

# Happily Ever After

**Text:** Ruth 4.1–22

**Theme:** God's redemptive plans cannot be thwarted by any obstacle

**“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.”**

**[1 Peter 1:24-25]**

Let's pray ...

Lord, be gracious to us, your servants,  
that we may live and keep your word.  
Open our eyes, that we may behold  
wondrous things out of your word.  
Let your testimonies be our delight,  
and our chief counselors.  
We ask this in Jesus's name. Amen.

## **Introduction — Appearing in court**

- some of you have had the privilege of serving jury duty
- I have been summoned only twice and nearly chosen once
- I was a bit disappointed since I wanted to serve, as well as observe a real court proceeding

## **This is something of what we're witnessing in Ruth chapter 4—an ancient court proceeding**

- but let's recap what we've seen so far in this short book of Ruth

## **If you would have been a field worker on the day Naomi & Ruth returned to Bethlehem, this is what you might have seen**

- two women walk past your fields on their way into town
- one you vaguely recognize, although it's been years since you've seen her
- the other, you know is a foreigner, and later you learn she is a Moabitess
- the one you know is Naomi, who, with her family fled the region during the previous famine
- you, and many others gather in the town square and hear her words
- her embittered words tell how God has dealt harshly with her
- it's clear to you that she once had all she needed, but now she seems to have nothing
- her husband has died, along with her two sons, leaving her and this other woman widowed

## **Not long after they return, you see this foreign woman out in the edges of the field you're working**

- she's gleaning from what has been dropped around the edges of the harvest
- you don't know much about her, but she works really hard
- and you notice your employer, Boaz, seems to take an interest in helping her out
- and not just a little: you're instructed to drop more than expected her way

## **Several weeks later, you see this woman, you know know is named Ruth**

- no longer is she dressed as a mourning widow
- those garments and her appearance have changed: she must be done mourning
- and rather than heading to the field, because the harvest is over, she's going the other way
- Ruth is going from where the grain is stored back into town

- in her arms is a cloak that appears to be filled with grain, as some trickles out behind her

**And on this same morning, quite early, as you are on your way to the grain piles to work, you witness something else about to happen**

- a crowd is gathering at the gates of the city
- Boaz, your boss, is there, along with the elders of the town, and not a few villagers
- this is unusual for this time of day
- normally, all this would happen at the end of the day, not this early in the morning
- as you listen in, you realize a court case is getting underway
- and what a fascinating legal drama it is turning out to be

**Well, unknown to this fictional eye-witness, you and I know what's going on**

- we're seeing God's lovingkindness, even when it appears unseen, never ceasing to act on behalf of His children, no matter their circumstances
- we've been able to see behind the scenes at what is now about to be clearly seen
- and in the end, we witness God overcoming all obstacles that rise up trying to block His plan of redemption
- while Naomi went out full and seemed to come back empty-handed, times they are a-changin'
- Naomi has moved from bitterness to blessedness, once empty but now nearly full
- Ruth is on her way from mourning as a widow to an engaged bride about to be wed
- Boaz will be transformed from a bachelor to a married man...if all can be worked out

*But before all this happens, we must witness the...*

**I. LITIGATION, VV. 1-6**

- Ruth, in ch. 3, received two promises from Boaz
- first, he told her that her future would be secure...one way or another
- she would be protected and provided for
- then, she is told by Naomi, that Boaz would not "rest" until Ruth found "rest"
- in fact, she has just told Ruth that very morning, this would come about today

**1. Well-placed determination**

- **"Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend; sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down."**

**(Ruth 4:1-2 ESV)**

- Boaz was a man of resolve, of upstanding character, and would work on behalf of Naomi & Ruth
- after Ruth left Boaz's presence, he goes to the town gate and waits there
- the elders would gather there to talk, discuss city affairs and judge any matters brought to them

**2. The drama builds**

- while waiting, the other "redeemer" Boaz had spoken of, makes his appearance
- this other "kinsman-redeemer" remains unnamed, but Boaz knows him well at this point
- the ten elders take their seats of judgment and call the court to session
- I believe Boaz is well-known to them, so they don't question his timing
- they know this will be worth their attention

**3. The case is laid out**

- **“Then he said to the redeemer, “Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. So I thought I would tell you of it and say, ‘Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.’ If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you.” And he said, “I will redeem it.””**

**(Ruth 4:3-4 ESV)**

- in v. 3, Boaz lays out the claim...but only one piece of it at first
- we see in this the shrewdness of Boaz
- he’s not being deceptive, but wise in his words and actions
- what we have here in these verses is like a court transcript of the case presented
- there is land which Naomi must own
- however, as a widow, she cannot care for it, afford it, nor live off it on her own
- Boaz, as her representative and relative, tells the elders and Mr. X of the situation
- this unknown man is the closest kinsman-redeemer
- he has right of usage or refusal
- if he refuses the property, Boaz says that he will take upon himself
- Boaz is second in line to redeem the land, & he plans to do so

