

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON- Sunday 1st September 2024 am

TITLE: "Love beyond law" TEXT: Ruth 4

SERIES: "There is a redeemer Pt 4 Scripture references from the ESV

Ruth 4 Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend; sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. 2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. 3 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. 4 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[a] will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you." And he said, "I will redeem it." 5 Then Boaz said, "The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth[b] the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance." 6 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."

7 Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. 8 So when the redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself," he drew off his sandal. 9 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. 10 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." 11 Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, 12 and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman."

13 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. 14 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! 15 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." 16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. 17 And the women of the neighbourhood 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.

18 Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, 19 Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, 20 Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, 21 Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, 22 Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

As a young girl, Pat was taught to knit by her grandmother, but often, the wool got tangled up and she could not use it to knit. Trying to untangle it herself just made things worse, so she would go to her grandmother and hand the mess over to her. Her grandmother would untangle it and hand it back to Pat. She had redeemed the ball of wool, turning something that was a useless mess into something that could be used.

- We rely on redemption everyday in the form of loyalty cards that give us points to redeem for freebies or returning unwanted items to shops as well as in the shape of balls of knotted wool.

The theme of redemption runs all through the book of Ruth but comes into sharp focus in this final chapter (v14). The women who came to celebrate with Naomi speak of the Lord's goodness to provide her with a Redeemer.

After the death of her husband, Elimelech, and her sons, Mahlon and Chilion, Naomi and her Moabite daughter-in-law, Ruth, returned to Bethlehem as penniless widows, with little hope for the future, but they had put themselves under the care of God. As a result, in God's providence, Ruth found herself gleaning in a field belonging to Boaz, a close relative of Naomi's dead husband. When Naomi saw how Boaz was really looking out for Ruth, showing her exceptional kindness, and protecting her from harm, she began to have hope.

- Boaz was someone who could redeem them from their poverty and also redeem the family name.

The law of levirate marriage meant that any child of a marriage between Boaz and Ruth would take Elimelech's family name and inherit the family land and wealth. As Naomi sought to read the signposts of God's providence and work within the provision of God's law, she instructed Ruth to go to Boaz and ask for the levirate marriage (Ch3). Boaz was

only too pleased to do this, but he warned her that there was another redeemer who had a prior claim. However, he, Boaz, would redeem her if the other man would not. When Ruth recounted all this to Naomi, her mother-in-law told her to WAIT to see how things would turn out. We, too, need to be prepared to wait as we look to see how God will work in our own situation.

As the narrative continues, and Boaz takes up his role as redeemer for Ruth and Naomi, we find ourselves being pointed to an even greater Redeemer.

The Lord Jesus Christ is at work in the world to redeem us from the poverty and mess of our sin.

As his redeemed people, we become instruments in the hand of our great Redeemer, for the good of others.

We have a responsibility to act in redemptive ways because we follow our true Redeemer, Jesus

Boaz is an example to us of loving kindness that goes beyond the law:

- Loving kindness that points to Jesus
- Loving kindness that is empowered by Jesus

What does this responsibility to act in redemptive ways require of us?

1. Redemption requires cost. Boaz needed to resolve the matter of the other kinsman redeemer, and so he waited at the gates of the town where he was guaranteed to meet him. (vv1-4). According to God's law, this first redeemer had to take the dead owner's widow to be his wife when he bought the field. He would need to pay out money to buy the field, marry Naomi and have a child with her. That child would have Elimelech's family name and, in due course, would inherit the land that the redeemer had paid for. The redeemer would have nothing to show for it for himself. However, he probably assumed that the field would be a safe investment because Naomi was too old to have children and so he was quite happy to redeem the field initially.

He had it wrong, however. The land had passed to Naomi's sons when Elimelech died, and so the redeemer would have to marry Ruth! (v5). In this situation, and with a number of onlookers, he decided to find a way out (v6).

- Faced with the real cost, this man was unwilling to fulfil his role as Kinsman Redeemer. He had the right and the means to redeem this family, so he met the legal and financial requirements. However, he lacked the heart to redeem them.

He was unwilling to suffer the financial loss and to have a child who would not carry on his name. Ironically, we do not know the name of the man who sought to preserve his name, but we do know Boaz's name.

In our materialistic, self-centred western culture, this is a challenge to us. The service God calls us to is one that suffers:

- loss of money to meet a need that can never be repaid
- loss of time that you will never get back to help others
- loss of reputation to stand up for those who no one else wants to stand up for, such as unborn babies

The service that God calls us to is costly service

2. Redemption requires love. Boaz continually served Ruth and Naomi beyond what the law required. He was not a man who fulfilled the letter of the law but ignored the spirit of the law.

· The law required him to allow Ruth to glean in the field. He was not obliged to provide her with lunch or extra opportunities for gleaning.

