

## INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth message in the series from Ruth I’m calling “The Romance of Redemption.” The title of this message is, “My Redeemer Lives!” Although there are only 84 verses in the entire book, it’s one of the most powerful stories ever written. If it was a romantic novel today, it would be advertised as, “How one woman found happiness in the arms of her second husband.” But it’s so much more than a story of love and marriage; this is also a story of how much our Redeemer loves us!

As we examine the wonderful details of the story, I want you to have a feel for the entire plot, so here is my synopsis of Ruth in 100 seconds: The story begins when an Israelite man and his wife, Naomi, take their two children on a family vacation to Moab. But they ended up staying in the pagan land of Moab where the two sons married Moabite brides. Sadly, Naomi’s husband, and then her two sons died. After three funerals, Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem. She urged the two younger widows to stay in Moab. Orpah stayed, but Ruth refused to leave Naomi and traveled with her back to Bethlehem.

They arrived with nothing and had to beg for food. Ruth went into the field of a farmer named Boaz to pick up leftover grain from the harvest. Boaz was so impressed with young Ruth that he instructed his workers to leave extra grain for her to gather each day. Naomi realized that Boaz was a relative of her dead husband, which qualified him to be a Kinsman-Redeemer. If Ruth married Boaz, they could legally reclaim the land that formerly belonged to Naomi’s husband. So Naomi used her matchmaking skills. Following Naomi’s advice, Ruth humbly asked Boaz to be her kinsman redeemer. In other words, Ruth basically asked Boaz to marry her! And Boaz said, “Absolutely!” But there was a problem—there was another relative who was closer and he had the first right to redeem the land. This relative wanted the property, but when he learned that a bride came with the deal, he said, “No thanks!” This allowed Boaz to marry Ruth and redeem the family’s land and reputation.

They were married and God blessed them with son named Obed, who turned out to be the grandfather of none other than King David himself! God redeemed Ruth’s life from being a poor, lonely widow into one of the human ancestors of Jesus with her own book in the Bible. It’s also a parable about how God lovingly redeems us.

Last week we left Ruth in the field of grace, so let’s pick up the story there in Ruth 2:17.

Ruth 2:17—3:4. “So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah. She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough. Her mother-in-law asked her, ‘Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!’ Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. ‘The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz,’ she said. ‘The Lord bless him!’ Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. ‘He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.’ She added, ‘That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers.’ Then Ruth the Moabitess said, ‘He even said to me, ‘Stay with my

workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.” Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, ‘It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else’s field you might be harmed.’ So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law. One day Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, ‘My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don’t let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.’”

Next week I’ll talk about “A Match Made in Heaven.” I’ll explain all that business about uncovering Boaz’s feet and Ruth lying at his feet. But in this message I want to focus on the meaning of that important phrase “kinsman-redeemer.” When you understand what Boaz is going to do for Ruth, you can better appreciate what our Redeemer, Jesus has done for us.

## **I. TWO JEWISH LAWS ARE INVOLVED IN THE STORY OF RUTH:**

If you don’t understand Jewish customs and laws you might miss out on the beauty of this story. It reminds me of the funny story about when the Pope decided to require that all the Jews in Rome leave the city (he never did that, it’s just part of this joke.). The Pope decided to force the Jews out of Rome unless one of the Jewish men could win a religious debate with him. The small Jewish community didn’t even have a rabbi so they sent one of their old men. The Pope didn’t speak Hebrew and the Jewish man didn’t speak Latin so they used sign language. The Pope started by raising three fingers. The Jewish man held up one finger. Then the Pope waved his finger in a circle in the air. The Jewish man pointed down to the ground. Then the Pope pulled out a wafer and a goblet of wine. The Jewish man pulled out an apple from his cloak. The Pope stood up and said to his Cardinals. “I give up. This man is too smart. When I held up three fingers to tell him about the Trinity, he held up one finger to remind me that there is only one God. Then when I waved my finger to tell him that God is all around us, he pointed to the ground to remind me that God is also right here. And when I pulled out the communion elements to show that God forgives our sin, he pulled out an apple to remind me that we’re all sinners because of Adam and Eve. The Jews can stay.”

When the Jewish man returned to his small group they asked him what happened. He said, “I’m not sure, but the Pope held up three fingers, I think he was saying we had three days to pack up and leave. So I told him that not one of us was leaving. He waved his finger around to tell me that they were going to round all of us up, and I pointed to ground to say that we were staying put.” They said, “What happened next?” The Jewish man shrugged his shoulders and said, “He pulled out his lunch, so I pulled out mine!”

Neither of them understood the other, but it turned out okay. But in our story, you’ve got to understand two obscure Jewish laws before you can fully appreciate the story of Ruth.

### **A. The law of the Goel (kinsman-redeemer) is found in Leviticus 25:23-25**

The Hebrew word for kinsman-redeemer is goel. How many of you know a word or two in Hebrew? Actually all of you know at least one Hebrew word: "hallelujah." That means "Praise God" and it's the same in every language.

I used to have a pastor friend who never had the chance to study the Biblical languages of Greek and Hebrew. He would often jokingly say, "I know a little Greek, and a little Hebrew. The little Greek runs a deli down the street and the little Hebrew owns a jewelry store." Well, now you know a little Hebrew; you know the word, "hallelujah" and now you know the word, "goel."

The law of the goel exists because God said, "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants. Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land. If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative (goel) is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold." (Leviticus 25:23-25)

Every fifty years, called a year of Jubilee, all the land reverted back to the original family, that way, and families could maintain the land given to them by God. But imagine you're an Israelite with a family farm, and it is 40 years to the next Jubilee. You suffer a bad crop year, and can no longer feed your family or buy seed. Your only option would be to sell your property. Then you'd become nothing more than a sharecropper, or, worse, the new owner could kick you off your former property. So imagine you've been slaving away for years as sharecropper on your former property. You have a rich uncle in another city, and you write him a letter about how bad life is and ask him to be your goel. For a while, you don't hear anything back, and then one day you wipe the sweat from your eyes and you see a sight for sore eyes. You see your rich uncle riding toward you on his Mercedes camel, and he has his checkbook out. A huge smile breaks across your face because you know that he is coming to be your goel, your redeemer! That was the redemption of property, but later in Leviticus 25, it talks about how an Israelite might be so poor that he sells himself into slavery. So imagine you've become a slave and you write the same rich uncle. Imagine the joy in your heart when he comes and purchases your life and sets you free from slavery. That's the law of the goel. It applied to redeeming a person as well as property. That's what Boaz is going to do for Ruth, and that's what Jesus has done for us!

### **B. The law of Levirate marriage (next of kin) is found in Deuteronomy 25:5-10**

This was a strange law that made provisions for a dead man's name to live on. You may think it was strange that Ruth asked Boaz to marry her, but the explanation is found in this rather obscure Old Testament Law.

"If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. However, if a man does not want to marry his brother's wife, she shall go to the elders at the town gate and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to carry on his brother's name in Israel. He will not fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to me.' Then the elders of his town shall summon him and talk to him. If he persists in saying, 'I do not

want to marry her, ' his brother's widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, 'This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother's family line.' That man's line shall be known in Israel as The Family of the Unsandaled.'" (Deuteronomy 25:5-10)

You may get the impression that Jewish women had no authority. But, as you can see, a widow had the choice to remain unmarried or she could ask one of his brothers to marry her. If he refused she had the recourse of shaming him in front of the entire village.

This law applied to brothers, but it extended to other relatives if there were no living brothers. Boaz might have been a cousin or nephew of Elimelech. But we'll see in the next message that there was a closer goel than him.

These are the two laws Ruth will invoke when she asks Boaz to be her goel and to marry her. You may be thinking, "That's nice, Pastor, but that story is 3,300 years old. We don't practice those laws in America. What does this mean for me?" I'm so glad you asked, because understanding the law of the goel will help you see how Jesus fulfills the role of a kinsman redeemer for us. Now let's talk about how:

## **II. JESUS IS OUR KINSMAN-REDEEMER!**

We all need a redeemer because the Bible teaches that before we accept Christ we are slaves under sin. We are in shackles of habits, attitudes and destructive behavior, and we desperately need a goel. We need someone to come and rescue us. But it won't be your parents, your spouse, or your friends. Jesus is the only one qualified to be a true goel. In order to be a goel, a man had to fulfill four important requirements. I want to show you how Jesus, our goel, fulfills these four requirements.

### **A. Jesus in my nearest kin through His incarnation**

In order to qualify as a goel, a man had to be a close relative. We're human beings and God is Spirit. We can't relate to God because we're fundamentally different. But God took care of that problem by sending Jesus to take on human flesh. He was the perfect God-man. As man, He qualifies as our human relative. As God He relates to His Father. The Bible says, "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish." (John 1:14 *The Message*)

The incarnation is a mystery beyond understanding, but let me give you a crude analogy. Let's imagine for a moment you were able to create a family of ants. But when you approach the ant bed, they go running away in fear. And if you pick one up, it will only try to bite you. But as the Creator of those ants, you love them and only want the best for them. How are you going to communicate it to them? You can give them food, water, and a nice ant bed, but they still fear you and bite you. There would only be one way to tell them they don't have to fear you and that you love them; you would have to become an ant yourself. So let's imagine you became an ant and lived among them to show them that their Creator loves them, yet they turned on you and

killed you. That’s a tiny fraction of the meaning of the incarnation. God wanted to show us He loves us, so Jesus became one of us, and yet, we crucified Him.

### **B. ONLY Jesus has the power to redeem me**

Second, a goel had to have the means, or the power to be a redeemer. In other words, he had to have the money to buy back the property or the person sold into slavery. Jesus qualifies because He has plenty of riches to purchase those of us who find ourselves slaves to sin. There is no recession in heaven. The earth is the Lord’s and fullness thereof. The Bible says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)

This verse explains what grace is. Grace is the favor that Jesus showed to us when He was willing to take all the immeasurable riches He possesses in heaven and spend it all on our redemption.

We all love what we call “rags-to-riches” stories. But the story of salvation from Jesus’ perspective is riches-to-rags ... to riches. Jesus emptied His heavenly bank account in order to purchase our redemption, and in the process He became poor. Jesus left the glories of heaven to come down and basically live as a poor, homeless man. He said, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” (Matthew 8:20) But He did this to redeem us. Don’t look to the government to redeem you—it doesn’t have the power. Don’t look for your job to redeem you—it doesn’t have the power. Only Jesus has the riches necessary to purchase our salvation.

### **C. ONLY Jesus is willing to redeem me**

A man could be a relative and have plenty of money, but the third requirement was that he had to be *willing* to be the goel. He could be a wealthy relative, but he was under no compulsion to buy back the property or person. Jesus qualifies because He is willing to buy my freedom. Jesus said, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

Jesus didn’t come primarily to heal the sick. If He had, he would have established a hospital. Jesus didn’t come primarily to teach or He would have established a school. He came to pay the ransom price for our salvation. He is willing and able!

### **D. ONLY Jesus has paid the full price to redeem me**

The fourth requirement for a goel was that he had to pay the full price to buy the property or to buy the person back from slavery. He had to seal the deal by writing the check or putting down the cash.

The price of our redemption was too high for anyone else to pay. But at the cross, Jesus paid the full price to redeem us from the law, sin, and death. The Bible says, “For you know that it was

not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed...but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Jesus qualifies as our goel. He is our kinsman through the incarnation. He has the power and the willingness to redeem us, and He has paid the price. He took on human flesh so He could live among us. Jesus took those human hands and touched the blind and broken hearted. He used those human hands to caress the little children who were drawn to Him. He used those human hands to break the bread that fed thousands. But the main reason Jesus needed a human body was to die. The Bible says, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." (Hebrews 9:22) Finally, he allowed those human hands to be nailed to a rugged cross. And now He extends those nail-pierced hands to you and me and says, "If you'll come to me, I'll be your goel."

## CONCLUSION

When Naomi heard of Boaz's grace to Ruth in his field, her hope was rekindled. She knew about the two laws of the goel and Levirate marriage, so she became a matchmaker and coached Ruth on how to approach Boaz. She gave her three important instructions. First, she said, "Wash yourself." Ruth had been working in the fields for weeks, and bathing was not a daily custom back then. There was definitely something in the air—and it wasn't love. Naomi said, "Girl, you'd better take a bath!" Second, she told her to use some perfume. The literal word is "anoint yourself." When Ruth became a widow, she probably thought she'd never get to use her perfume again. I don't know what brand it was, but it might have been "Midnight at the Oasis." Third, she told her to put on her best clothes. Ruth has several costume changes in the story. In fact, the entire story can be summarized by her change in clothes. In Chapter 1 she wears widow's clothes. In chapter 2 she wears a worker's clothes. Here in chapter 3 she wears a woman's clothes. In chapter 4 she will be wearing wedding clothes! So Naomi told her to bathe, put on perfume, and dress right. That's still good advice for a first date!

But it's also good advice on how we should approach our Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus. Like Ruth, we all have a dirt problem called sin: It stinks! But instead of cleaning up your own act, Jesus says, "I'll cleanse *you*." The Bible says salvation is "not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal." (Titus 3:5) You can't wash yourself, but Jesus can! Second, we also need an anointing. But once again, we don't have to anoint ourselves. 1 John 2:27 says, "The anointing you received from him remains IN you." Our anointing isn't what the Old Spice guy is selling. It isn't dabbing a little Chanel #5 behind your ear. It is an inner anointing of the Holy Spirit that produces what the Bible calls, "the fragrance of life."

And finally, we need to change our clothes. The Bible says even our best deeds are like dirty stinking rags. These rags of self-righteousness we are wearing stink to high heaven. But don't go looking in your own closet for the right kind of clothes to wear to meet Jesus. Once again, He is so full of grace that He offers you the correct wardrobe. Jesus offers to exchange your filthy clothes for his robe of righteousness. According to Isaiah 61:3 God offers to exchange a garment of praise for your spirit of despair. In other words, God says, "Take off those sad rags and put on my glad rags!"

Have you noticed Boaz met the qualifications, but he didn't push himself on Ruth? He didn't step in and say, "I'll be your goel." What if Ruth didn't want him? So, he waited for her to ask Him. And Jesus is waiting right now for you to say, "Lord, I need a redeemer. I need a goel. I'm asking you to redeem my life from destruction."

Many of you have already done that, but you need to be reminded that your Redeemer lives. Let me switch Old Testament characters for a minute. A few years ago, I wrote a book about Job called, "Finding Peace in Your Pain." Whenever I sign that book I always write Job 9:25. Most people know the story of Job. He was a man who suffered the loss of his fortune, his family, and his fitness. But in the depths of his despair he looked up to heaven and with tear-stained eyes, he said in Job 19:25, "I KNOW my Redeemer lives and in the end He will stand upon the earth." You may be where Job was. Life is tough. You're hurting. But if you look up today, God will give you the grace to say, "I know my Redeemer Lives!" Say it four times and you'll find the garment of praise replace your spirit of heaviness: "I KNOW my Redeemer lives!" "I know MY Redeemer lives!" "I know my REDEEMER lives!" "I know my Redeemer LIVES!"

## OUTLINE

### 1. TWO JEWISH LAWS ARE INVOLVED IN THE STORY OF RUTH:

- A. The law of the Goel (kinsman-redeemer) is found in Leviticus 25:23-25
- B. The law of Levirate marriage (next of kin) is found in Deuteronomy 25:5-10

### II. JESUS IS OUR KINSMAN-REDEEMER!

#### A. Jesus in my nearest kin through His incarnation

"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish." *John 1:14 The Message*

#### B. ONLY Jesus has the power to redeem me

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." *2 Corinthians 8:9*

#### C. ONLY Jesus is willing to redeem me

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." *Mark 10:45*

#### D. ONLY Jesus has paid the full price to redeem me

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David O. Dykes  
Pastor, Green Acres Baptist Church  
Tyler, Texas

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes