

The Book of Ruth – A Tale of Two Men – Ruth 4:1-12 – Lesson Summary

A good or bad ending can make or break a movie, show, or book. I remember giving my time and attention to a 6 season TV series over a few years only to experience the worst series finale possible. At that moment, I realized that I had thrown away hours of my time just to be unsatisfied at the end. I have been anxious about endings ever since. As we approach the end of The Book of Ruth my prayer is that it's conclusion would bring great satisfaction as one story ends and we see an even greater story continue on. We will see that The Book of Ruth is not only a story about two women but two men as well.

In the final verses of Ruth Ch. 3 Ruth and Boaz are presented with an obstacle. Despite their clear desires to marry one another, there is a kinsmen redeemer who is closer in line to Elimelech than Boaz. It does not appear that this individual is aware of the situation. However, Boaz is, and his integrity leads him to address this obstacle in a godly way. Boaz waits upon the Lord as he addresses the obstacle before him in a way in which the Lord would be pleased. His actions appear to be a stark contrast to Naomi's impatience when having Ruth go to the threshing floor to present herself to Boaz. Naomi takes things into her own hands but Boaz surrenders to the will of God as he takes the necessary steps of addressing the obstacle before him.

Boaz understands that in order to have an opportunity to marry Ruth, he needs to address the kinsmen redeemer who is in line before him. Notice Boaz doesn't sit back and do nothing. His obedience to the Lord is not passive. With great urgency Boaz pursues the individual he must speak with by waiting at the gate of the town. Soon after, by God's providence, this man walks by. Boaz has been obedient and now the Lord provides the opportunity he needs. With little hesitation, Boaz presents the opportunity to redeem Elimelech's land to the kinsmen redeemer who is first in line. Upon being informed of the opportunity before him, the man quickly states his desire to redeem the land. It's only when the cost of redemption gets too high that he ultimately rejects it. Boaz is quick to remind the redeemer that Naomi and Ruth would accompany the land being redeemed. The kinsmen redeemer would not only gain the land, but would be expected to continue the line of Elimelech through Ruth. Having considered these additional costs, the kinsmen redeemer rejects the opportunity in order to protect his inheritance. Boaz immediately responds.

In direct contrast to this man's response, Boaz immediately declares his desire to redeem everything that belonged to Elimelech including Ruth the Moabitess. It's important to see that the cost has not changed for Boaz. The first kinsmen redeemer rejected his opportunity because the cost was too high and affected his future inheritance. Boaz faces the exact same reality but pays little regard to the cost and seizes the opportunity to redeem all that had been lost. This shouldn't surprise us. Boaz has consistently displayed great sacrifice as he's cared for both Naomi and Ruth. He provided Ruth protection, provision, respect, and dignity. In both word and deed, Boaz has never failed to represent the loving compassion and kindness of God. Every action and sacrifice that Boaz has made has been about restoring what Naomi and Ruth had lost in Moab. This final gesture tells Ruth that she is worthy, she is redeemable, and she will never be empty again. Together they would become fruitful.

Earlier, I said that The Book of Ruth is a story about two men. It might be easy to think it's about Boaz and this redeemer who rejected his opportunity. However, the story is not about that man at all. In fact, his name is literally translated as "so and so". This story is about Boaz, a kinsmen redeemer, who's heart and actions reflect another man's heart, the heart of our Great Redeemer Jesus Christ. At great cost, Jesus surrenders everything in order to redeem us. He does so because He wants us to be full again. He wants us to know that we are worthy of redemption. He wants us to be a part of His family as He provides an abundance of His love, mercy, and grace. Boaz can only be Ruth's redeemer because He is ultimately redeemed by Christ.

Discussion:

- 1) When you've been faced with an obstacle or challenge in your life, how have you responded? Have you been obedient? Have you been patient?
- 2) The first potential kinsmen redeemer felt the cost was too great to be obedient to the law. When has the cost of following Christ felt too great to you? How have you responded?
- 3) Boaz's love for God compelled him to sacrificially love Ruth. How have you sacrificially loved others?