· The law required the nearest kinsman to redeem a family if they were able and willing. Boaz was not the closest kinsman redeemer and so was not obliged to fulfil the role of kinsman redeemer or undertake levirate marriage.

Yet he does (vv7-10).

· Boaz did what the other redeemer was unwilling to do – he will take Ruth as his wife.

Why was he willing to suffer loss for the sake of an outsider to Israel? The answer can be found in Naomi's words to Ruth: "May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" (2:20). The word kindness is the Hebrew word, *Hesed*, and can be translated as loving kindness. It is a word that speaks of the loving loyalty of God to the people he has committed himself to.

· Boaz is acting out of love for Ruth

The other man was only interested in acquiring more for himself and saw Ruth as a hindrance to that.

Boaz so loves Ruth that he is willing to pay the cost because he will get Ruth, the object of his love, in marriage.

This is selfless love that goes beyond the letter of the law to the heart of the law.

We need hearts that are filled with selfless love if we are going to be able to pay the true cost of acting in redemptive ways. The real opposite of love is selfishness, not hate. Selfishness will keep you from acting with love towards others. It is easy to be the redeemer if there is something in it for you. You may well be happy to:

· Invest money when it gives you a good return on your investment

· Spend time with others, listening to them and serving them when it makes them and others admire you or puts the person in your debt.

Those are redemptive acts that feed our greed, pride and self-worth. Are you willing:

· to serve when the act of so doing does not produce a return that your heart craves?

· to serve God's people by praying for them when no one else but God hears you?

· to give a gift in such a way that only God knows where it has come from?

This is service that does not sound a trumpet and call attention to you! That kind of service only happens when the motive is

True selfless love that goes beyond the letter of the law

3. Redemption requires acceptance. The elders and those who gathered to witness Boaz's love for Ruth respond in a way that has beauty in it. (vv11-12). They bless Boaz and Ruth, and in so doing they show acceptance of this outsider from Moab.

That is the beauty of grace

Ruth has simply come to put herself under the care of Israel's God. The people did not ask her a lot of questions about issues that are often divisive in churches. They did not require her to state what her theology was, what was her favourite style of Christian

music or what version of the Bible she used. She was not required to fit in with the tribe in regard to secondary cultural issues.

- We are people who are fully accepted by Jesus, when we seek his mercy to us as sinners. He simply calls us to come and does not load us down with conditions.

In the same way, these people simply accepted Ruth, and we are called to simply accept those who come among us.

Their response is to welcome her and bless her.

Our response must be to welcome and bless those who come amongst us, whatever our differences

Acting in redemptive ways is costly, requires selfless love and means that we are to accept those who are different to us.

- Our motives are called into question, and this is always a painful challenge.

We need to look, not to Boaz, Naomi or Ruth, but to the real hero of the book of Ruth: the true redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ

The true redeemer was also born in Bethlehem.

- At the cost of his own life, given up to a cruel death on a cross, he redeemed us from both the guilt and the power of sin

- He did this because he loved us and out of a motive of selfless love for his Father and love for his people

- He unreservedly accepts all who come to shelter under his wings, without requiring us to meet any secondary conditions.

The Lord Jesus Christ calls us to come to him empty-handed

with the cry of our heart being: "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

He opens his arms to all who admit they have made a mess of life and need him to unravel that mess.

When we see the standard of love, we can feel guilty and hopeless. To live the life of love that goes beyond the law, we need forgiveness for when we have not loved, and strength to enable us to love. Both of these come to us through our redeemer, Jesus.

- There is always forgiveness for our failures when we confess them to him. He died on a cross to deal with all our sin, and cried out "It is finished" so we can know with certainty that the price has been paid in full. The Father raised him from the dead because he was satisfied that he had accomplished everything.

We do not need to despair, even when we have not acted in redemptive ways as we should have done. We can come to confess all our failures to our true redeemer and experience his forgiveness afresh.

- There is always strength to enable us to change from the inside, so that we are willing to meet the cost out of selfless love and accept those who are different from us.

When we put our trust in him, Christ comes to dwell in us by his Spirit, and he changes us so that we become instruments of redemption in the hands of our Redeemer.

· When Pat got the ball of wool in a mess, her grandmother unravelled it for her every time she went to her to ask for help. This is a simple illustration of a great truth for us all.

That is what Jesus is like.

Every time we make a mess of our lives, we can give the mess to our great Redeemer. He is honoured when we come to him to sort out the mess and to redeem us yet again.

We fail to honour him when we try to sort out the mess ourselves.

We honour the Lord Jesus Christ as we lift up the mess of our lives, trusting that he loves us enough to bear the cost and to redeem our mess.

He demonstrated that love for us at the cross.

We can trust his love, and his strength and power to change us.

· Take time to look at the current mess in your own life and to bring it before the great redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ, with the confidence that he will redeem you.