

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

February 5, 2012

Hope for Those Who Are Empty

No. 3605

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Dear radio friends,

Today, in our series in the book of Ruth, we are going to look at the second part of chapter 2. I have entitled this message “Hope for Those Who Are Empty.”

Earlier in the book Naomi had been brought back by God to Canaan after she and her husband sinfully moved away from the promised land to Moab. She comes back a widow and brings back with her Ruth, a daughter-in-law, who is also a widow. They come back poor, empty. And even though there is a plot of ground that is rightfully theirs, it is not of much use to them. It will provide them no food on their return.

So Ruth goes out to glean. That is, she goes out to gather grain after the harvesters. When she does this, God leads her to the field of Boaz, who happens to be a close relative of Naomi—a kinsman, which, we are going to see, is a very important fact in this little book. In fact, it is key to the whole book of Ruth. Boaz is a kinsman.

In the passage that we look at today, that point is central too. It is a thing that gives hope to these two poor widows. In verse 20 Naomi says to Ruth: “The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.” What a ray of hope. He was a man whom Naomi had completely forgotten about, who not only had the right to redeem them, that is, to buy their land and to provide for them, as well as to marry Ruth and give children to their family, but he was also a kind and a godly man who showed an interest in Ruth. He provided food and protection for her when she came into his fields.

We should remember that Boaz stands in the Old Testament as a type of Jesus our Redeemer. He was a picture in the Old Testament of Jesus Christ. As we go on in the book of Ruth, we are going to see Christ coming through more and more in the character and the behavior of Boaz.

Ruth and Naomi find themselves in a desperate situation of poverty. Their family line is threatened with extinction. What should they do? It may be that in this situation Naomi was anxious. But a cooler head prevails and Ruth goes out to glean. Her attitude is: Jehovah will provide. We need to worry about just today. God will take care of tomorrow. She thinks to herself, “I will go out and get the food that we need for today.” And when she goes out to glean with this quiet trust in the Lord, He provides for her in a marvelous way that she and Naomi could never have expected or dreamed of. In one day their whole outlook on life and on their future changes. There is hope here for the empty.

That comes out in verses 17-23 in Ruth, chapter 2. First, in verse 17, they are given hope for the day. Ruth goes out in the morning, not knowing what to expect. Will there be a field for her to glean? Will there be a farmer who will allow her, a stranger, to pick up barley from his fields? Is it going to be safe for her to be out there in a man's world?

And what does she find? She finds not only a field with harvest workers who are willing to let her follow and pick up stalks of barley, but when lunchtime comes she also meets the landowner, Boaz, who greets her kindly and tells her to help herself to the food and drink that he has provided for his workers. He tells his servants to drop not stalks of grain but bundles of grain for her to pick up. And he commands them to protect her.

So, first, what an amazing change of circumstances in one day for Ruth. But also, there is hope here for Ruth and Naomi for the immediate future beyond this one day. At the end of the day Ruth has an ephah of barley. That is enough food for at least two people for two weeks. And, besides, Boaz invites her to stay in his fields for the entire barley harvest and, in fact, for the entire summer—to the end of the wheat harvest. And that means provision for many months to come. What hope comes to these empty widows in one day!

But more. There is hope for these widows long-term. That comes out in the conversation that Naomi and Ruth have when Ruth returns home in the evening. One of the beautiful features of the book of Ruth is the deep relationship between these two women. That comes out especially in their conversations with each other. They shared their life and its burdens and hopes with each other. They did not live selfishly. Ruth is concerned about Naomi, and Naomi is looking out for Ruth and for her safety and her future in a strange land.

Verses 18 and 19 tell us that when Ruth came home with all this barley and with food for her mother-in-law, that Naomi immediately noticed that things had gone well for Ruth—that someone had shown her extraordinary kindness. In amazement she asks: "What hast thou gleaned today? Blessed be he who took notice of you!" And Ruth says, "The man's name with whom I labored today is Boaz." Then there is this little detail that suddenly occurs to Naomi. She says, "That man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. Blessed be he of the Lord." And then Ruth continues by telling Naomi that Boaz has invited her to stay in his fields till the end of harvest. And Naomi says, "That's good. Stay there!"

Now the hope that is expressed in the words of Naomi that he is a near kinsman is much more than simply that now they will have sufficient food for many days to come. We have to understand what this discovery of a kind kinsman meant to Naomi. It means, perhaps, that someone would be willing to buy her land so that she had financial resources beyond the harvest. But it also meant that there may be a husband for Ruth. Naomi, we saw in chapter 1, was too old to provide one. But maybe, just maybe, this Boaz was the man. And the significance of that, for Naomi, is that the first child from such a marriage would take over the family name and property of Elimelech, Naomi's deceased husband. So Naomi, when she says, "He is a near kinsman," is expressing a long-term hope. "Ruth, this is going to be good for us in the long-term. He is a man who can revive our otherwise extinct family and who can restore to us a place in Israel with God's covenant people."

The spiritual significance of this is that it gives them an eternal hope. This kinsman/redeemer, Boaz, points us to another Redeemer. Without the redemption that will come through Boaz later in the book of Ruth, that other Redeemer will not come. And, you see, God is raising up this family, the family of Elimelech and Naomi, from nothing—in order to bring that other Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Boaz will redeem the land. He will marry Ruth. And they will have a son, Obed, who will become the father of Jesse, who was the father of David, from whom Christ will be born. And even if Naomi and Ruth did not see all of that here, this was what God was doing. He was raising up the line of Christ, the true Redeemer that they and we will need. Naomi's longing here for a name and an inheritance in Canaan was an expression of her hope in the coming Messiah, her eternal hope. She wanted her place in Canaan. She wanted her family to participate in the coming redemption of God's people through Jesus Christ. Here, for two empty widows, there is a great and an eternal hope.

And, as we consider this, we should see the parallel to Jesus, our Redeemer. Apart from Him we are empty. We are poor sinners, hopeless and lost in this world. We have no hope for the present and our struggles in the present. We have no hope for the immediate future and the fears of tomorrow. We have no hope for the duration of our lives till death. We have no hope in death and no hope beyond death in eternity. Without the Redeemer, we are hopeless and empty. People who live in this world without knowing Jesus have a hopeless existence. In Ephesians 2:12 and 13 the apostle Paul describes it this way: "That at that time [that is, in the unconverted state] ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now [he says to the Ephesians] in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

If you are an unbeliever, if you do not know Jesus Christ, if you do not put your faith in Him as the only hope for sinners, if you do not believe the gospel of the cross and suffering of Jesus Christ as the only payment for your sin and the only deliverance for sinners, you are in a hopeless situation, on a hopeless path that leads to the eternal damnation of hell.

