Meanwhile, Boaz went up to the town gate and sat down there. Just as the guardian redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, come over here, my friend, and sit down.

So he went over and sat down. Now, the town gate here was like the town center in those days. Our houses were built so closely together that the only real open space for people to come and speak and do business was the space at the town gates.

And so Boaz goes there hoping to find another, sorry, this other close relative, this other redeemer. And again, do you notice, we're reminded of God's sovereign hand at work here. Because no sooner had Boaz sat down, then the very man he was waiting for comes along.

You see how verse one is described again? Meanwhile, Boaz went up to the town gates and sat down there just as, or literally, and behold, the guardian redeemer he had mentioned came along.

It's uncanny the way, uncanny the way the narrator describes it here. You see, God does not speak at all in the book of Ruth, yet he is clearly at work, isn't he?

[8 : 01] It's a great reminder for us that God continues to work despite appearances. Well, Boaz sits down and the man just so happens to pop along straight away.

And so Boaz asks the man to come and sit with him. And then we read in verse number two, Boaz took 10 of the elders of the town and said, sit here. And they did so.

Then he said to the guardian redeemer, Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the price, sorry, the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people.

If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.

I will redeem it, he says. Now, remember, Boaz is keen to marry Ruth. But interestingly, he starts by speaking about the land, doesn't he?

[9 : 01] Probably because the land carried more of an obligation for this kinsman redeemer. Now, remember, it's the nearest relative who is to redeem the land, whereas the obligation to marry the widow was for the brother-in-law.

And this would have been an attractive opportunity for this man. You see, Naomi has no sons to inherit the land. And so eventually, this man would get to keep the land himself, instead of paying for it now, only to give it back later.

It's an attractive opportunity for him. But then Boaz points out that this opportunity of redemption actually involves a greater cost than just buying the land. And so in verse 5 and 6, we read, then Boaz says, oh, by the way, on the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.

And at this, the guardian redeemer said, then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.

And then he removed some sandals. And so in verse 8, the guardian redeemer said to Boaz, buy it yourself. And he removed his sandal and gave it to Boaz. And you see the cost here.

[10 : 16] Not only does the kinsman redeemer have to pay for the land, he also has to marry Ruth and provide for her, and then give back the land to Ruth's firstborn son, and provide for Ruth's mother-in-law as well.

Now, at this point, I could make a joke about mother-in-laws coming to live with you permanently, but I won't in case my mother-in-law is listening. In case she is, I love you, Barbara. But this opportunity of redemption comes with a significant cost for this man, doesn't it?

Can you imagine having to provide for all these people that pay for the land, and then when the first son of Ruth is born, you have to give back this land to this son, and even ask permission.

Can I have your permission, son, even though I've paid for the land, to use the land? I'm guessing most of you remember the airline Ansett. It was owned by Air New Zealand. Do you remember Ansett, the airline?

It was owned by Air New Zealand. And the week before Ansett collapsed, from what I understand, Air New Zealand apparently offered to sell Ansett to Qantas for \$1.

[11 : 18] That was the deal. Sounds attractive, doesn't it? Airline, your personal airline for \$1. But then you realise that if you bought the airline, you'd be buying all its debt as well.

And so what looked like a lucrative business deal actually turns out to be a costly arrangement. And this opportunity to redeem the land for Naomi is too costly for this man. And so he says, I cannot redeem the land for it might endanger my own estate.

Now it's hard to know whether the man really cannot afford to be this generous or whether he does not want to be this generous. I suspect he does not want to be.

Why? Well, the narrator does not even name him. Did you notice? In fact, when Boaz addresses the man in verse 1 and calls him friend, the Hebrew word literally means a certain one.

He said, a certain one, come and sit here. Or it's our equivalent of Mr. So-and-so, come and sit here. Now, Boaz would have definitely used his name. He knew the man. But the narrator excludes or omits his name and just puts so-and-so in its place.

[12 : 23] And in a book where the narrator uses so many names, omitting this man's name is surely significant. It suggests this man is not worth remembering, not worth naming, because he didn't show kindness or generosity.

He didn't act like God. The cost of redemption was more than he was willing to pay, but not so for Boaz. Boaz is more than happy to pay it, isn't he? And so after some sandal swapping in verses 7 and 8, Boaz announces in verse 9, he says in verse 9, Then the elders and all the people of the gate said, This is the climax of the story, isn't it?

Boaz gets the girl and everyone cheers. They joyfully call on God to bless both Ruth and Boaz. And they ask God that Ruth might be as fruitful as Leah and Rachel, from whom the 12 tribes of Israel came.

In other words, may someone great come from Ruth and build up God's people. They also pray that Boaz's name might be famous in Bethlehem, unlike Mr. So-and-so, whose name we never find out.

It's a happy occasion, isn't it? It's a happy ending, as we heard from Ruth's talk. Look, especially when we realize the full extent of the redemption, which brings us to point 2 and verse 13.

[14 : 18] Have a look there, verse 13. So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he had made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi, Praise be to the Lord, who has this day not left you without a guardian redeemer.

May he become famous throughout Israel. Now, before we look at the extent of the redemption, or the results of redemption here, notice whose work it ultimately is.

I mean, in chapter 1, Ruth was Marlon's wife for 10 years. And how many children did they have? Zero. Yet, Ruth marries Boaz and conceives on her wedding night.

Now, maybe Marlon was unable to have children. After all, his name meant sick and weak. But what's the real reason, according to the narrator? He says in verse 13, The Lord has enabled her to conceive.

In fact, in verse 14, the women attribute everything to the Lord. They say, Praise be to the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer. You see, the work of redemption may involve human activity, but ultimately, it's the activity of God.

[15 : 28] As we have seen, God has been working behind the scenes to bring Boaz and Ruth together. It has been God who brings the other redeemer along as soon as Boaz arrives at the gate in verse 1.

It is God who enables Ruth to conceive. It is God who works to redeem his people, to provide for them, like Naomi. And we see this first result of redemption in verse 15.

The women continue by saying, This child will renew your life and sustain you in your old age, for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.

Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The women living there said, Naomi has a son. And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Now, I'm not sure why the women get to name the child. Instead of poor old Ruth, who does all the hard work of labor. Maybe Boaz and Ruth were kind and let them. In any case, the child is named Obed, which means servant.

[16 : 34] And he himself will serve Naomi as a redeemer. For he will continue the redemption that Boaz started. He will continue to provide for Naomi in her long life.

Or later in her life. And sustain her. And what's more, in verse 17, Obed is called Naomi's son. Did you notice? Why? Well, because he will carry on the family name of Naomi's husband, just like a natural son would.

In a sense, actually, the book of Ruth could also be called the book of Naomi. For it starts and ends with Naomi. In chapter 1, Naomi said, I went away full, but have come back empty.

And here in chapter 4, God has worked to make Naomi full again. It's come full circle, you see. Of course, the book of Ruth is called Ruth because it's through Ruth that God provides for Naomi's fullness.

Ruth is better than seven sons, such is her love for Naomi. And it is by Ruth's proposal to Boaz that Boaz makes the move. It's through Ruth that this kinsman redeemer, this guardian redeemer is born, who will renew Naomi's life and provide for her at an old age.

[17 : 42] And this is the first result of redemption, a full life for Naomi. But there's a second result of redemption. From Ruth will come David, we're told.

In fact, David is the last name of the book, did you notice? And the point is, God has also been working to provide Israel with a king. See, chapter 1 told us that this story took place during the day of the judges.

And in the book of Judges, well, it ends with the sentence, In those days, Israel had no king and everyone did as they saw fit. But the book of Ruth ends with David, who would become Israel's greatest king, whom God would use to redeem Israel, as it were, from the time of judges, from all the chaos and disorder and from her enemies and provide rest for Israel.

That's the second result of redemption. But there is a third one, again, as we saw from the children's talk. And that third result of redemption is our redemption. For through Ruth and Obed comes an even greater king than David, Jesus.

We saw this from Matthew, chapter 1, which is also full of names, which Gary read so well for us. Matthew traces the genealogy, remember, from Abraham to Jesus. And only a handful of women are mentioned, one of whom is Ruth, a Moabitess.

[19 : 03] Ruth, you see, is really an unlikely hero, isn't she? She wasn't even an Israelite. Yet God sovereignly uses her to bring about our redemption. For it is through Ruth that King Jesus comes and offers us redemption.

You see, we may not have said unkind things to God like Tim said to Michelle that day, but we have all ignored God from time to time, haven't we? Certainly not always given him thanks or the honor he deserves.

In other words, we have all sinned. Yet just as the names in the book of Ruth are important, so also is Jesus' name. For just a few verses later, after our Matthew, chapter 1, reading, in verse 21, which will come up on the screen, we read this.

You see, it is through Ruth and Boaz, sorry, through Ruth and Boaz comes not only Naomi's redemption in Obed, not only Israel's redemption in King David, but ultimately our redemption in King Jesus.

How does Jesus redeem us? Well, by paying the price for our sin so we can be brought back from eternal punishment. That's what redeeming means, to buy back, to pay the cost.

[20 : 23] And Jesus does it by his blood. In fact, on the next slide, Peter puts it like this. We heard this from Doug at the beginning of the service. Peter says, For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, it says.

Jesus redeems us from an empty way of life. He's not like Mr. So-and-so who is unwilling to pay the cost of redemption. No, he is like Boaz, who was willing to pay.

For Jesus willingly went to the cross to pay for our sins and to bleed in our place. And just as God works through Boaz to bring Naomi from emptiness to fullness, so also God works through Jesus to bring us from the empty way of life to fullness of life.

In fact, on the next verse, Jesus said this, I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. See, Jesus is our Redeemer who redeems us from an empty way of life, a life without God, without hope, without heaven.

And he gives us life to the full, life with God, with hope, with every spiritual blessing, and an eternity of glory to look forward to.

[21 : 43] Jesus comes to bring us this life. And so I need to ask at this point, what have you done with God's offer of redemption? Have you accepted it by believing in Jesus?

Do you trust in Jesus for life and life to the full? For those of us who have, then do we realize what a full life we have? I mean, when we think of a full life, we often think of it in terms of having a good innings, don't we?

You know, we've had a long and healthy life, accumulated a good amount of wealth, enjoyed lots of things, had lots of experiences. That's how the world speaks of a full life.

But that's not how the Bible speaks. No, a full life, according to God, is a life where we know God and his son Jesus, now and forever. For that life brings meaning, joy, and peace now, and unimaginable glory later.

At the start of our series, I mentioned to you a young man who became a Christian and started speaking to others about Jesus. And they became Christians. He was a great evangelist.

[22 : 47] I don't know if you remember the story. And a few months after, he had become a Christian and had converted a number of people. I don't remember the exact number, but it was more than five people.

It was amazing. In a short period of a few months, he then drowned at a beach while swimming. And we couldn't work out why. In fact, I mentioned at the time that it was hard not to be bitter towards God.

Surely he could have had a fuller life. Surely he could have had a fuller ministry. He could have converted more people, brought more people to Christ. Surely he could have had fuller experiences.

He wasn't married yet. He had no children. There was lots of things he hadn't done yet. But in Jesus' words, he did have a full life. Because he knew God then and is with God now.

For us who believe in Jesus, do we realize what a full life we have? In biblical terms. It's so easy, isn't it, to complain about the things we don't have. Whether it's money or warmer weather or better health or nicer car and so on.

[23 : 48] But we have so much to be thankful for. For we have been redeemed from an empty way of life. By the precious blood of Christ. And we've been given life to the full.

That is, we now have God as our Heavenly Father. Who will never leave us nor forsake us. But is always working for us, for our good. As we're reminded of in chapter 1. We've been showered with extravagant kindness.

With every spiritual blessing. As we're reminded of in chapter 2 of Ruth. We who are unlovely to God. Kicking around in our own blood. Have been loved by God. Who spread the corner of his garment over us.

As we're reminded of in Ruth chapter 3. And here in Ruth chapter 4. We are reminded that we have been redeemed from that empty way of life. And given life to the full. Life with meaning and contentment now.

And unimaginable glory later. We have great fullness. And so rather than complaining about the things we do not have. We are to rejoice. In how much we truly do have.

[24 : 50] Indeed we are to no longer live for ourselves. But for Christ who brought us this fullness. We heard that from our first reading from 1 Peter. That Doug read at the start of the service. We are to be holy as God is holy.

For we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. In fact our next song says this. It says this life I live is not my own. For my redeemer paid the price.

God has redeemed us. He's paid the price. Bore us back from sin and death. And so now we are to live for him. And that means finally. Being on board with God's plan.

You see it's no accident that God uses Ruth. A foreigner to accomplish his purposes. He not only uses this unlikely hero. To show that it's all his work. But he uses this Moabite. This foreigner.

From the nations. To show us what his intentions have always been. To bring people from all nations into his family. Do you remember the promise to Abraham? That through Abraham all nations would be blessed.

[25 : 49] And that's what he's doing here with Ruth. And that's how Matthew's gospel ends. It starts with that genealogy we heard from our first reading. With all these names. People from the nations come into God's family.

And then it ends with Jesus on this slide. Saying all authority in heaven on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.

You see this is God's plan. And it always has been God's plan. Told it to Abraham. Told it. Used Ruth a Moabite a foreigner. And brought her in.

To his family. And here is Jesus commanding us. To go and bring people from all nations. Into God's family. To share with them the good news of Jesus. That they might be redeemed.

And have life to the full as well. One of the things I love about this church. Is that we have a good strong emphasis on mission work. It's terrific. We are supporting others who work overseas.

[26 : 45] To share this gospel of Jesus with others. That others might from the nations be redeemed. In fact I was trying to remember how many link missionaries we have. And I couldn't count. I lost count.

We've got loads. It's terrific. Also terrific is the fact that we have people from the nations as part of our church. I mean the food at the fair last Friday night was evidence of that. We had food from all sorts of places.

You know Chinese food. Sri Lankan food. We had the Aussie barbecue. We had kind of Lebanese style kebab. It was brilliant. In fact I tried to taste some of it. All of it. I only got to the second dish and I couldn't finish it.

And now I need some exercise. But anyway. It was brilliant to have people from the nations as part of our church. But can I continue to encourage you to keep doing what you can personally to be on board with God's plan.

See I wonder whether, me included, whether we could use the fair even more so to reach the nations. I mean we have them on our doorstep in our suburb don't we?

[27 : 42] So the question is what are we doing personally to reach them? Last Sunday night a guy from our four o'clock service was out in the car park after church. He had a flat battery. And there were other members of the church trying to kick start the car.

Excuse me. And in the end they had to call the RACV. And so it was going to be a while. So his family came to my place to wait because it was quite cold. Anyway he got a phone call to say that the RACV had arrived.

So he went from our place over to the car park just out here. But he was gone for a long time. It was over 20 minutes. And so I got a bit worried. So I left my place. Went over to the car park.

And when I approached this guy from our church was talking to the RACV man about God. Not flat batteries. Not cars. But God.

Evidence for the existence of God in fact. One thing had led to another you see. And he saw this opportunity to turn the conversation towards spiritual matters.

[28 : 41] And he took it. And so he was able to share Jesus with this man. Why? Because he knows that God's plan is to redeem many from among the nations. And he wants to be on board with God's plan.

For no one can redeem themselves. Just as Naomi and Ruth could not. No, they needed a redeemer in Boaz. Just as we all need a redeemer in Christ. And so may we do what we can to see more and more people redeemed.

And may we ever rejoice in our redeemer who's given his life for us. Let's pray. Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you for this beautiful story.

This true story about Ruth and Naomi and Boaz. Father, we pray that you would help us to rejoice in the redemption we have through Jesus.

Help us to live not for ourselves but for Jesus whose precious blood was paid for our redemption. And help us, we pray, to be on board with your plan to see people from among the nations redeemed too.

[29 : 56] That we might all enjoy this full life that you have given us. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.