



GOD'S HAND IN OUR SHREWDNESS

Part 5 of Redeeming Ruth

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Ruth 4:1-12 | February 04, 2007

You're listening to Redeeming Ruth: A sermon series following the event from the Book of Ruth, presented by Pastor Mark Driscoll. Follow this wonderfully written story of the redemption to be found in Jesus and his people, and learn how it applies to everyday people, today. This is a presentation of Mars Hill Church, in Seattle. For more information, go to marshillchurch.org.

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. Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belong 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."

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." Now, this was the custom in the former times in Israel, concerning redeeming and exchanging. To confirm a transaction, the one drew of 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. 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 by 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."

"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."

Good evening, Mars Hill. Good to have you with us. My name is Mark, one of the Pastors here at the church. We will be in Ruth Chapter 4 this week. If you got a Bible, you can go there. We're taking six weeks to look at the story of Ruth. This is the fifth of six weeks.

I'll go ahead and pray and we'll get to work. You liking Ruth and Boaz so far? What a great, great, great story. I'm loving it. We're gonna see what happens this week. It should be pretty fun, and then we'll just see how it goes. So, this week's whole sermon is based off of a legal transaction before court. And if you think, "Well, that doesn't sound very romantic?" Well, it gets there. But, sometimes you got to take care of a little business before you can go on your honeymoon, so that's what we're gonna deal with this week. I'll go ahead and pray. Good to have you guys. And thanks for jumping into Mars Hill tonight.

Father, we begin by thanking you for being such a wonderful, glorious, good, sovereign God. And God, as we study, we ask that we would see your hand in the life of Ruth and the life of Boaz, and that we would see something of your character, so that we might know you better, and trust you more fully. For that to occur, we love you, Holy Spirit, and we invite you as our God to instruct us and convict us and enable us to learn and obey Scripture.

And Jesus, it's our prayer that as we look at the man, Boaz, we would learn something of you as our redeemer. And as we look at the woman Ruth, we would learn something of how you have treated your bride, the church, as her glorious redeemer. And so, God, we're opening your word tonight to learn more about the Gospel. We ask that you would bless our time, as we ask for this in Jesus' good name. Amen.

Here's what we'll do. I'll just catch you up in the story. Maybe you're new, or you weren't paying attention, which often times happens. And I'll tell you the story to get you up to Chapter 4. The story takes place, we're told, in the time of the Judges, which is a dark period of Israel's history, about a thousand years before the birth of the Lord Jesus. A time of sin, folly, rebellion, sexual perversion, all kinds of trouble recorded in the Book of Judges. If you want to read a little more thoroughly, it's right next to the Book of Ruth. It was about a hundred-year cycle of generation after generation of disobedience and sin.

Furthermore, the story then narrows in to the town of Bethlehem, which literally means, "House of Bread," and therein we discover that there was famine, likely the result of God chastising or disciplining his disobedient children in an effort to bring them to repentance. The story then narrows more

fully to focus on one particular family. In every way, a seemingly ordinary and very regular family, headed by a man named Elimelech, whose name means, "My God is King." He's got a wife named Naomi, which means, "Sweet" or "Pleasant." They've got two sons, Mahlon and Chilion; bizarre names which mean, "Sick" and "Dying," and Elimelech is a great leader with a great plan who is a fool, and foolishly decides to leave Bethlehem.

Out of all of the places on the Earth that he could've moved, he chose – during the famine – to instead relocate his family to Moab, which a very bizarre place to go. Because the whole town of Moab takes his ancestry back to the book of Genesis, where a man named Lot got drunk and had incestuous relations with his daughter. They gave birth to a young boy named Moab. And the Moabites are descendant of that disgusting sin, and they worship the false God Chemosh, not the God of the Bible. They're known for lots of perversion and sexual sin.

And rather than staying in Bethlehem and trusting God, or going to any other place on the earth, he goes to the Detroit of his day, he heads head-long into Moab, not the place that you would think he should go. In arriving there, there's no church to attend, no Bible studies, no prayer meetings, nobody knows the God of the Bible, no fellowship for his wife. He is a foolish man who pursues an economic opportunity without thinking about the spiritual implications of where his family is to reside. They're there for a while. The two sons get old enough that they want to marry, there's no Godly women to marry, so they marry Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. No children are born.

And then tragically, Elimelech and his two sons die, leaving the three widows destitute and in dire circumstances. Naomi then hears that God has blessed his people in Bethlehem. That the harvest has come, there's a new season there. She desperately wants to be blessed, and return home, so she leaves Moab and decides to relocate back to her hometown of Bethlehem; running to God and his people. Orpah and Ruth, who love her, her daughters-in-law, journey with her. Along the way, she stops and realizes that she really has nothing to offer these women, so she encourages them to return home, marry Moabite husbands, perhaps start a new life. Orpah takes her up on that offer.

Ruth has a genuine conversion experience, devotes herself to Naomi, to God, to God's people, wants to go to Bethlehem so she can go to church and have Christian friends, and get into Bible study and a prayer group, and she is running to God and his people, so she and Naomi relocate to Bethlehem.

They get there, the women come out, ask Naomi, "It's been a decade. We haven't seen you. How are you doing?" She says, "Don't call me Naomi, which means pleasant or sweet, call me Mara, which means bitter. I'm unhappy. I'm mean. I'm angry. I'm devastated. I don't like what God has allowed to happen to me." In that, I think that she is confessing the state of her heart, and she's inviting Christian friends, as it were, to speak into her life, and to walk with her and to help her. And she's running to God and his people for assistance.

Chapter 2, we then find that the women are facing starvation. They have no money. They have no food. They have no help. They're in a desperate situation. Ruth asks Naomi permission to go glean in the fields, which is the equivalent of the food bank or the soup kitchen or the homeless shelter in that day. Very dangerous for a young woman to venture out into a new city all by herself to go glean in the field, but in faith she does so, trusting that God would give her favor in the eyes of someone. And then we're introduced to what is one of the great themes of the Book of Ruth, probably the greatest theme, the providence of God. We've looked at how God works through two hands, his visible hand of miracle, and his invisible hand of subtle providence.

And it's through the visible hand of miracle we see God part the Red Sea, a virgin has a baby who performs miracles, walks on water, raises from death. It's obvious that God is involved. God's subtle hand of providence is less obvious, and only perceivable through the eye of faith. And we see that God is determining when and where people live, and where they move, and who they work with, and who they bump into, and who they happen to cross paths with. And we see that in Chapter 2, where we're told it just so happens, of all of the fields that Ruth could've ended up in, and of all the places she could've landed, she just so happened to find herself in the field of a man named Boaz.

Who just happened to be Godly. Who just happened to be rich, who just happened to be generous. Who just happened to be very much single, and he himself needed a wife, it just so happens. What happens then, he just happens to see her on the one day – the first day she shows up to work in his field. He just happens to call her to himself. He happens to praise her, pray for her, give her a generous gift, offer her a six or seven-week temp job until harvest is over. Just happens to offer to pay her enough to cover her expenses for an entire year's salary. Just happens to take her out to lunch – little first get together, quasi-date as it were. He just happens to serve her, be very nice to her. It looks like love is in the air. Maybe they'll live happily ever after, get a cake, go on a cruise, decorate their Christmas tree, name their kids Buffy and Fluffy and whatever else. Get a dog. Maybe she'll make their own clothes. They'll sing songs. It'll be like the Von Trapp's, and they'll live happily ever after.

You hope that's the way it's going. But, it doesn't. For six, seven weeks, she shows up to work and Boaz does nothing. No follow-up. No second date. No text message. No coffee. No dinner. No email. Nothing. The man has not game at all. No game at all. Like so many men, he just does not know how to close the deal. And what he is doing is he's looking over Ruth, looking for another woman. He's not looking at the woman that God has put directly in front of him. So many men do this. All right, there's a woman right here, and like, "I wish I could meet a nice girl." "Hello?" So, what she decides is not to chase him, but to get in his way.

Okay, ladies, there's a subtle difference. Godless women chase men. Godly women get in the way. That's what they do. So, based on Naomi's advice, with time running out – we're coming to the end of harvest. They're gonna go their separate ways. They won't live happily ever after. Oh, no! Naomi, this wise older woman says, "Here's what you do, all right, go tanning. Get your hair foiled. Get a new dress. Put on some perfume. Shave your pits and your legs." I'm just telling you. All right, gentlemen, is this true? Yes. Men already have hairy pits. They're looking for something else, right. And a lot of women are like, "It's natural." Ha, ha, ha. No, it's gross. It's gross. It's nasty. No guy is looking for Chewbacca, right. I mean, that's not what he's going for.

So, she shaves her pits, shaves her legs, goes tanning, gets her hair foiled, gets her teeth whitened and gets her nails done, gets a little dress, gets her

heels on, and she's gonna go get in the way of Boaz. He's out on the threshing floor harvesting the grain – big payday. So, she heads out to the big party. Now, she takes Naomi's advice, which is brilliant. Naomi understands men, and she says, "Don't just walk up to him and have the emotional melt-down, right. Just don't walk up, [Whining.] 'I don't know where we're at. We need to talk. We need to define the relationship.'" No! No! No! No, don't do that! [Whining.] "Why do you not want to be with me?" Is it not obvious?

Naomi tells her wisely, it's all about timing with men, and it is. Wait for them to eat the chicken wings, have a few beers, right. Let him watch the Ultimate Fight on the big screen with his friends. Let him shoot a few darts and play a few rounds of pool, right. And then, he'll be filled with the Holy Spirit and ready for a conversation. Men, is this still true? Yes. Right. So, it's all about the timing with men, right? It's all about timing. So, she waits patiently – carefully. And then, she waits until he goes to sleep at the foot of the pile of grain, protecting his assets from thieves and robbers. And she does something that I would not necessarily suggest, but it works out pretty good. And that is that she, at about midnight, goes to his feet and, sort of, snuggles up and he wakes up – freaked out – midnight – "Who's there?" "It's me, Ruth. Naomi said to do anything you want."

And she then, reveals her heart to him and she doesn't propose to him, but she proposes that he propose to her, is basically, what she does. She tells him, "I love you and I want to marry you and I want to be with you and I want to climb into your bed as your wife. And we could make babies and it would be great." Boaz prays, "Thank you, Jesus." And Boaz promises her, "I would love to marry you. I'm surprised you went for me." He's not that great looking, ladies. He's not that young, but he has a job. Write that down, right. Like, he has a job. He's an adult man. He doesn't live with his mother. He doesn't ride a bike to work because he's got so many DUIs that he's lost his license. He's a man.

And so, he's a little surprised that she, being a little younger and more attractive, would be interested in him, but she's looking for character and stability and dependability. She's looking for a husband and a good legacy, not just a boyfriend and a good weekend. And so then, he tells her. "I would love to marry you, but," da- da-da-da, here's the complication. He is not legally first in line with the right to marry her. There's another guy who's got the right to marry her first. And so, between Boaz and Ruth and their happily ever after marriage, is a man, who we'll see this week. He doesn't get a name, because he's Mr. Nobody. But he has the right to marry Ruth, and so Boaz has to deal with this obstacle. He has to get Mr. What's-his-face out of the way, that's what he's got to do.

Now, in this, let me tell you gentlemen who want to marry, and I know most of you are single, when you love a woman and you want to marry her, invariably, almost without exception, there will be an enormous obstacle between you and the marrying of that woman, that you will need to overcome that obstacle to marry her. And I believe God and his Providence allow these sorts of complications. She's a single mother, she's a widow, she's still in College, she lives in another state, she's got a bunch of College debt, she's a little older and if you get married, she wants to start a family right away, whatever it is. She's a new Christian, she's just gonna need a lot of encouragement spiritually. Whatever it is, there will be an obstacle that you have to overcome.

And I believe God does that this for two reasons. One, it allows the man to settle the issue in his heart, of how devoted he truly is to that woman. How much is he willing to sacrifice? What is he willing to work through? What is he willing to pay or endure to be with that woman? Secondly, it then reveals the depth of his commitment to the woman. She knows if he's willing to go through this, overcome that, work through this obstacle, overcome this financial difficulty or geographic limitation, he must really love me, because he is willing to go above and beyond the call of duty, because he so desperately wants to be with me.

For Grace and I, my wife – I met her when I was 17. I'll give you an example. I knew her two weeks and I told her, "I'm gonna marry you," now normally that's a stalker, but I was sincere in my heart. And I loved her and I was drawn to her in a way I've never been drawn to another woman. I just can't help myself. Like, I just really dig her. I like being with her – I mean, here's the – to me, this is the litmus test of whether or not you should marry someone. Can you do a road trip together without murder occurring? That's the road trip. You put two human beings in a car and send them on a long drive. Usually within an hour or two, I'm done. I – that's it, I'm done. With Grace, I can spend days, weeks, years with her. I like hanging out with her. I like being with her. I like doing nothing with her. I just – I dig her.

I like her in a way I've never liked anybody else and she even laughs at my jokes, snorts – I think it's cute. I mean, it just works for me. I dig her. And so, at 17 I told her, two weeks in, "I'm gonna marry you. Now, I know I'm a junior in high school, and this isn't the best time to get married, so we're gonna have to get there." But then, there's obstacles, like, staying together through high school. She graduates a year early, then I graduate. We go – she transfers out to be at my College, and then we have to get engaged. And we went to get married between my junior and senior year of college, when I was 21, flat broke, so I had to make a lot of money that summer. So, I get a job working two shifts; five at night to one in the morning, one in the morning 'till nine in the morning, because nobody wanted this job, and then I'd sleep sometimes in my truck, or wherever I could, to save money, because I had to marry Grace before we go back to college.

Get back into college; I'm working full-time; 18 credits, so I can be married to Grace. We're flat broke, \$250 a month apartment, heating it with wood, driving beater cars. Thursday night going to the Laundromat to play scrabble, because we can't afford a place with a washer and dryer. And Friday night's date night, we go to the 99-cent movie at the theatre – that's how old I am. It's like the eighth run movie theater, you're like – and you're watching like Airbud II or something. I mean there's nothing there. You're like, "Oh, look, a sport dog. Ah, that's good. Who loves ya' baby?" I mean, we're broke, you know what I'm saying? We are just busted – flat – new married – college broke, but I was with Grace.

We graduated, moved back to Seattle, got house sitting opportunities until we could get enough money to get into a place. A lot of obstacles. A lot of sacrifices. There has been a lot of redemption. I totally love this woman. It hasn't been without difficulty, that's for sure, on both of our behalf. But I had to be with her.

And what you're gonna see this week with Boaz and Ruth is that Boaz, to a certain degree, has got to dump this guy who's in first position with the right to marry Ruth, and he has the legal opportunity to take her as his wife. But, Boaz has to find a way that is legal and holy to get rid of Mr. What's-his-face, to proverbially dump him. Chapter 4 Verse 1. You ready to rock? Now, Boaz, which means strong man, mighty man, dude of dudes, had gone up to the gates. So, he leaves his harvest in the field, ten years of famine, he leaves his huge economic opportunity to run into town to marry Ruth, because she is his first priority. She looked adorable and he wanted to get married immediately, okay? We'll deal with this a little bit more next week, but at Mars Hill we do not encourage long engagements, all right? A day, for example, is good. Maybe a little longer than that, a few months, perhaps, go get a cake or something. But he's in a hurry, that's the point.

Now, Boaz had gone to the gate. The gate is sort of the center of town where business is transacted and social relationships are made, and sat down there. So, it's first thing in the morning, man of action Boaz runs into town, "I got to find Mr. What's-his-face. I got to dump him and then I'm gonna marry Ruth." Sits down, and as soon as he sits down, here what we read, "Behold," it just so happens, who comes by, Mr. What's-his-face. "The redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by." Here's again the providence of God, subtly working behind the scenes. Boaz was honorable with Ruth on the threshing floor, didn't have any inappropriate physical relations. Instead, he's trying to do things honorably, biblically, legally. He goes into town, sits down at the place where business is conducted and legal matters are transacted, and just so happens, that God blessed his pursuit by bringing along Mr. What's-his-face.

So, you're gonna see Boaz here take charge. He starts telling everybody what to do. He's a leader. He's a guy who takes charge – has a plan. So, Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend," he calls him friend, we never know this guy's name, because he's not a noteworthy man, but he probably doesn't know this man very well, and probably doesn't remember his name. And what do guys do when we see a guy that we think we know, but we don't know his name, what do we say? What's up dude? This is Hebrew for, what's up dude? So, Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend, sit down here," I like how he's giving orders. "And he turned aside and sat down and, he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, sit down here."

So, he grabs ten guys who were elders and says, "I need to do a legal transaction. I need to do a business deal today. You, you, you, you, you, you sit down. We're gonna do a legal transaction here. I need witnesses." I mean, he is leading the charge. He's an honorable Godly businessman. They all follow his instructions. So, they sat down, then he said to the redeemer – here's the deal, bottom line – "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, that there is no one besides you to redeem and I come after you."

Here's what he's saying. Mr. What's-his-face is a loser, okay. You say, "That's mean," yep. Now, Mr. What's-his-face is a loser, because he is legally and spiritually obligated, as the closest living male relative to Naomi and Ruth, to take care of them. Leviticus 25 speaks of this, "That he is to make sure they're okay," at this point, he has done nothing for these women; they're starving to death. He hasn't done anything. He probably lives a mile or two away. It's a smaller town. This would be akin to, you're an adult male who owns your home and has a job, and your aunt, or your cousin lives a few miles away, and they're starving to death, and you don't even call. You don't check in. They're new to town. You don't even go visit, "How are you doing? Do you need any food? Your husbands are dead. Can I pray for you?" Nothing. This is a man who has abdicated all of his responsibilities. He has failed at them.

And some of you men will look at him and say, "Well, he's not a bad guy, he didn't anything wrong," well here's his sin; he didn't do anything, that's the sin. Sometimes a man sins by co-mission, where he does a bad thing. Sometimes he sins by omission, where he doesn't do anything. This is the first sin with Adam; he didn't say or do anything. And weak, cowardly, failed men don't do anything. The women are starving to death; they're at such a point of destitute poverty that Naomi is looking to sell the family land. Now, this is a big deal, because the land would have been passed on from one generation to the next. It was part of the legacy and lineage of the family.

You would live on the land. Your relatives would live on the land. You would harvest the land. You would feed yourself off the land. I mean, your survival was tied to the land. Well, Elimelech died. His sons died. They have no grandkids. The family had come to an end. It was devastated and over. Naomi is so impoverished. Apparently, her husband left her nothing. The equivalent today would be a married guy with, you know, a family who doesn't have a life insurance policy. Doesn't have any investments, hasn't done anything to take care of his wife, in the untimely event of his death. She's in such dire straits that she is forced to sell the land that she has inherited from her deceased husband.

And legally, according to Leviticus 25, the preference was to keep it in the family, so there would have been a close male relative, called the redeemer, who would be the one to look after the land, if it went up for sale, to purchase it to keep it in the family, but also to look after the widows and the orphans. This guy is so pathetic; he doesn't even know anything about Naomi and Ruth. He doesn't know their need. He's not helping feed them, pray for them, care for them, look after them, attend to them; he doesn't even know that the land is going up for sale.

Boaz, who has no legal obligation, is the only one who knows what's going on – paying any attention. And so, he comes to this man and says, "Legally you have this opportunity to buy the land. The women are in dire circumstances. You need to make up your mind right now, do you want to buy the land or not. And if you don't want to buy it the land, I'll buy the land. I'll fix the mess. I'll take care of things. I'll do what's right." He's an honorable man. And in this, I want you to see that there are three kinds of men when it comes to business here in the Book of Ruth. There is Elimelech, who is a bold, courageous, confident man with a plan, who took risks, but he was fool. And it destroyed his family and it led to death.

Some of you men are like that, you say, "Well, I make a plan. I'm courageous. I make decisions. I lead. I take risks." But, if you're a fool, you'll devastate your family; you lead them into death and not life. This other man, unnamed, is a man who doesn't do anything wrong, he just doesn't do anything. He's a guy who doesn't follow through on his responsibilities. He doesn't take care of that which is his to look after, and then there's Boaz.

The guy who is picking up the mess of these other failed men, and he is trying to help these women who are in this dire circumstance. What will the answer of the man be? He said, "I will redeem it." No! No! No! Not Mr. What's-his-face.

Now, this man is a fool, because Boaz comes to him and says, "Do you want to buy some real estate?" "Yeah, I like real estate." "Great." He doesn't get a contract. He doesn't survey the details. He doesn't look at the additional expenses. All right, so here's what Boaz is going to do. Shrewdly negotiate the deal. And he is not going to take no for an answer. He wants to marry Ruth. What he doesn't say is, "Oh, I guess the Lord wants you to have her," and walks away. No. No. No. Boaz finds a way legally, ethically, morally, Biblically acceptable to get rid of Mr. What's-his-face, and so he is going to negotiate shrewdly.

Now, some of you guys may struggle with this, and say, "Is this a Godly thing to do?" Yeah, it is. You men have to learn how to conduct yourself shrewdly in your affairs of business, right. You live in a city, the most overpriced city in America, two years in a row. Housing prices have gone up 126 percent in ten years. Most people don't get married or have kids. There's more dogs than kids in our city. If you want to get married, have children, have your wife stay home with the children, you want to buy a house, put your wife in a vehicle that if she gets in a wreck she'll win; something big, right, then you're going to need to make money.

How are you going to need to make money? Well, you're going to need to be a shrewd businessman, not sinful, but shrewd. You're gonna need to out-negotiate the other men that you're competing with in business, and that's all business is. It's competition. And you're going to need to win, so that you can feed your family and preserve your legacy and take care of your wife, your children, your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren.

I've seen too many guys who are like, "I lose for Jesus." No. No, you can also win in business for Jesus, in a moral, legal, ethical, Godly, Biblical way. It's all about the art of the negotiation, and the subtle selling of the deal. Boaz is going to get into a business transaction. What I think is curious here, there's a lot that the Book of Ruth doesn't tell us. We don't know how Elimelech dies, Mahlon dies, Chilion dies. How Naomi, though most women weren't allowed to own property, came to own the property. There's a lot we don't know. Why, after ten years of marriage, Ruth didn't have any children. Why the famine came to Bethlehem? There's a lot we don't know, yet the story slows down, devotes almost an entire chapter to one legal business transaction. Why? Because that is important.

So many men think, "Well, if I love the woman and I know my Bible, then I'm ready." No, you also need to be a good businessman. Know how to make money, invest money, save money, spend money. Real estate, housing, life insurance, health insurance, dental insurance, retirement, college fund, these are the aspects of life, that too many people do not consider to be spiritual, but they are, because it's caring for the whole of your family. Yes, you want them to love Jesus in their heart. You also want to have food in their mouth and a roof over their head and an education in their future, and such things.

So, Boaz is going to cut a deal, as it were. He's going to negotiate shrewdly. "Then Boaz said, 'The day,' – here's the strings attached, Verse 5 – 'The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi,' so the first thing is, you get Naomi. Now, what is she, a bitter mother-in-law. Okay, this is true. He's not lying, but first he says, "Would you like a nice, cheap piece of real estate?" "Yes!" "Okay, it comes with a bitter mother-in-law." "Oh." Well, that's not a selling point.

How many of you, if you were looking for a new home, walked in and said, "This is a great house!" Right, but upstairs in the master bedroom, there's a bitter old woman. She stays. You would say, "Oh. The deal has suddenly lost interest for me." Furthermore, "you also acquire Ruth, the Moabite." Now, he doesn't know, likely, that Ruth is a Godly, wonderful, gem of a woman. All he hears is Moabite; racism, discrimination. Most guys don't want to marry a Moabite, especially one that's already been married, not a virgin. They worship Chemosh. They're a little freaky. You got to marry the Moabite. "Oh, marry the Moabite. I already got a wife." This could be bad. It seems like a lot of wives, you know, and a lot of mothers-in-law. Not only that – I mean it looks like he's picking up baggage and carry-ons, if you know what I'm talking about.

"The widow of the dead in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance," not only that, you're gonna need to get Ruth pregnant, you're gonna need to make some babies. Do you like babies? Do you want some babies? A lot of dudes are like, "No. They're like sprinklers, fluids come out all the holes, and I don't want any of them," right. Plus, they're up all night. They cost money. They take time, and he may already have kids that are grown, and now he's got to look at having more kids with a woman he doesn't even know. And these kids will cost money. And then these kids will grow up, they'll want a share of the inheritance he's already promised to his kids, diluting his estate.

This guy would've never thought through the implications of this deal. But, there's big, bad, Brother Boaz saying, "Well, here's the fine print in the contract. You sure you want to do this deal?" The guy has, shockingly, a little bit of a change of mind. Then the redeemer said, "I cannot redeem it for myself." I would love to. I just can't. This is not a good deal for me, "lest I impair my own inheritance." I'll destroy my own family. I can't afford this. "Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it." Boaz, why don't you take care of it? Don't you love how Boaz comes in, "Do you want to buy the land? If you don't, I will." "Well, I'll buy the land." "Okay, here's all of the associated costs, obligations, responsibilities. Do you still want it?" "No, you can have it." This is the shrewd negotiating of a deal in the favor of Boaz. But, is he lying? Not lying, he is just using Spirit led negotiating. That's what we'll call it. Spirit led negotiating.

Now, Boaz is at a station in life where he can actually afford to do this. This is one of the benefits of marrying an older, established man, is that he is not in the same financial positions as I was at the age of 21, when I went to marry Grace. At the age of 21, I could not have married a single mother and adopted children. I wasn't in a financial position. Boaz is at the place where he can financially, and practically, and he is enabled to do this. Let me say this, men. To get to this point where he is able to redeem Ruth, what has Boaz been doing in the prior years? He's been building his business. He's been making a living. He's been investing in real estate, and he's been investing wisely and tithing generously. And he has been conducting himself in a very

responsible way, financially.

Many of you men are single. Let me submit this to you. Right now is an opportunity for you to build your financial wherewithal, your portfolio, to buy your house, even if you've got to rent out rooms to buddies to help cover the mortgage. It's an opportunity to start a college fund for your kids. You say, "I don't even have a girlfriend." It's faith. It's also attractive. You meet a woman, she'll say, "What have you been doing about a house?" "I've been reading my Bible. I've started a college fund in faith that God would give me a glorious woman and that we would make children." "Whoa!" That is a lot better than telling her, "I'm a guild leader in World of War Craft." Strategically invest your time. You know what I'm saying, right. "I make good money, and I have the biggest TV." She doesn't care. She doesn't care.

When you are a single man, it is not an opportunity for you to extend adolescence until marriage. It's a time for you to act like a man, because marriage is for men, not for boys. Too many men think, "If I get married, that'll make me a man." No. No. No. You become a man to prepare you for marriage. You don't expect marriage to make you a man. And as a man, you leave your father and mother's house, you finish your education, you get a job, you make some money, you keep yourself out of debt, you pay off school loans if you have them, you go ahead and save up so you can buy a home, so that when God should bring along the woman of your dreams, you're able to get married.

Some of you guys, God is gonna call you to marry a single mother or a widow, a woman who is still in college, a woman who has medical difficulties, a woman who wants to have a big family, and doesn't want to be on the job, but wants you to take care of the household finances and be the provider. Some of you men are going to marry women who are older and don't have a lot of time with which to start a family, and they're gonna want to start a family right away. All of which is glorious and good if you're a man who is the position to be able to do that. But right now, gentlemen, if you work a part time job, live in a studio with 57 other guys, right, spend all your money on a big fat TV, rims on your car, sub-woofers, and you know, highlights in your hair, I mean, you get cuts in the line to hell, but you're not ready to be a husband, right. You're not doing anything.

Too many guys are chasing the pursuits of boys, rather than thinking, "How can this be an opportunity for me to grow spiritually, put to death sin, make some money, buy a house, learn some business skills, invest in my future, so that if and when Ruth comes along, I'm ready to execute on the deal." Mr. What's-his-face misses the opportunity to have a glorious woman like Ruth, whereas Boaz is ready because he hasn't been dinking around for a lot of years. He's been Godly and faithful in preparing himself. You get the point.

Now, this was the custom. Here is the legal deal, Verse 7. "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." Again, there's witnesses, courts in session, legally binding contractual agreement. The way they would seal a deal, the equivalent of signing a contract and having a notary stamp it, they would take off their sandal, and this would be the public declaration that they had agreed to the deal.

My daughter, when I read this to her, she was totally bummed. She said, "I would not do a lot of business." She's nine. I said, "Why?" She said, "Your shoe collection would totally not match. You'd be missing half of the shoes." I was like – that's my daughter's insight on the text. She loves her shoes. But, they would exchange shoes. And herein, we find that this is the legally binding contractual relationship between this man and Boaz. And here is what I would say. If you're a Christian, and you're gonna do business with a Christian, should you get a contract, meet with an attorney, write it all out? Yes. Too many Christians think, "They love Jesus. I love Jesus. It'll be fine." No, it won't, because the world is fallen, things take longer, cost more, go bad, he said, she said, I thought you meant this, no brother, you misunderstood, right hand of fellowship, it goes bad, okay.

So, what you want to do is write it all down, have it legal. Have it binding. Have it clear. Have the attorneys look it over. You know, read the fine print. I've seen, for example, people say, "Well, I'm gonna work on my home, and I'll hire Brother So-and-so," and they don't get a contract, don't get a bid, don't get competing bids. Things go over budget. People's feelings are hurt. It's real ugly. It's bad. Boaz avoids that kind of thing, and he makes it legally contractually – a binding agreement in the sight of the law.

So then, Boaz is gonna stand up and he's gonna speak. He's gonna give a speech. He's publicly declaring what he intends to do. 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." Elimelech, Chilion, Mahlon made the mess. They died. They didn't provide for their wives. They didn't leave any proverbial life insurance or support. These men failed to execute on their responsibilities to take care of their families. Boaz stands up and says, "I am going to take care of what these other men failed to do." In this, he is a redeemer. He is a redeemer. We'll get to that in a moment.

Also, Ruth the Moabite, he's pledging his vows to Ruth, as it were, "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." Here's what he's saying, "I will buy the land. I'll take care of Naomi. I'll marry Ruth. I will honor her deceased husband. We will have a child. The family line will not die. I'll perpetuate it. I'm Boaz. I'll fix everything."

And this is an amazing man, who has no legal obligation to do this. It's just pure grace. Mr. What's-his-face was legally obligated to do all of this. Boaz is doing it, not by obligation. Some have misappropriated Deuteronomy 25, on this, they'll say, "Boaz was doing his legal duty." No, he wasn't. He was doing the legal duty of another man. It was Elimelech and Mahlon and Chilion. It was their job, and then it became Mr. What's-his-face's job, and none of these men did their job, so Boaz is gonna come in as the redeemer, and he'll do the job.

And let me say this to you men, that one of the great distinctions and honors of being a Christian man, is to be a redeemer. It is a wonderful thing. Some of you men will marry a woman who was molested or raped or abused. You will be her Earthly redeemer. Some of you men will marry a single mother. A man has walked out on his responsibilities, and you will redeem that woman and those children. Some of you men will marry a woman

whose father did not do his job, and you will love her, and you will care for her, and you will encourage her, and you will pray with her, and you will pray for her, and you will be her earthly redeemer. It is one of the great honors of being a man, is to be an earthly redeemer. In this, let me say something, that I think is important, but highly controversial.

You men, if you love the Lord, something in you, you were a little boy growing up, you'd listen to the superheroes and you'd say, "That's it. I want to be a superhero. I want to come in and I want to save the lady, and I want to be her protector, defender, provider." And there's something in a Godly man that is drawn to a woman in need. Am I right or wrong? I'm right. In high school, how many of you asked this question, "Why does that horrible girl always get the best guy?" She's learned the art of making drama and crisis. And what happens when she makes drama and crisis, some guy puts on a red cape and decides he's Superman, and is gonna fly in and save the day, and rescue the girl.

You men need to be careful, that in your desire to be a redeemer, which I would whole-heartedly encourage, that you only fly in to save women like Ruth. Not that you don't love or encourage or support such women, but when you pursue a woman to be your wife, and you're giving your life to her, and your future to her, and you're gonna have children with her, you must make sure that she is not just a woman in need who needs redemption, but that she's a woman with Ruth's character. Is Ruth an evil woman, a sinful woman, a wicked woman? Is she drunk, shacking up with her boyfriend? Does she bounce from one loser to the next? Is she a woman who hardly ever makes it to church, unless Boaz drags her and promises to take her out to drinks afterward? No. She's a woman who loves God.

She has had a hard life. She didn't have a great family. She didn't have a great first husband. He died. She's a widow. She's flat broke. She's new to town, but she works really hard. She doesn't sleep around. She doesn't mess around with the wrong kind of guys. She's devoted to the Lord. She's devoted to her mother-in-law. She has outstanding Godly character. Boaz looks at her and says, "I want to redeem her. I want to make her life better. I want to be her husband. I want to take good care of her. I want to have children with her. I want to grow old with her. I want to be with Ruth." You men, who have this desire to be a redeemer, I would encourage you to only allow that go in a romantic way, toward a woman who has character like Ruth.

Some of you women are drama queens, high maintenance. Just call it like I see it. And you have learned, if I create a crisis, good men come in and want to save me. And that's wicked. That's not what we're talking about with Ruth. We're talking about a Godly woman who's in a difficult circumstance, and the right kind of man sees her character, and absolutely adores her and wants to be of assistance to her, as her husband, okay. So, if you're here and you're a woman who has made it an art of creating drama and crisis, in an effort to attract a Boaz, you need to repent.

And if you're a man who keeps chasing the most rebellious and obstinate and unholy women, thinking you're being like Boaz, you're not. You're being foolish, like Elimelech. But, if you are a man who has the heart of Boaz, and you meet a woman whose deep love for the Lord is like Ruth, but her life is not easy, and with love you could make it easier, then by all means, pursue her as your wife. I'll continue.

Then all the people who are present, they're gonna respond. All right, there's not a lot of Godly men and women in that day. It's the day of the Judges. Here's someone to celebrate, Boaz and Ruth. "Then, all the people who were at the gate and the elders said," – and we're gonna pray – "We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman," – so the first prayer is for Ruth – "who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel." God, we pray that Ruth would be like the Matriarchs who were the mothers of the 12 Tribes of Israel. She has gone from the Moabite outsider, to the highly respected Matriarch insider. These women love her, and they have much hope for the children who will come from her.

They then pray also for Boaz, "May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem." What they're saying is this, "Boaz, you're a great man. We all know it. You're good in business. You love people. You're generous. You're kind. You bless everyone. Continue." Continue. Some men get off to a good start, and then get off track. You want to run your race well. You want to finish your life well, Paul says. They pray, Boaz, keep doing what you're doing. Don't mess this up. God has provided, and now you must continue. And then lastly, they pray for the children who will come through them, Verse 12. "And may your house be like the house of Perez," now, Boaz and the Bethlehemites are descendants of Perez, so this is a great honor in this prayer, "whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this woman."

How long had she been married previously? Ten years. How many children did she have? Zero. What are they trusting God to do? Open her womb and enable her to become a mother. This is faith. This is faith. Are you – I know many of you are single – are you right now, clear in your mind with what your heart's desire is for your future? What's your vision? Do you see yourself as married with children? Is that in your heart? Now, over 90 percent of you will marry. I know not all will. And I'm not saying that everyone must get married, because the Lord Jesus, himself, was not married. But the majority of you will marry. And deep down in your heart, what is the desire of your heart? Is it to be married? Is it to be parents?

That was in the heart of Ruth. That was in the heart of Boaz. My question to you then is, are you living in such a way as to prepare yourself for marriage and family? If you're dating someone who doesn't love Jesus, why? If you want to marry someone who loves Jesus, why would you get romantically entangled with someone who doesn't love Jesus? It's not leading toward marriage. Do you want to have a holy, satisfied, blessed sex life with your spouse? It's a wonderful goal. Then, is messing around with your boyfriend or girlfriend going to achieve that? Will God bless that?

If you're working a dead-end job because you're lazy or you don't have ambition, is that going to prepare you for your future? If you're racking up debt, is that going to prepare you for your future? If you're sporadic in your walk with God, the reading of Scripture or accountability of sin, is that going to prepare you for your future?

Boaz and Ruth lived in holiness and obedience and Godliness until God brought them together. And when he did, they were able to move toward marriage quickly. Even though there were obstacles, they were able to overcome them because they had conducted themselves in such a way that they

were ready to enter into that next season of life. Outside of the four walls of this building, you will be strongly encouraged to just have a good time. In this building, as your Pastor who comes at you with the heart of a father, I want you to not think just about having a good time, but about having a good legacy. About having a good legacy. Two, three, four – like Jonathan Edwards used to pray for – five generations of his family, every day. Are you living in such a way to build a legacy? If not, that's sin that needs to be repented of. Ruth is an example for the ladies; Boaz is an example for the men.

And let me tell you this, I'm not saying that when you get married, it gets easier. I'm telling you when you get married it gets harder, and when you have children, it gets even harder. I love my wife with all my heart. We've been through some hellish times. There's been a lot of redemption. I have five kids. We've had a miscarriage as well; otherwise we'd be at six. I love being a dad. My oldest child is nine. My youngest is one year old. And they are glorious, but they are an enormous expense, a tremendous inconvenience, and a whole lot of work, and we haven't even hit junior high yet. I mean, that is – that is – I mean I just – I see – I'm already out shopping for a cup. I mean I just know how it's gonna go. You know what I'm saying.

And so, What I am saying is this, though, that the honor of being a redeemer. You men really need to aspire to this. It is a wonderful thing to know that you can take care of your wife, your children. You ladies to know that you can trust your husband, and that your life is safe, because he loves you and the Lord and the children. He's not going to destroy everything like Elimelech did, because he's not a fool. And it is wonderful to build a legacy, though it's a lot of work. I'll tell you what this looks like at my house. I was home yesterday, with my wife and five kids, and I went into the dining room – and I guess I'm trying to bore deep in the hearts of you who are still unmarried, a vision for your future and a hope for what God would have for you, and especially for you men – especially for you men.

Your dad was supposed to do this, 40 percent of kids go to bed tonight with no dad. Many of you the father you did have he was not a great guy and didn't tell you what you needed to hear. I want to, in a fatherly way, impart into you Godly desires and vision to be a man like Boaz, because it's the best life there is. It's not the easiest, but it's the best. Yesterday, I'll you a story, I went into the dining room, in my house, and there's my seven-year-old son, Zachariah Blaise, I call him Buddy Zac, because he's my buddy. And he's in first grade – learned how to read. He sitting there with the Bible open and number of sheets of paper laid out and he's got writing all over them.

And I look at him and it looks like curriculum, Bible curriculum. He's seven – first grade. Fill in the blank, memory verses, theological questions, stuff from Leviticus – seven, okay? And I don't – I mean, he just loves God and he's a smart kid and I say, "Zac, what are you doing," he said, "I'm writing Bible curriculum for Calvin," his five-year-old brother, "and Alexie," his three-year-old sister. I said, "Dude, you're writing inductive Bible Study curriculum," "Yes." I was like, "All right, dude," I mean, because in first grade most kids are doing this [Laughter], that's first grade, you know what I'm saying? Now, I didn't put my finger in my nose, but you know what I'm talking about.

So, that's usually first grade and here's my son and he's got it all laid out and I said, "Dude, why are you doing that?" And he's this serious little guy, we have this conversation – and he's a fun kid. We play ball and he rides around on his Heely shoes and we work on his jump shot, I mean he is a kid. But, he says, "Dad, I'm gonna do well in school, and then I'm gonna go to College, and then I'm gonna make a lot of money and I'm gonna buy house, I'm gonna get married and someday I'm gonna be a dad. And when I'm a dad, I'm gonna teach my kids about Jesus, and so I figure if I can start teaching Calvin and Alexie, I'll be practicing, and then I'll be a good dad." Seven – seven. And I just – I started crying like I won a beauty pageant, you know, I'm all broken up.

And deep in my son's heart, there's a desire to do well in – you know, he's got to get out of first grade first, but at least he's got a vision for his future. He's got a desire in his heart and if he goes with that deep desire that is from God and Biblical, it'll keep him out of all kinds of trouble. He'll study well, he'll go to school, he'll go to College, he'll get a job, you know, a girl comes along and says, "You want to sleep with me," "No. I want to sleep with my wife," you know? You know, "Do you want to sin against God," "No, I don't want to – what do I want to do? I want to pursue this vision, this dream, this goal that god has laid in my heart." And I see it in the heart of my seven-year-old son.

And the Bible says that we'll have conflicted desires, Paul talks about this Romans, "I don't do what I want to do, I do what I don't want to do, I'm a total conflicted mess." You have conflicted desires. If you're a Christian, you're deepest desire is to be Holy, to obey God, to walk with him, to trust him. What are your other deep desires? Is it marriage, is it children, is it legacy? And ask yourself, "Am I living in such a way to work toward that goal, or is there sin and folly and stupidity? Is there Elimelech-like behavior, Orpah-like rebellion that just simply cannot exist with where I hope and aspire to be; my future.

I say that not to condemn you, but to question what it is you're doing. Now, I'll conclude with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because that is the point of every page and line of Scripture. And I will tell you that this family, ultimately, leads to the birth of a son; we'll get there next week, which eventually leads to the birth of whom? Jesus. Jesus is coming through this family. If it wasn't for Boaz you wouldn't get Jesus, that's how important it is that there's a good dad somewhere that makes a difference and a new family line. And Boaz is a redeemer and Jesus is the redeemer. And Boaz is the foreshadowing of the ultimate redemption of Jesus and Ruth. The bride is the foreshadowing of the Church of Jesus Christ, which is his bride. And I'll draw some parallels so you understand the Gospel out of the Book of Ruth. The first is that Boaz was a near kinsman to Ruth and Jesus Christ, our glorious eternal God, became a man – entered into human history, took upon himself human flesh, to identify with us to become our near kinsman.

Second thing is that Boaz was able to redeem Ruth and Jesus, alone, is able to redeem us. Boaz did it through financial wherewithal; Jesus did it through his sinless life to redeem our sinful life, and to give himself as the price for our redemption. Not only is he able to redeem us, he is like Boaz, willing to redeem us. Boaz was not forced or obligated to marry and redeem Ruth, Jesus is not forced, or obligated to redeem us, but he is willing. Boaz did it out of love, likewise, Jesus redeems out of love, and he's willing and able.

Fourthly, Boaz paid the price for redemption. Likewise, Jesus has paid the price for redemption. It cost Boaz a great deal to redeem Ruth, and it cost

Jesus his own life. He went to the cross and died, to give himself, to pay the price for our sins, which is death. That's the penalty and price. And so, at the cross, Jesus was able and willing and did pay the price for our redemption. Furthermore, as we read the story of Ruth and Boaz, we see in this section, Ruth says and does nothing. Her redemption is a gift that is given to her; it is nothing that she participates in. Likewise, the Lord Jesus redeems us, not by our participation, good works, morality, religion, purgatory, reincarnation, karma, none of those things. It's a gift. Boaz redeems Ruth, does all of the work. The Lord Jesus redeems us, his bride, the church, collectively, as a gift; he does all of the work. And Boaz takes Ruth to be his wife. He loves her, and he has an unbroken, ongoing relationship with her. So, Jesus Christ takes the church, his beloved bride, he loves her in an unbroken and unending continual relationship.

And lastly, Boaz not only redeemed the woman, he also redeemed the land. We're waiting for the Lord Jesus to return to finish and complete his work of redemption, and also to redeem the earth, which is his proverbial land. We take our cues as the church, the collective bride, from Ruth. She walked in Holiness and she trusted wholeheartedly. That's what we are to do by the Grace that God gives us. To repent of sin and to trust in our redeemer, and to trust in his finished work, and to live the new life that he gives us in relationship with him. If you're not a Christian, the big point I'm trying to drive at, you need to be redeemed like Ruth was. And Jesus is, in the words of Spurgeon, "Our glorious Boaz. He's our redeemer. He is a near kinsman. He is able to redeem. He is willing to redeem. He has paid the price of redemption. He has done all of the work. And like Ruth trusted in Boaz, so you should trust in Jesus, our glorious Boaz." That's how you become a Christian, you turn from sin to Jesus, and we invite you to do that tonight.

When you're ready, you can all respond. We'll take communion remembering the price that Jesus paid for our redemption through his body and blood. We'll give our tithes and offerings, so that the word of Jesus can go out into our city. I'll tell you what. I'm excited. We're the least church city in the America, along with Portland. We grew by a thousand people last month, okay? What does that mean? That means that our redeemer lives and he's redeeming. He's redeeming, and we want to be a part of that. And then, we're gonna sing and celebrate, and we'll have a great time, because we have been redeemed by Jesus. And now, we get to enjoy the relationship and the new life that he gives. I love you guys.

I know I come at you tonight with a fatherly tone and a fatherly heart. I know for many of you I'm not old enough to be your dad, but in your heart, I want you to hear those fatherly words, I love you very much. And I want to see our ladies like Ruth, I want to see our men like Boaz, and I want to see our children a legacy for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I'll pray.

Father, thank you for a chance to teach the Scriptures to people that I love very dearly. I'm very honored and privileged to be the pastor of. Please send your Holy Spirit to not only convict us of sin, but to lead us into new life. Lord Jesus, I pray for the men that they wouldn't be like Elimelech and Mr. What's-his-face, but they would be like Boaz. I pray that the ladies would be like Ruth, Holy and trusting wholeheartedly. I pray, Lord God, for the marriages that they would be endearing and enduring. I pray for the children that they would be part of the legacy.

And I pray that you would burrow in the hearts and the minds of those who have gathered, most of whom are unmarried, a vision for their future. What is, God, that you have birthed in them, is their deepest desire. And will they repent? And will you enable them to live a holy way, so that nothing gets in the way of you desire for them, and that what you desire through them. Lord God, we come to you, as Ruth came to Boaz. We trust you, Lord Jesus, our glorious Boaz, and we thank you for the redemption that you have given to us as a loving gift. Amen.