But what a change there is for those who know the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Ruth came to know Boaz. What a change. When Jesus graciously comes to us in the gospel with promises and when we, by His grace, hear His Word and see what He has done and believe on Him and repent of our sins and find our salvation in Him, how bright our eternal future becomes. What a change that brings in our present lives. We still live in the same world, with the same struggles, but now as creatures of hope.

If you are a believer, rejoice in that hope. What has Christ done for you? He has raised you from darkness and sin. He has removed the guilt of your sin. He has freed you from what your sin deserves—the punishment of sin in hell. He has freed you from the power of sin and Satan and the ways of this world. He brings you, in your salvation, great joy and blessing in knowing Him. He has put you in the company of the redeemed. He has included you in the church, which is His bride. He has given you an inheritance that is eternal, that fades not away, in the heavens.

There is great promise for God's people. A great promise, not only for the present, but one that reaches into eternity. Our hope is fixed, not on the things of this life, but on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. In the hope of Naomi, we express our eternal hope in Jesus our Redeemer.

There are several more things I want to point out in this passage. The first is the explanation for the change of circumstances in the lives of Ruth and Naomi. What explains this change? Was it because of the man Boaz and his generosity that everything changed for them? Well, partly, it was. In reality, Boaz was under no obligation to these women. As we see later in the book, he was not the nearest relative. And he was not a brother to the deceased. He was a gracious man. Maybe we are tempted to stop and admire Boaz here. But let us not stop there because, behind Boaz, God is at work.

Naomi acknowledges this in verse 20 when she says, "Blessed be he [that is, Boaz] of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead." Behind the goodness and graciousness of Boaz Naomi saw the work of God's grace in creating this kind spirit in Boaz. And she also saw God's grace to her, to Ruth, and to her family. And even to God's covenant people. "The Lord," she says, "who has not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead." In other words, Jehovah has remembered His covenant mercy. Those are the words here.

The word that is used here for kindness refers to God's particular love to His elect people. Because of that love, God promised to send the Savior. All through the Old Testament that promise can be seen—in the promise to Adam and Eve, the promise to Noah, the promise to Abraham, the promise to Moses and Israel in Egypt, the promise to Israel as they came into Canaan, the promise to David, all the promises in the prophets. And again and again, God, in spite of the sinfulness of Israel, preserves them and keeps them. He did this so that He might fulfill His promise and keep His Word concerning the coming Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

That was beautifully expressed by Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, when he said: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel who has performed the mercy promised to our fathers and remembered his holy covenant." He was speaking of the birth of the Savior: God has remembered His covenant promise.

It is God's remembering that covenant promise that explains the change in circumstances here for these widows. God, remembering His mercy, fills their emptiness with hope. Jehovah is merciful. In His grace He filled Boaz so that he was merciful to them. Boaz could have been a hard, ruthless man. But knowing the grace of God himself, Boaz was a gracious man. This grace explains the conversion of Ruth. This grace explains the rich relationship that developed between these two women from two different ethnic backgrounds. They knew God's grace. And in His grace, God remembers His people in the hopelessness of their sins, and He sent the Savior, the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. So you have here the hope of the widows. And the explanation for it is the grace of God.

And now, lastly, I want to point to the perseverance of Ruth. Ruth and Naomi have hope. But they have a long way to go before their hope is realized. And so Naomi says to Ruth in verse 22: "It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in

any other field.” She is saying to Ruth, “Now that you’ve found the place of blessing, stay there, even if it means hard work and much waiting.”

From the lips of Naomi, that is a remarkable change. For she and Elimelech, because of difficulties, had left the place of God’s blessing in Canaan and had gone to Moab. In these words she expresses her repentance. This is what she had learned. And Ruth, you see here, listens to Naomi. Verse 23 tells us that she stays gleaning through the barley harvest to the end of the wheat harvest, that is, a full summer of work in the fields—from spring to fall. Field labor is hard labor, hot, dusty, and unpleasant. But Ruth perseveres because she is in the place of blessing and safety and hope for her.

There is encouragement in this for all of God’s people—to remain in the place of God’s blessing—even if that is difficult. Where is the place of God’s blessing? It is the place where God has put you today. And remaining there means living in obedience in that place. Maybe it is difficult. But God says, “Stay there, wait. Your hope will be realized.” The place of God’s blessing is the place where you are with God’s people in the church, where truth is maintained and taught, where God’s Word is honored and obeyed. There God, the Redeemer, affords to His people safety and blessing.

Let us pray.

Lord, keep us close to Thee. Help us to live in faithfulness to Thy Word in the place that Thou hast put us in life. Keep us in the company of Thy people. Fill us with hope and blessing as we live in this world from which we have been delivered. Give us the hope that Thy Son’s death on the cross affords us. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

February 12, 2012

Seeking Rest in Marriage

No. 3606

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Dear Radio Friends,

Today, in our series of messages in the book of Ruth, we come to chapter 3. In chapter 2 Ruth, who had come from Moab with her mother-in-law Naomi as a widow, went out to glean for grain. The Lord led her to the fields of Boaz, a godly man who was very kind and generous to her and whom Ruth discovers is a kinsman or a near relative. Naomi's advice to Ruth is to stay gleaning in the fields of Boaz, which she does all through the summer until the end of the fall harvest.

Because Boaz is a near relative, he is a potential husband for the widow Ruth. If Ruth would marry, that would mean several things. First, it would mean provision and care for Ruth and Naomi. Second, it would mean that the first child from this marriage would continue the family name of Elimelech, which at this point has come to an end. And, third, it would mean that the property that belonged to Elimelech would remain in the possession of that family. In His law, God had said that the nearest male relative should marry the widow if she had no children, so that this could take place. Boaz was a near relative, and therefore a potential husband for Ruth.

As the summer draws to an end, the question of whether Boaz will marry Ruth becomes quite urgent, especially in the mind of Naomi. Soon there will be no fields to glean. The interaction between Ruth and Boaz will cease, and Naomi will have to begin selling land in order to continue her existence as a widow. With this in mind, Naomi urges Ruth to pursue marriage with Boaz. And notice, her primary concern is not her own situation, but the future of the family name and the well-being of Ruth in this strange land.

In the first verses of Ruth chapter 3, we read that Naomi said to Ruth: "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz of our kindred?" She wants Ruth to marry Boaz. She sees this as rest for Ruth. Rest. That is a beautiful description of what marriage is. It denotes that there is safety and security in marriage; that God has created marriage as a covenant relationship of companionship and satisfaction, of peace and fulfillment. Husbands and wives, do you seek rest in your marriage? Do you find your fulfillment in the spouse that God has given you? Is your marriage a place of rest? That is what God intends it to be.

And this is what Naomi seeks for Ruth. She sees Boaz as the ideal husband for Ruth. There is a closer relative who has the first right to marry Ruth. But Naomi wants Ruth to seek rest in marriage with Boaz. And that is because Boaz is a man of godliness who also loves the people of God.

So Naomi gives advice to Ruth. She reminds Ruth that Boaz is a near relative. And she has a plan for Ruth to follow. She knows where Boaz is (v. 2): “Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshingfloor.” In verse 3 she instructs Ruth to wash herself, to put on perfume and her best clothes. In this way it will be plain to Boaz that she has not come begging for food or to work, but that she has another purpose. And then Naomi also tells her what she is to do when she comes to where Boaz is. She is to wait till he is done working and eating, and go in and uncover his feet and lie down when he is sleeping. Verse 9 indicates that this is a symbolic gesture. When she uncovers his feet, she is to ask him, “Spread thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.” That gesture will make clear to Boaz that she is asking him to fulfill the role of a near relative, to protect her, and to provide a shelter for her, to give her a place of rest in marriage.

As we look at Naomi’s advice and plan, it is important that we ask: What are her motives? Is this because she wants the wealth and protection of Boaz for herself? Or is this out of love and concern for Ruth? If we look again at verse 1, we see that her interest is not herself but Ruth. She addresses Ruth as “My daughter,” which demonstrates a motherly concern. She is seeking rest or safety and security for Ruth in this marriage. And her purpose is, at the end of verse 1, “that it may be well with thee.”

And then, beyond this, as a believing woman, she wants her husband’s name to continue in Israel. That is not selfish, but rather shows her deep spirituality. In a day when it seems that no one really cares about such things, but every man does what is right in his own eyes, she respects the law of God and she has put her eye on the promise of the Messiah, which is tied in with the family name and her possession in the land of Canaan. These, for Israel, were symbolic of their name and place in the coming kingdom of the Messiah, and of their place in the heavenly Canaan. This is what motivates Naomi.

It is important that we identify these motives. Naomi was not a desperate parent pushing her daughter into marriage, by match-making and being a busybody. No, she was concerned for Ruth, and out of that concern she took seriously her responsibility as a parent in giving advice and direction to her unmarried daughter. Believing parents can learn from that. Parents, you have a responsibility when it comes to the marriage of your teenage and young adult children. What is it? Well, on the one hand, we do not have to arrange their marriages. But, on the other hand, we do not just let them go, so that they can figure it all out for themselves. No, we must take an active role, an involved role in this important part of their lives. If we do not, they are going to start learning things from the wrong sources, from the wicked world. So this is a responsibility for believing parents.

What, specifically, is the role of parents? First, we must model to them how they should live in marriage. That is something that starts from the day they are born. Children will expect from their marriage and live out in their marriage what they see in the marriage of their parents. So men, fathers, you have to be the husband that you want your daughter to have. If you want your daughter to find a man who will love her, who will be Christ-like and sacrificial, who will respect her, then that is how you need to live as a husband toward your wife, so that your daughter knows what to look for and so that your son knows who he should be as a husband. Mothers, you need to be the godly wife that you want your daughters to be and that you want

your sons to marry. If you want rest for your son in marriage, you need to show him what a submissive, respectful wife looks like.

And then, besides modeling this to our children, we have to teach our children the things that they will need for a godly home. There needs to be a spiritual aspect to the life of our Christian homes. We need to have devotions as a family. We need to read the Word of God together with our children and pray with them. The church needs to be central in our lives. We need to teach our children specifics about living in marriage. They need to be able to see that we mean these things because we also live them. And, probably more important than anything else, we need to teach them the gospel and model the principles of the gospel in our relationships in the home. Jesus, as a husband, gave Himself for His bride. Jesus, in His love, humbled Himself and came to serve and not to be served.

Then, when it comes to the specifics of a relationship, we need to help our children just as Naomi helped Ruth. We need to help them identify godly characteristics in a potential spouse. They need to learn discernment from us by the restrictions that we put on their friendships, from the warnings and the advice that we give them, from the emphasis that we put, not on looks, but on godliness. You are all familiar with Proverbs 31: the virtuous woman. But did you realize that a godly mother wrote this not for her *daughter* but for her *son*, so that he would know what to look for in a wife? (Go back and look at the first verses of that Proverb.)

Our children need to learn also how to behave themselves toward the opposite sex. Some of this they will learn from their interaction, but they need parental direction so that young men learn to treat women respectfully; so that young women learn to be modest out of respect for a man. Parents should provide an environment for this kind of interaction between their children and other godly young people.

And then, besides all this, we should pray for our children in this regard. If we want for our children a godly husband or wife, we will pray for this for them and will teach them to pray for this. We will teach them the weightiness of the decision to marry a person—that this is not something to run into but it is a once-in-a-lifetime decision that will have more impact than any other decision on their earthly life.

And so parents need to be proactive in these areas. If they are not, their children will learn about sex and dating and marriage from the world, the television, the workplace, and so on. And the world has nothing to teach them. It is a mess out there. There is no rest in marriage in the culture of our day. The Word of God here urges us, as Naomi, to seek rest in marriage for our children.

Let us turn our attention now from Naomi to Ruth. The first thing to see in Ruth is her response to Naomi's advice. Again, this is instructional, especially now, for young people. Verse 5 gives us her response. She said, "All that thou sayest unto me I will do." She is respectful and submissive to her mother-in-law. These two women were the closest of friends. Their hearts were knit together. And that was primarily because Ruth, the younger, respected the older, godly Naomi. She was willing to learn from her. So she goes out and does everything just as Naomi advises.

You young people who are listening today, you too should listen to the advice of your godly parents in these things. Out of her love and concern for Ruth, Naomi gives her instruction. If you have godly parents, be assured that their heart is with you, that they love you, and that out of that they help you in your youth. Yes, they may put restrictions on you. They will give you advice. They are going to intervene. But in those things, remember, they are not trying to destroy your happiness. Your believing parents, when they follow God's Word, want simply to guide you, to help you to avoid a life of heartache. Think about that.