#### **4. The obstacle raised**

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

**(Ruth 4:5-6 ESV)**

- if you were there, you could almost see the disappointment in Boaz’s face at this news when...
- Mr. X says “I will redeem it”
- but Boaz, shrewd and wise as he was, introduces the second piece of this transaction
- if you redeem the land, you must also redeem Naomi, and the other widow along with it

#### **5. Case law precedent**

- here’s just a quick rundown of how this whole kinsman-redeemer practice could work out
- we saw last week, from Deuteronomy 25 how this worked when it came to widows

##### **1) but there were other ways the redeemer could become involved**

- the first might apply here
- if an Israelite family became poor (or in Naomi’s case, widowed) and had to sell land...
- the nearest male relative had the responsibility of rescuing them from poverty
- in Leviticus 25.23–34, this was called redemption of property
- **““If your brother becomes poor and sells part of his property, then his nearest redeemer shall come and redeem what his brother has sold.”**

**(Leviticus 25:25 ESV)**

- if, somehow, the family became so poor they had to sell themselves into servitude...
- the nearest male relative had to rescue them by purchasing their freedom
- **““If a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich, and your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner with you or to a member of the stranger’s clan, then after he is sold he may be redeemed. One of his brothers may redeem him,”**

**(Leviticus 25:47-48 ESV)**

- the third scenario is what we find here: nearest male relative redeeming the widow
- this was vital to carrying on the family name and lineage
- the marriage, in this case, was not fundamentally about love, not in romantic sense
- Valentine’s Day had not been co-opted by Hallmark yet
- it was about families surviving, keeping property in those lines, and the heritage to follow

**2) Why the land first, and only then the prospect of Naomi & Ruth?**

- Boaz is exemplifying wisdom here, not a down-playing of their value
- he suspected the first redeemer might not want the burden of caring for these women
- and such proves to be the case
- the first redeemer is a businessman; he’s thinking in terms of profit-loss
- this will cost him: buying the land and the ongoing care of two widows is not on his list
- plus, it may be that he was already married and had his heritage secured
- if something happened to a son he might have, it all reverts to Naomi & Ruth
- he would lose his heritage, so he says he will not endanger his own estate
- so, it appears the matter is settled
- but there is yet a transaction to be taken care of

*We see this taking place in the following...*

**II. NEGOTIATION, VI. 7-12**

- Boaz has quite willingly taken on the role of the go’el, the kinsman-redeemer
- now, in front of witnesses, all this must be taken care of properly
- **“Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. So when the redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself,” he drew off his sandal.”**

**(Ruth 4:7-8 ESV)**

**1. Abdication by the first redeemer**

- recall from Deuteronomy 25 the odd-to-us ritual that must take place?
- **““If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. And if the man does not wish to take his brother’s wife, then his brother’s wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, ‘My husband’s brother refuses to perpetuate his brother’s name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband’s brother to me.’ Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, ‘I do not wish to take her,’ then his brother’s wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, ‘So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother’s house.’ And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, ‘The house of him who had his sandal pulled off.’”**

**(Deuteronomy 25:5-10 ESV)**

- most likely, the sandal signified sovereignty over property rights
- one would be able to “walk” on one’s own property—or give the right to another by this sign
- Mr. X has refused to be the kinsman-redeemer

- legal precedent now dictates this be ratified by this ritual
- now, Mr. X's refusal was not a vehement one; simply not a good business transaction here
- so, just the sandal removal is involved to seal the deal
- Mr. X repeats, "I cannot take this on; you buy it for yourself"
- then the sandal is removed confirms the transfer of redemption to Boaz

## 2. Declaration by the new redeemer

- **"Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.""**

(Ruth 4:9-10 ESV)

- Boaz solemnizes the decision before all the elders
- he calls upon all as witnesses to what just happened
- first, the property goes over to Boaz; he assumes oversight of the land
- second, he has just acquired Ruth as his wife
- he will maintain the name of the dead with his property
- so the name of Elimelech and Mahlon will not disappear

## 3. Benediction from the witnesses

- **"Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman.""**

(Ruth 4:11-12 ESV)

- there is actually a triple benediction taking place in these words

### 1) first, all the townspeople there acknowledge they are witnesses

- and they ask that the Lord bless Ruth like Leah & Rachel
- in other words, they said, "God, give them lots of children for Israel's sake"

### 2) second, they bless Boaz

- they want the new patriarch of this family to prosper
- the name will go on in Bethlehem and in Israel

### 3) finally, this benediction zeroes in upon a yet-to-be-conceived child

- this sounds like Psalm 127
- **"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward."**

(Psalm 127:3 ESV)

- the heir to Mahlon's name would also be Boaz's heir
- and Boaz was a descendant of Perez, a son of Judah
- this would also show itself a mark of God's sovereign work here
- the ethical and moral issues of the names mentioned so far were not an issue for God
- He overcame all the sins involved in Leah & Rachel, Judah & Tamar
- instead, the focus is upon God's covenant love ruling the day

- Naomi, and Ruth, are both now fully redeemed, God's hand working thru Boaz
- if all the parties of this simple court case had lived long enough, would have seen something
- the fulfillment of their prayers of benediction had a house established
- a name far greater than Perez, through the house of David, was secured

*This is what we now see, in drawing the story to its delightful ending, in the...*

### III. GENERATIONS, vv. 13–22

- in these closing verses, we see God blessing this family
- He grants them a child, and also a dynasty to come
- Naomi probably felt like a queen, holding a grandson
- little could she know the great-great-grandson that would truly be a king

#### 1. Family and friends

- the first five verses of this short book covered a ten year period of time
- from 1.6–4.12, we are barely over two months in the making
- now comes v. 13 and we've flashed through the first year of Boaz & Ruth's marriage
- **“So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.”**

**(Ruth 4:13 ESV)**

##### 1) given a son

- consider Ruth: from foreign Moabitess to less than a migrant worker to lady-in-waiting to wife
- and now, in just a few words: and she gave birth
- God had not opened Ruth's womb for children in however long she was with Mahlon
- but now she has a son, a heritage, the family line goes on

##### 2) and now the women of Bethlehem

- they knew of Naomi's emptiness upon her return
- but now they offer praise, a prayer, a prediction and a pronouncement to her fullness

##### i. a praise

- **“Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer...”**

**(Ruth 4:14 ESV)**

- the joy of knowing you have been redeemed
- do you know that joy? Do you know your redeemer?
- He has bought you with a great price, His precious blood
- God has not left you completely forsaken: there is a redeemer

##### ii. a prayer

- **“...and may his name be renowned in Israel!”**

**Ruth 4.14b**

- surely, their prayer was already in the making
- the descendent would indeed be the most famous king of Israel

##### iii. a prediction

- **“He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age...”**

**(Ruth 4:15 ESV)**

- their best wishes come true: this child renews Naomi's sweetness

**iv. a pronouncement**

- “...for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”

Ruth 4.15

- it was obvious to all how much Ruth loved Naomi
- Ruth was like gaining seven sons, so sweet was her love and commitment
- Naomi, as grandmother, becomes a primary care-giver to this new little boy
- “Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.”  
(Ruth 4:16-17 ESV)
- they name him Obed, which means “servant”

**2. The lineage goes on**

- “Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.”

(Ruth 4:18-22 ESV)

- this is where we see David connected with the tribe of Judah, fulfilling Jacob’s prophecy
- and we, who look back through New Testament eyes, see something even more amazing
- the narrator knew, looking back, from at least David’s days, who David was
- we know who David’s great Descendent was...and is: Jesus Christ
- He is the Son of David, the Messiah, the Chosen One of God to save us from our sins

**Conclusion – Grand theme of Scripture**

- God moves His children from sense of insecurity & fear to place of peace and rest
- Naomi began with emptiness
- God, however, took her from that place to a place of being full of life once again
- in the end, she knew the plan of God in redeeming her

**God is always able to overcome the obstacles to our redemption**

- His hand of lovingkindness, even if not seen by us, is always working
- He will draw you
- He will bring you
- He will give you new birth and new life in Jesus Christ
- there is a redeemer, Jesus, God’s own Son
- come to Him
- praise Him
- serve Him all your days and you will know peace and rest

**Let’s pray—**

O Lord, there are times when we attempt to lift up our own self-importance over Your grand plans and love. In truth, we exist at Your pleasure, for Your glory. May we invest our days with eternal value and live each hour doing what You have called us to do. It is through our Lord Christ that we serve. It is in His name that we pray. Amen.



### Hymn #308

There is a Redeemer  
Jesus, God's own Son  
Precious Lamb of God  
Messiah, Holy One

Jesus, my Redeemer  
Name above all names  
Precious Lamb of God  
Messiah, O for sinners slain

Thank You, O my Father  
For giving us Your Son  
And leaving us Your Spirit  
'Til the work on earth is done

**“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”**

**(1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 ESV)**