

# Ruth

*She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. (Ruth 1:20 ESV)*

*And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. (Ruth 4:17 ESV)*

## **A Son Has Been Born To Naomi**

**December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Ruth 4**

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### **Introduction:**

Good morning! Please keep your Bibles open to Ruth chapter 4. Thank you, Amanda, for reading for us.

We have spent this season of advent making our way through the book of Ruth and today we come to the conclusion of the story. Much of this closing chapter revolves around the role of the kinsman redeemer. We don't have kinsman redeemers in our culture, so let's take a moment to familiarize ourselves with this concept before we go any further.

If an Israelite family was forced to sell their land in an emergency or if – as in Naomi's case – the family line was about to die off with no heir, the person most closely related to the family was expected to intervene. As the kinsman redeemer, it was his responsibility to buy back the land, to marry the widow, or do whatever was needed to preserve the lineage and the land allotment of the family.

Last Sunday, Boaz told Ruth that he would fulfil the role of the kinsman redeemer for her family. But he also introduced a complication. Do you remember what he said?

And now it is true that I am a redeemer. **Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I.**<sup>13</sup> Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the Lord lives, I will redeem you. (Ruth 3:12-13a ESV)

That brings us to the drama of our passage this morning. At this point in the story, we've grown quite fond of Boaz and we're really hoping that he and Ruth wind up together. There's a love story unfolding! But this wrinkle threatens to ruin everything.

Beyond the love story, we are also still wondering if and when the Lord will rescue Naomi from her desperate circumstances. Everything that we have witnessed over the last three weeks has paved the way for this:

## The Conclusion Of The Story Of Ruth

This final chapter is broken up into two distinct scenes. In verses 1-12 we find:

### Scene 1: Redemption at the gate

The closing verse of chapter 3 really set the stage for this opening scene. After Ruth reported all that Boaz had said at the threshing floor, Naomi assured her:

“Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today.” (Ruth 3:18b ESV)

Naomi recognized that there was more to Boaz's actions than mere obligation. She realized that he had come to develop feelings for Ruth. Neither of them seem to have expected this. Back at the threshing floor, when Ruth invited Boaz to 'spread his wings over her' and to perform his role as a kinsman redeemer – when she asked him to marry her and to provide her with a son – his response surprised her. She thought that she was pleading for a favour. Why would this wealthy, respected Israelite want to tarnish his reputation by marrying a destitute, widowed foreigner? She thought that SHE was asking for a kindness. But do you remember how he responded?

May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. (Ruth 3:10 ESV)

Ruth probably expected that the *best-case* scenario was that Boaz would say, *'Fine... It's the right thing to do, so I guess I'll do it.'* But – in a wonderful twist – we come to discover that Boaz had

come to admire Ruth. He was moved by her love for her family and gripped by her character. Her request wasn't a burden to him; it was a kindness! He was honored that she would choose him!

And yet – in spite of the fact that Boaz truly desired to marry Ruth – as a man of integrity he needed to do the right thing the right way. There was a closer relative who was legally 'first in line' to step in and redeem this family.

And that brings us to the first scene that we find here in chapter 4.

Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. (Ruth 4:1a ESV)

In a small city like Bethlehem, everyone needed to pass through the gate to do business, so it functioned as the town center. Sure enough, the redeemer comes along and Boaz quickly pulls him aside to have this important discussion. Boaz wants to make this exchange official, so he calls over ten of the elders of the town to witness the discussion. We read in verses 3-4:

Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. <sup>4</sup> So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you." (Ruth 4:3-4a ESV)

If this man agreed to serve as the redeemer, he would need to purchase Elimelech's field. This was no small commitment. Depending on the size, the field would have cost anywhere from 1-4 year's wages.

But – the man likely reasoned to himself – Ruth is old and unlikely to produce an heir which means that – when she dies – the field will come under his name. In the meantime, he can profit from the produce of the land and recoup some of the initial cost. Thinking that he has stumbled upon a perfect investment opportunity, he replies:

"I will redeem it." (Ruth 4:4b ESV)

Dagger to the heart! Just like that – with four short words – the love story is thwarted! This unnamed relative is willing to serve as the redeemer. Boaz is officially out!

Or is he?

Boaz has one last detail to discuss – a detail that the would-be-redeemer had apparently overlooked. We read in verses 5-6:

Then Boaz said, “The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.”<sup>6</sup> Then the redeemer said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, **lest I impair my own inheritance**. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.” (Ruth 4:5-6 ESV)

Apparently, this man had forgotten about Ruth the Moabite. Unlike Naomi, Ruth conceivably *could* bear another child – in which case the field would become the inheritance of *her* child. Suddenly, this seemingly low-risk investment was looking like it would be ALL risk!

If Ruth gives birth to an heir, then this expensive field will go to the child! In the meantime, as redeemer he is going to need to foot the bill to care for the old widow Naomi. AND he’ll have to feed and house this new Moabite wife. And he’ll need to feed and house however many other children she might have! This commitment would be life changing!

Having counted the cost, this unnamed relative determined that he no longer wished to be the redeemer and so we read in verses 9-10:

Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon.<sup>10</sup> Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.” (Ruth 4:9-10 ESV)

In a powerful display of love and integrity, Boaz absorbed the poverty of Ruth and Naomi so that they could share in his wealth. Redemption always comes at a cost, and Boaz was willing to pay the price.

With that, the camera moves from the scene at the gate, and we jump forward in time. The author gives one measly verse to the detail that we might have expected to be the highlight of the story. In verse 13, we're told:

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. (Ruth 4:13 ESV)

The wedding bells ring! The marriage is consummated! A child is born! And that brings us to:

## **Scene 2:      Redemption in the living room**

The camera has moved away from the city gate, but rather than zooming in on the wedding ceremony where the 'will they, wont they' drama between Ruth and Boaz is finally resolved, the camera rushes right past that scene and focuses instead on grandma Naomi holding her grandson. As one commentator notes:

At long last, Ruth marries and gives birth (4:13), but both she and Boaz are noticeably absent from the proceedings. Instead, Naomi and the baby are the honoured guests, the heroes on whom all happy eyes fall. That comes as no surprise, however, for since the beginning this book has been essentially Naomi's story.<sup>1</sup>

Because the REAL drama of this story is not centered around the relationship of Ruth and Boaz. The REAL drama of this story – the tension that needs to be resolved – is Naomi's relationship with God. When Naomi returned to Bethlehem, she testified before the women of the city that the Almighty had dealt very bitterly with her. She said:

I went away full, and **the Lord has brought me back empty.** (Ruth 1:21a ESV)

Now here, in the final scene of this story, those same women who listened to Naomi's accusation against God are witnesses to His kindness. They declare in verse 14:

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *The Book Of Ruth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 263.

Then the women said to Naomi, “**Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer**, and may his name be renowned in Israel! (Ruth 4:14 ESV)

‘He has not brought you back empty, Naomi! You were *wonderfully wrong*! The Almighty is not against you! He has given you a redeemer!’

In a sense, the conclusion of this story is the vindication of God. For three chapters, we have watched Naomi grapple with the question: ‘If God is in control, and if God loves me, then why is He taking EVERYTHING away from me? Why is He *against* me?’

Here, the women who have known Naomi all her life – women who knew Naomi’s husband and sons and who have seen her at her best and her worst – declare that the Lord has dealt faithfully. Naomi couldn’t see it while she was living in her grief, but God was working for her good every step of the way.

The women go on to proclaim:

He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for **your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons**, has given birth to him.” (Ruth 4:14-15 ESV)

When Naomi came back with nothing but a foreign daughter-in-law at her side, she thought that she had nothing. But that daughter-in-law proved to be more valuable than SEVEN sons! How often we overlook that which the Lord has *given* to us because we’re so focused on what He has taken away. We would be wise to learn from Naomi’s story.

And that brings us to the beautiful scene that we find in verse 16 – the moment that Naomi never believed would come. We read:

Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. (Ruth 4:16 ESV)

Over the past few months, we’ve read about Samson ripping lions to pieces and Gideon defeating an army with 300 men, but – maybe I’m just getting soft in my old age but – I confess that THIS picture gripped me more than anything we’ve seen in Judges.

A sweet, grandmother – a woman who has experienced a lifetime of grief – rocks her new grandson to sleep. God is doing a new thing, and she can finally see it with her own eyes.

For the Lord will not  
cast off forever,  
<sup>32</sup> for, though he cause grief, he will have compassion  
according to the abundance of his steadfast love; (Lamentations 3:31-32 ESV)

Naomi was convinced that she was under the curse. But for those who trust in the Lord – though sorrow may last for the night, JOY comes in the morning. Here, with her sweet grandson asleep on her lap, Naomi finally knows this to be true. And so too do the witnesses in the living room who announce:

“A son has been born to Naomi.” (Ruth 4:17b ESV)

Here, we come to the conclusion of Naomi’s story. But little does she know, the end of her story is the beginning of a story that will transform the future of her people. Neither Naomi, nor Ruth, nor Boaz had any idea how their seemingly insignificant lives would impact the world. Truly:

God uses the faithfulness of ordinary people to do great things.<sup>2</sup>

In verse 17, the author pulls back the curtain and shows us what this story has ultimately all been about:

And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, **the father of David.** (Ruth 4:17 ESV)

With that one brief verse, suddenly this story slides into God’s larger plan of redemption. This small story becomes one brush stroke in the greater picture. We see now that the conclusion of the story of Ruth is actually:

### **The Beginning Of The Story Of A Coming King**

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<sup>2</sup> Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *The Book Of Ruth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 279.

If I were to ask you what the book of Ruth is all about, what would you say?

You might say that this is a story about hope, and you wouldn't be wrong. The transformation of Naomi from a widow lost in despair to a grandmother filled with joy is the central plotline.

You might also say that this is a story about faithful love – in Hebrew, *hesed* – and you wouldn't be wrong there either. Naomi's transformation is only made possible – humanly speaking – because her daughter-in-law Ruth loved her so much that she refused to let her go.

You might also say that this is a story about redemption, and who could argue with that? At the climax of the story, Boaz chooses to redeem this family at great cost to himself. He assumes their poverty so that they can assume his riches.

It's also a story about how God's love stretches beyond the confines of Israel, including even the Moabitess, Ruth.

It's also a story about the sovereignty of God that is constantly at work even in the details that we are inclined to dismiss as 'bad luck' or 'chance'.

It is all of that and more! Which is why – as one Old Testament scholar notes:

It has been called the most beautiful short story ever written.<sup>3</sup>

There is so much that we can glean from this short book. But, if we were to sit down with the original author, I suspect he would tell us that – above all else – this is the story of a coming king.

In this closing chapter, the focus of the story slowly shifts off of Ruth, Boaz and Naomi and begins to look forward to the generations that will follow. He wants us to see how this story fits into the larger picture. We read in verses 18-22:

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<sup>3</sup> F.B. Huey Jr., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Deuteronomy - 1, 2 Samuel)*, ed. Frank A. Gaebelein, vol. 3, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 509.

<sup>18</sup> Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron,<sup>19</sup> Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, <sup>20</sup> Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, <sup>21</sup> Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, <sup>22</sup> Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David. (Ruth 4:18-22 ESV)

Why is this here? Why didn't we end the story with Naomi in her rocking chair holding her grandson? That would have been such a beautiful ending! What a missed opportunity!

But we couldn't end there. Because the Book of Ruth isn't ultimately about Ruth. Nor is it ultimately about Naomi or Boaz. The most important *human* character in this story is the king who was yet to come.

It is the story of how, in the dark days of the Judges – at a time when hope appeared all but lost – God worked a miracle in the little town of Bethlehem, and he gifted a family a child who would be their redeemer. Similar to the stories from Israel's past – stories of Sarah, and Leah, and Rachel, and Tamar – this miraculous birth story was a signal that God was about to do a saving work for His people.

Sure enough, three generations later, a boy named David was born into this family line. Through this son, Israel would finally experience freedom from her oppressors. For the first time, the 12 tribes of Israel would be united under one shared king; a man sovereignly appointed by God to lead them out of the dark days of the judges and into freedom; a man after God's own heart.

That's what the first readers saw when they read this book. They saw the origin story of David – the king from Bethlehem who had finally come to set them free!

But if you are familiar at all with the story of David, then you know that the freedom that he ushered in didn't last. His family ruptured. His kingdom was divided.

But still, the people of God waited. The anticipation that began in Ruth – the hope of a king from Bethlehem – persisted. 300 years after David had died, the prophet Micah wrote:

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,  
**from you shall come forth for me**

**one who is to be ruler in Israel,**  
whose coming forth is from of old,  
from ancient days. (Micah 5:2 ESV)

Seven hundred long, dark years after Micah made this prophecy – when all hope once again seemed to be lost – an angel appeared to a group of shepherds and declared:

“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be **for all the people.** (Luke 2:10b ESV)

Even Moabite people like Ruth, and Canadian people like us.

<sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11 ESV)

In the little town of Bethlehem – the same city that witnessed Naomi’s transformation from despair to joy – the same city that saw the birth of the great king, David – in Bethlehem, the Saviour of the world was born.

This morning, if you haven’t already, I want to invite you to place your trust in the King who has come and who is coming again. God has sent His Son to save the world.

God will send his Son again to judge the world and to reign in righteousness.

Believe this day in Jesus. He is the Savior who is Christ the Lord. Trust in him. Rest in him. Delight in him. To that end, let’s pray together.