Ruth goes out and does everything that Naomi advises. She washes, perfumes, puts on her best, goes out to the threshingfloor before it is dark, watches while the men eat and drink, marks out the place where Boaz lies down, waits till everyone is sleeping, tiptoes over to where Boaz is, lifts the blanket off his feet, and lies down there at his feet till he wakes up from the cold. And then, rather straightforwardly, she asks Boaz to marry her.

Now, you probably think that is a rather unusual way to seek a marriage partner. A lot of people, when they read this passage, have trouble with Ruth's forwardness and see her conduct as quite inappropriate. But we should not read it that way. You see, our trouble is that we are looking at this through the eyes of our culture and times and we do not understand the cultural norms of the day in which this was written. The cultural norms of our day are sensual and perverted. We read about Boaz being merry and we immediately think he was drunk. We read about Ruth lying down with him and it seems like the stuff of Hollywood, does it not? But that is nonsense. That is not what is happening here. Instead, it was entirely appropriate that Ruth make this proposal to Boaz.

In fact, according to the law, that was her duty. You can look that up in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. If the kinsman were not doing anything to initiate marriage with the widow, then the widow was to initiate this relationship. And Ruth and Naomi, understand, were living in a day when God's law was largely ignored. The man who was supposed to seek Ruth in marriage was not doing it. But Ruth and Naomi honored God's law. They understood the spiritual significance of the land and of the name.

Then think also of how Ruth would have been dressed. Either she would have had on widow garments, which was a black covering from head to toe, or she would have had on modest clothing, which included an extra veil of covering as verse 16 indicates. This was not a day of low necklines and seductive clothing. That is not what Naomi was proposing at all. And Ruth does not go out to arouse a man. In fact, this was the most professional and business-like marriage proposal you have ever heard of.

Boaz's response, too, shows that this was entirely appropriate. He was a man of godliness. He responds to Ruth by saying, "Blessed be thou of the Lord"—something he would never have said if Ruth's behavior was inappropriate. He realized, too, that Ruth's proposal was another act of kindness toward Naomi and the family of Elimelech. He praises her for not going after other young men but instead following God's Word and seeking to fulfill her proper role as a widow. There was no indiscretion in this midnight meeting. It was simply for the purpose of immediacy and privacy that Ruth goes to Boaz at night.

There are, again, things for us to learn from this. Ruth's proposal to Boaz tells us where the emphasis should fall in seeking a spouse. Yes, Ruth's appearance and cleanliness were a part of this. She washes herself and puts on her best. We learn from this that the Bible does not ignore physical appearance and beauty, and we should not either. We should care for our bodies. Cleanliness and dress do matter. They are a part of stewardship. If you read Proverbs 31 you see that part of the virtue of the woman described there is that she clothes her entire house well. How a person dresses and smells communicates something to others. If it is overdone, it can tell others that you are vain. But it can also say that you are lazy. What it should be saying is that we are neat and orderly, that we are good stewards of what God has given us in every area of life.

But even though Ruth dressed well, that was not the primary thing here. That was not what attracted Boaz to her. That was not why he said, "Blessed be thou of the Lord." Rather, the emphasis falls on godliness. The same thing that we see in chapter 2 in the initial meeting of Boaz and Ruth is here. This is why Naomi sees Boaz as the best candidate for marriage for Ruth. And Boaz appreciates Ruth's kindness toward the family of Elimelech.

If you are looking for a husband or a wife, that is where the emphasis ought to fall in your relationship—not on physical beauty, popularity, education, wealth, social status, intelligence, and so on. But on godliness. The big questions that you face when you date and enter marriage are not: Where are we going to live? What are we going to drive? How much money will we have? But the big questions are spiritual ones: Where will we go to church? Can we pray together? Is God's Word important to both of us? Are we one in the Lord? And, young people, if you want rest in marriage, if you want a life of peace and joy, then you must marry in the Lord. Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Too often people do not talk about those things before they are married. Then they have much turmoil in their marriage because they are on different pages spiritually. Do not do that. Sort out these things first in your relationship. Do not let passion get in the way of priorities.

As we finish today, let us talk about the other marriage relationship, not the earthly one but the heavenly one. Spiritually, all believers, as members of the body of Christ are married to the Lord. There we should and will find our true rest. Ruth here stands as a type or figure of the believer who seeks rest in Christ Jesus. In sin we are without rest. Our souls are restless, till we rest in God. But the safety, the security, the rest of our souls comes when we, by faith, trust in Jesus Christ, His cross, and His righteousness for us. Everyone who experiences the unrest of sin (maybe that is you today) is called to believe on Jesus Christ.

In Boaz's praise of Ruth we learn something of the character of true faith in Jesus Christ. Boaz praised Ruth for her single-heartedness. She does not go after other young men. Everyone who believes in Jesus and seeks rest in Him will live that way, too—not loving the world, not living for self, but living for Christ—loving God with all his being.

May God grant it to you and to me.

Let us pray.

Father, our souls are restless until we rest in Thee. Draw us by Thy Word to Thyself. Help us to see our sin, to forsake it, and to find all our joy in Jesus our Redeemer. Bless Christian marriages and homes, and Christian young people who seek rest in marriage by seeking Thee. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

February 19, 2012

Boaz: A Willing Redeemer

No. 3607

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Dear Radio Friends,

Today we come again to the book of Ruth. We are in chapter 3 and we will be looking at verses 11-18. In the earlier verses of the chapter we looked at the marriage proposal of Ruth to Boaz. Naomi, out of her concern for Ruth, says in verse 1: “Shall I not seek rest for thee?” And she means in marriage. She has a plan for Ruth to go where Boaz is sleeping at the threshingfloor and to request of him that he fulfill the responsibility of a near kinsman by marrying her and redeeming the land of Naomi. So Ruth goes out and finds the place where Boaz is sleeping. She lies down near his feet. She lifts his blanket to cover herself. According to verse 9, this is a symbolic gesture. She says, “I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.” She is not simply asking Boaz to share his blanket because she is cold, but to provide security and protection for her as the near kinsman.

As we looked at this proposal, we answered the question: Was this appropriate behavior? What we saw was that it was the widow’s right, by the law of God, to initiate the kinsman request if nothing was happening. We saw also the godliness of both Ruth and Boaz. There is no indiscretion here. Instead Boaz praises Ruth for her desire to raise up the name of the family of Elimelech and he blesses her in the name of Jehovah.

At this point of the story there is some suspense. How will Boaz respond? Is he willing to fulfill the role of the kinsman/redeemer? Ruth has gone out and she has made herself vulnerable. There is the danger here of rejection, of rumor, and of a scandal. How will Boaz respond?

Today we are going to look at the response of Boaz to Ruth’s request. There are three things that we want to see in these verses. First, the willingness of Boaz; second, the godliness of Boaz; and third, the patience of Ruth. As we do this we remember to look through this story to Jehovah, the God of providence, and to Jesus, the true Redeemer who is pictured here in Boaz.

You have here, first, the willingness of Boaz. That willingness is expressed in verse 11 when Boaz says to Ruth: “Now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest.” Boaz is saying, Whatever it takes, Ruth, I am willing to do it.

But there is an obstacle. In verse 12 we find that there is a nearer kinsman, a closer relative who has the right of redemption before Boaz. Maybe this is a detail that Ruth, being new to Bethlehem, does not know about. But Boaz knows about it, and he is telling Ruth: “Legally, I

cannot do this. I'm willing to take on this responsibility, but it's not my right. There is a closer relative who has this right."

Is this a disappointment for Ruth, a setback? Probably it is. And that is why Boaz says in verse 13: "If he [that is, the nearer kinsman] will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth." Understanding Ruth's disappointment, he makes a vow to see to it that someone will redeem her and marry her. How reassuring this is for Ruth. He does not chase her away. He does not say, "Well, there's a nearer kinsman, so this is not my responsibility." No, he tells her, "Lie down till the morning. Be at rest about it, because now it is in my hands, and I will take care of it."

So she rests till the morning and gets up early to leave. As she is leaving, Boaz again demonstrates his willingness by giving her six measures of barley to take home to her mother-in-law, Naomi. We do not know exactly what six measures is. Some speculate that a measure was about twenty pounds. So six measures would be 120 pounds. But I doubt that Ruth would carry home 120 pounds of grain. Regardless, the point here is this, that he gave her a good supply of grain—not just what she needed for that day or for two days, but for many days. And he gave that to her as a gift to confirm his word, as a token of his promise. Boaz realizes that this is a promise not just to Ruth but also to Naomi. In verse 17, as he gives Ruth the grain, he says, "Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law." He wants Ruth to let Naomi know that he is willing to fulfill the part of a kinsman.

This token reminds me of the gift that Joseph gave to his brothers to take back to Jacob their father in Canaan. When they came back and they told Jacob, "Joseph is yet alive," Jacob had trouble believing it until he saw the wagons and the supplies that Joseph had sent back to bring him and his family to Egypt. Then he believes it. Boaz's gift of grain is something like that for Naomi. The parallel today is that a man, when he asks a woman to marry him, puts an engagement ring on her finger. It is a token of his promise that he will keep his word.

And that was exactly how Naomi read it, too. In verse 18 she says to Ruth, "The man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day." Boaz has made a promise. And he has confirmed it with a gift. He is a man of his word. He is willing to pay the price of redemption.

What a moment of joy and euphoria for Ruth and Naomi. Their hope and their desire is confirmed. Their prayer is answered.

And as we look at this, we should see the parallel in God's revelation of His promise to His people. Boaz, the redeemer, stands as a type of Christ, the Redeemer. His willingness and promise are paralleled in the gospel. You can certainly see that throughout the Old Testament. Way back in Genesis 3:15 you have God's promise of the Messiah—the seed of the woman. God confirmed that to Adam and Eve in the shedding of the blood of animals to provide a covering for their nakedness. All through the Old Testament God repeated and confirmed this promise of Christ over and over again. The prophets spoke the promise. And God confirmed it with miracles, with ceremonies, with sacrifices—all the while telling His people, "I will keep My Word and promise."

And God works the same way today. Yes, we have the full revelation of the promise in Jesus Christ. He has already paid the price of redemption. He has demonstrated His willingness in laying down His own life to redeem His people. But the bride of Jesus Christ, the church of God, still waits for her final redemption. And, meanwhile, He gives evidences and tokens of His love and commitment to her. The Holy Spirit is called “the Earnest” of our salvation. The sacraments are signs to remind us of His death. The Sabbath Day is a day of promise and of hope in which we have a foretaste of the perfect fellowship that we will have with God in heaven. And all the while God continues to speak to us through the Word. “I love you, I laid down My life for you, I’m coming again to receive you to Myself that where I am there ye may be also.” In this way Boaz, the redeemer, in his willingness reminds us of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, and His willingness.

The second thing from these verses that we should see is the godliness of Boaz. Coming back to the story, the question is: “What led Boaz to be willing?” It certainly was not just out of duty. In fact, Boaz could have walked away from this deal. He was not the closest relative. It really was not first his responsibility. Why was Boaz willing?

The verses indicate that Boaz was motivated by a personal godliness, that is, he was a man who lived constantly in the consciousness of God. When Ruth wakes him in the night he says, “Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter.” In his first waking thought, startled awake, God is on his mind.

And because of this, Boaz puts a priority on the Word of God. He was willing to marry Ruth. In fact, there are indications that he really wanted this. But there was something more important to Boaz: God’s Word. God’s Word gave the right of redemption to someone else before him. So Boaz will defer to the other man. Though he loved Ruth, he loved God’s Word more. That is the foundation for a good marriage. That should be the foundation for all Christian dating. God’s Word is more important than what we do in our relationships. If you are looking for a good husband, here is one of the first tests in your dating: Does this young man respect what God’s Word says about sex and its place only in marriage? He may say he loves you. But does he love God’s Word more than he loves you?

The godliness of Boaz comes out also in his evaluation of Ruth. Why was he willing to marry Ruth? Verse 11: “I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for [and here’s the reason] all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.” He evaluates Ruth and others according to their relationship to God. He sees in Ruth a loyalty and a purity and a godliness. If she was not godly, we can be sure he would have hesitated. But he admires her for her godliness. And so he is willing to marry her.

Then also something of his character comes out in the way in which he behaves himself towards Ruth. This indicates the kind of husband that he will be to her as well. A godly woman deserves respect. A woman is not a thing or a slave or an object. Boaz calls Ruth “blessed,” and “my daughter.” He shows that as a man he is ready to provide for Ruth and her family, giving her all this grain. This may seem old-fashioned, but the man’s duty and calling from God is to be the breadwinner and provider for his family. Boaz is willing to do that.

And then also he gives protection to Ruth. He tells her: “Lie down till the morning.” He does not want her wandering home on her own in the night. But also, he protects her reputation. In the morning, when she is leaving early, he says to his servants: “Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor.” This is not because something inappropriate had taken place and he is trying to cover up a sin. But he wants to avoid the very appearance of evil in order to protect the reputation of Ruth. That shows the kindness and love of Boaz. If someone is willing to sacrifice your reputation and to bring scandal on your name, that person does not love you. But Boaz protects the name of Ruth.

And one more thing. Because he lives before the Lord, Boaz is a man of his word. He will keep his promise because he lives before God.

God’s Word records all these things about Boaz for us as an example of what a godly man, a person who calls himself a Christian, should be. The godly person will live always before the Lord. His constant God-consciousness will motivate him to obey the Lord and to show kindness and love to others. And young people, young men and young women listening today, there is important instruction here for you in who you should be and in what you should look for in a prospective husband or wife—one who loves the Lord.

But again, in the godliness of Boaz, we should see Jesus. Boaz was this godly man because, by the Spirit of God, he was created after the image of Christ. All godly virtue in a Christian is a reflection of Christ, who is the imagebearer of God and the firstborn among His brethren. In Christ we have not just a godly redeemer, but a perfect Redeemer. He is the Lamb without spot or blemish. That qualifies Him to take our place as Redeemer and to pay the price of redemption with His own blood.

That brings us to the third thing in these verses. That is the patience of Ruth. When Ruth comes home to Naomi in verse 16, Naomi asks her: “Who art thou, my daughter?” That is a rather curious question. She asks Ruth not “how did you fare last night and what did you do?” But “Who are you?” She inquires after her identity. Ruth, we know, was the same person who went out the night before. So why does she ask: Who are you? The answer is that, if Boaz has said, “Yes, I will marry you,” then Ruth’s identity has changed. Naomi is asking, “So, are you going to be the wife of Boaz? What is your identity?”

That is important for us as believers as well. The important question is not, How are things going in your life? Or what have you done as a Christian? But who are you? Are you one of Christ’s? Do you belong to Him? Things may not be going well in your life, but that does not matter so long as you are His. Who are you? Are you a Christian?

And Ruth’s answer has the same Christ-centered theme. In verse 16 she told Naomi “all that the man had done to her.” She did not talk to Naomi about herself and what she had done, but about the man, her redeemer, and what he had done. And that, too, is important among believers. We do not speak of what we have done, but of what He has done. If we would talk about what we have done, we would have nothing to say. But when we talk about Christ our Redeemer and what He has done, there is so much to say.

In the last verse of the chapter Naomi says to Ruth, “Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall.” There is great wisdom in those words. What she means is this. Ruth, you’ve done all that it was your duty to do. Now it’s out of your hands. It’s in God’s hands. Don’t be anxious about it but wait on Him.

There is a great lesson here for us on waiting on the Lord. Ruth was an industrious woman, a hard worker. Naomi was resourceful, full of plans. These women were diligent in what God had given them to do in their situation. But now it is time for them to sit still and wait on the Lord.

What is it to wait on the Lord? Do you sit on your hands and say, “Well, everything’s in God’s hands, so I don’t need to do anything”? No, that is not waiting on the Lord. That is denying your responsibility and despising the means that God has given. As we wait on the Lord we are active in the duties that He has given. Just as Ruth was industrious and resourceful and did all that she could and must. What Ruth has to realize now is that the *results* are not in her hands. God commands us to be faithful, not successful. The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord. One plants, another waters, but God gives the increase. Waiting on the Lord means that we are faithful and diligent and we commit our work to the Lord for His blessing. The results are in His hands.

That is such an important lesson for God’s people. Sometimes it is very difficult for us to sit still and wait on the Lord. It is against our nature and against what our culture tells us. Society says, If you want something, you put your mind to it, you put in the effort, and you’ll get it; the results are in your hands, you have the power. But the reality is that things are not in our hands, but the Lord’s. And we must sit still and wait on him. The wisdom of Naomi here encourages us to do just that. Maybe you are waiting for a marriage partner like Ruth was. Maybe it is your job situation—you have gotten the education and you have applied for the jobs but you have to wait. Maybe it is your health—something is not right and you have gone to the doctor; he has taken the samples, but it will be a few weeks before the results are clear. Maybe your concern is your children—you have raised them in the fear of the Lord but you do not see the evidences of God’s grace in their lives. There are so many areas in which this applies. And we are busy, busy, busy—but anxious, too, because we are not seeing the results that we want. God’s Word is: It’s in My hands. You sit and wait.

This is the lesson that David had to learn—anoointed to be king of Israel, he was a fugitive and an exile for years. So he writes: “Wait on the Lord, be of good courage; and he will strengthen thy heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord” (Ps. 27:14). Waiting on the Lord? This is the strength of the believer. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. Who? They that wait on the Lord.

This is what true faith looks like. Ruth must wait on her redeemer Boaz, trusting his word and promises. And that is what God’s church and people, the bride of Jesus Christ, must do in this world. She waits. May God give us the grace and patience that we need in order to wait on Him.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for the gospel of Christ and the wonderful promises of our Redeemer. Give us the grace of patience as we wait on Him. He said, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching." Keep us waiting always on Thee. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

February 26, 2012

The Redeemer and His Work

No. 3608

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Dear Radio Friends,

In our study of the book of Ruth we come today to chapter 4. We are going to talk about the first ten verses. If you have a Bible close by, I would encourage you to follow along.

Up till now, the widows Ruth and Naomi have come and settled in Bethlehem. They are destitute, and so Ruth has been out gleaning for grain after the harvesters. In His providence, God led her to the fields of Boaz, who, it turns out, is a close relative. At Naomi's prodding, Ruth has requested of Boaz that he fulfill the role of the kinsman/redeemer by marrying her. Boaz has expressed his willingness to do this. But because God's law says that the closer relative has first rights to do this, and because Boaz has a high regard for God's law, he cannot do it without the consent of the closer relative.

In the verses we look at today, we come to the resolution or climax of the book. Will Boaz marry Ruth? You can imagine the anticipation of Ruth and Naomi as they wait to hear whether this will actually happen. So we have a key passage in the book.

It is also a key passage because it presents Boaz, the redeemer, to us as a clear Old Testament type or picture of Jesus, our Redeemer. It answers many questions about the possibility of our redemption from sin. When we read that Boaz said, "I will redeem her," we should hear the voice of Jesus Christ saying this to and about His people: "I will redeem them." When we think of the sacrifice and the price that Boaz was willing to pay, we should think of the price of the blood of Jesus Christ that was paid to redeem us from sin. Though we will say some things about Boaz today, our focus will be Christ.

The first thing we need to understand here is the law of redemption. What is redemption? And what was the law for redemption in the Old Testament? Very simply, redemption is to set someone free by paying a price. A good illustration of this comes from American folklore. Whether this story is true or not, we do not know. But it is said that Abraham Lincoln once witnessed a slave auction and began to bid on a teenage slave girl, a dollar higher each time, until all other bidders were silent. And he won the auction. Then when the girl asked him, "Why did you bid on me?" he answered, "So that I could set you free." He paid a price to give her liberty. That is redemption.

In the Old Testament, the law of redemption had two parts. The first part had to do with a person's land or inheritance. God had given to each family a portion in the promised land of Canaan. But if a man or family became poor so that they could not eat, or if they had a debt that

they could not pay, then they would give their land over to their creditor. They did not have banks or loans, so they paid the debt with their land. Here in Ruth 4:3 we see that Naomi had a piece of land that she wanted to sell. She obviously needed to buy her food and clothing. And with no steady income, the best option for her to survive through the winter months when there would be no gleaning was to sell her land.

Now, one thing to remember about this land-sale was that it was not permanent, that is, you would sell your land to someone else and it was theirs for a period of time. God's law said that at the year of Jubilee, which fell every fifty years, that land would return to its original owner. The reason God had made the law that way was spiritual. Every family's piece of land was a picture of their inheritance in the heavenly Canaan. That is why, in I Kings 21, Naboth refused to sell his land to Ahab, who wanted a summer garden. Naboth's reason was spiritual. He realized that this was not his land to sell, but that it belonged to the Lord, and that there were stipulations in place about its sale. Even if he would get a better piece of land and money far above its value, he cannot sell the inheritance of the Lord. God wanted the land to be preserved in the name and possession of the family that it was first given to.

Boaz, realizing this, wants the land of Naomi to stay in the hands of her closest relative. Naomi could have, I suppose, sold the land to just anyone. She was interested in the money, not the land. But she was not permitted to do this. If you look at Leviticus 25:25ff., you see that she had to sell it to a closest relative. And the closest relative was actually under obligation to buy it if he could. The reason was, not just the preservation of the land, but of a name, a family name, in Israel. That is where the second part of the law of redemption comes in.

If your family name was cut off or ended, that was a sign of your having no spiritual part in the coming Redeemer Jesus Christ. Then His blessings were not for you. And we can think of people like Esau or Onan (the son of Judah) who despised the idea of preserving a name, who did not care about having a part in the coming Messiah's blessed kingdom. The desire to preserve one's name and inheritance in the Old Testament was an expression of one's faith in the promise of God concerning the coming Messiah. Esau, who was an unbeliever, did not care about that. He despised his inheritance.

But now, how did this law of redemption in its two parts work?

Well, if you lost property, it was quite simple. In the fiftieth year the land simply went back to the original family. But what happened if you lost your name? That is, what happened if all the men of the family died and there were no children and no one to carry on the family name? That is the situation now for Ruth and Naomi. They have land. But after they die, there is really no one left to own it.

That is the second provision of the law of redemption. In this situation, not only did the closest relative have to purchase the land to keep it in the family name, but he had to marry the widow. And the first son of that marriage would not be considered his son, but would take on the name of the deceased husband of his mother. That is the law of redemption.

And that is what we see working out here in the book of Ruth, especially here in chapter 4. There is a man who is a closer relative than Boaz to the family of Elimelech. We can properly call this man the man with no name. In verse 1 we read that Boaz, when he sees this man calls out to him, “Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here.” It is very likely that this is not actually what Boaz said to him. Boaz would have known the man’s name and probably addressed him by his name. But what we have here is a deliberate hiding of the man’s name and identity by the Holy Spirit who is the author of Scripture, so that what is said about him is similar to when we would call someone: “Mr. So-and-so,” or “What’s his name.” The man with no name.

This man is very happy to buy the land. In verse 4, after Boaz tells him that Naomi has some land for sale and asks whether he, as the closest living relative, would like to buy it, he responds, “I will redeem it.” The English does not capture it, but in the original this is emphatic. He is saying something like this: “I, even I, will redeem it.” Or, “I, and not you, will redeem it.” He is saying to Boaz, “Keep your hands off it.” Now, why is he so happy and ready to buy the land? Well, because there would be a financial advantage for him in this. There was a limited amount of land that they could own. But this would allow him to extend his real estate. He would get the use of this land until the fiftieth year. And maybe in his mind he even realizes that Elimelech has no son. And so, he might not even have to turn his land back because there would be no one to return it to. This was a good deal, he is thinking. And so he is very willing to buy the land.

But Boaz tells him in verse 5, “When you buy the land, you must also marry Ruth, the wife of Mahlon, who is dead.” And Boaz, before the elders of the city here, is simply stating what the law of God requires. How then does this man respond? In verse 6 he says, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance.” He means that this will in some way jeopardize or put at risk his own finances and inheritance. How it would do that is not exactly clear to us. But the point is that the man is more concerned about money and land than the preservation of a name and inheritance in Israel. That is why we call him, “The man with no name.” His name is not remembered because he did not care about preserving the name and inheritance of Elimelech, his relative, in Israel. Because of this he is shamed and he loses his own name and place in the kingdom of Christ.

Verses 7 and 8 tell us what happened. For his refusal he was publicly shamed. He had to take off one of his shoes and give it to Boaz. And Deuteronomy 25 tells us that someone would spit in his face. And then he would hobble off, shamed before God’s people. He is called the man with no shoe and no name because he refused to redeem his brother’s family. Like Esau and like Onan, he despised the inheritance of God’s people.

In contrast to this man we have Boaz. The Holy Spirit puts this man in the Bible to show us what Boaz was willing to do and what Christ did in order to redeem His people.

But before we move on to Boaz, there are some spiritual lessons for us here from this man with no name.

First, God tells us by this law of redemption that our place in heaven ought to be far more important to us than what we have on this earth. We should not put our roots down too deeply

here on the earth. This is not our home. But here we are pilgrims and strangers traveling toward our heavenly home.

Second, God tells us that we ought to put others before ourselves. That is the principle behind the law of redemption that this man was unwilling to follow. We need to have the mind of Jesus Christ, in which He esteemed others better than Himself and in which He put their needs before His own.

Then, third, God teaches us the importance of preserving our spiritual heritage. The heritage that God gives today comes through the church and His work in the church. We can sell that short by ignoring the work of God in the church and in the history of the church in this world. When we do that, we are selling a spiritual heritage. God has redeemed a bride, a church. We need to be a part of that church that is faithful to Him. We need to be students of the history of the church. We need to love the heritage of truth that God has given to His people in a faithful church.

Well, let us look now at Boaz and from Boaz to Christ the Redeemer.

We see in this passage again the godliness of this man Boaz. He is a man of integrity. When it comes to the question of Ruth's redemption, he wants to follow the Word and law of God. No matter his admiration for Ruth and his desire to marry her, the nearer kinsman must first relinquish his right before Boaz will do it. And he presents the whole case to the man in the most favorable and straightforward way. He does not manipulate the circumstances to get what he wants. Also, he is a man of his word, a man of faithfulness and commitment. He keeps his promise to Ruth. He is willing to do this, not for his own sake, but for the sake of Ruth's deceased husband Mahlon. In verse 10 he gives us the reason that he has married Ruth: "to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance." What the other fellow will not do, Boaz will do. He is a man of action. He knows that God is at work in this history. But that does not mean that he sits back and does nothing. No, he assembles the elders in the gate of the city. The gate was not just an entrance, but the place for legal transactions. He uses the means that God has appointed. And he follows carefully the Word of God. What an example Boaz is for us.

But as we look at Boaz, we must not see simply a man, but we must look through this redeemer to the other Redeemer, Jesus Christ. I want to draw out some parallels here that point us to the gospel of redemption through Jesus Christ.

We need redemption. By nature we, and I mean every last human being—that includes you and me—by nature we are all in bondage. Our bondage is a spiritual bondage of sin. We are born into the bondage, born slaves to sin. By nature we are under the power of Satan. We are followers of the course of this wicked world that is opposed to God. We are in bondage to ourselves and our sinful flesh. Ephesians 2 describes it as being dead in trespasses and sins and walking according to the course of this world and according to the prince of the power of the air. Because of this bondage we are fit for the judgment of God, we are fit for the wages of sin, which are eternal death in hell. This is the price that must be paid for our redemption.

I ask you, dear radio listener, do you understand that? Do you see your own bondage? Do you see the price that must be paid to free you from the consequences of sin? Do you see that you are empty and destitute and that there is no way for you to pay and set yourself free? We live in an age when freedom is often talked about. People want political and religious freedom. People want freedom from addictions of drugs and alcohol and sexual sin. People want freedom to express themselves, the right to think and to say and to do publicly as they please. They want to be free to live as they desire. They want to be accepted, whatever their lifestyle. And it is supposed to be the most liberating thing for them to come out of the closet and to tell others about their sinful ways.

But is that liberty? No, the world is in bondage to sin. And the more its sinful way of life is accepted, the more it becomes clear that man is in bondage to sin and he cannot free himself.

What is freedom? Freedom is not the right to do whatever you want to do. No, freedom is the ability, from God, to do the things that by nature you cannot do. Freedom is the strength of God's grace to do what you ought to do in honor of your Creator, God, and to enjoy living in obedience to the Word of God. That is freedom.

And that freedom can come only through Jesus Christ. In His work of redemption, Christ has paid the price to set free His people. He is freed from the wrath of God and the punishment that sin deserves. He is freed from the power of sin so that it should no more reign in us. And what a price He paid for that freedom—a price not of silver and gold, but the price of His own precious blood. That is our redemption in Christ.

Do you understand it? Do you see what was happening on the cross when Christ laid down His life? Do you understand the price that He had to pay for sin? Do you see that the suffering of Jesus Christ, not only at the hands of men but also at the hands of God, was the price for our sins? This is the “near relative,” the “kinsman,” the “Redeemer” coming to set us free. He lays down His life a ransom for many. He did not pay this price for every one, but only for His people. The Bible tells us that those whom He has set free are free indeed (John 8:36). The cross did not just make possible our redemption, but it sealed it so that we are free indeed.

That freedom is experienced by God's people in their knowing His love, in their freedom from the powers and desires of sin, in their freedom from sin's guilt, in their love for God, in their faith in Jesus Christ.

Oh, that we might understand the price that Christ paid for our freedom and never take it for granted! Sometimes we celebrate freedom by remembering the lives that bought our liberty. Let us remember the great price that Christ paid for our liberty.

And so we look at Boaz here and we see Jesus. I want to close by pointing to Jesus in, not just what Boaz did, but also in who Boaz was.

Boaz was a near relative. To redeem Ruth, he had to be a near relative. Jesus, too, had to be a “blood relative” of His people in order to save them. And He was. He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—born of a woman. He became partaker of our flesh and blood. And He

did that so that He could die for His people. Why did God become man? So that as a man, as one of us, He could die for sin.

Then also, Boaz was a man of resources. It would do you no good to have a close relative if he could not afford to redeem you. Boaz could redeem because he had the wealth, he had the wherewithal to do it. Jesus Christ is the only One who has the wherewithal, the strength, the resources to make the payment for our sins. No amount of earthly wealth or power can set us free. No, the Redeemer must be God, because then only is He strong enough to carry the burden of our sin, the weight of the infinite wrath of God against us.

The saints of the Old Testament understood this. Listen to Psalm 49:7. Speaking of a wealthy people, it says, “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.” They said this because they were looking for a Redeemer who was more than just a man. Jesus Christ is that Redeemer.

Then, looking at Boaz again, you see a willing redeemer. The kinsman here had a choice. The man with no name chose not to redeem. But Boaz shows his grace. And we must remember that Christ, as our Redeemer, was under no obligation to man. He was under no obligation to us. If you count yourself as one of the redeemed, understand that Christ did not have to redeem you. God would have done no injustice to leave every one of us to perish in our sin. The redemption that we have in Christ is a work of the free and sovereign grace of God to His elect people. If it at all depended on our worthiness, that would not be a work of grace. We would not be redeemed. Redemption is of grace.

Do you reflect on that? Christ the Redeemer did not pay the price reluctantly or because He was under obligation to us, but freely and willingly He gave Himself in love for His people.

Then, finally, looking at Boaz, we see the richness of our redemption in Jesus Christ. Boaz takes his redeemed, Ruth, into the closest fellowship. He makes her his own bride. She is not a servant or a beggar, but she is his wife, who lives with him, who shares his life and riches. And that is the blessing of the redeemed church. We become the bride of Jesus Christ and we share in all His riches and blessing. Not only are we set free from sin, but we are joined to Jesus Christ and brought into the possession of the blessings of heaven. When we think of what it means to be saved, this is what we should remember. Salvation is to know God and to know Christ in the closest communion and fellowship, the intimacy of a spouse, and to enjoy all the riches of God—to live and dwell with Him.

That is what heaven will be—the perfection of the covenant.

Let us pray.

Lord, bless Thy Word to us so that we may rejoice in our salvation and never take for granted the price that Christ paid for our redemption. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen