

A contrast:

1. Days when the Judges judged; cf. the last verses in Judges (21:5): "*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*"

2. Bethlehem of Judah's reputation:
a. Jonathan, grandson of Moses, Levite, idol priest for hire.

b. The concubine from Beth. of Judah; the near loss of the tribe of Benjamin.

* Ruth is the 3rd of 3 stories about individuals from Bethlehem of Judah.

* Will history repeat itself?

1:1 Now it came about in the days when the judges governed [judged], that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. ❖ 2 The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there. 3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. 4 They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. 5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD had visited His people in [by] giving them food. 7 So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with [demonstrate *hesed* toward] you as you have dealt with the dead [Elimelech, husbands] and with me. 9 "May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

10 And they said to her, "No, but we will surely return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 12 "Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons, 13 would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me."

14 And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung [committed] to her.

15 Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law." 16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall* be my people, and your God, my God. 17 "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if *anything but* death parts you and me." 18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her [i.e., she stopped trying to persuade her].

19 So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" 20 She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi [meaning *pleasant*]; call me Mara [bitter], for the Almighty has dealt very *bitterly* with me. 21 "I went out full [i.e., husband, sons], but the LORD has brought me back empty [no husband, sons]. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

22 So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

The crisis:

- *Husband dies; sons die* – crushing blow.
- No security – Patriarchal society; well-being was dependent on a male figure; Naomi had no husband,...no sons... *and* no grandsons!
- Plus it's the chaotic time of the judges.
- In a foreign land.
- **Implications of section (sig. for this story):**
 - The daughter-in-laws are barren ("10 years").
 - Elimelech's land is sold (cf. ch. 4).

Naomi's blessing: That God would bless them by providing them rest with a new husband.

- Motivated by genuine care.

Naomi's argument:

- Naomi's doesn't have a husband with which to have children.
- Naomi is probably too old to have children.
- And even if she conceived sons *that night* they couldn't grow up fast enough. By that time, *Ruth* and *Orpah* would be too old to have children.
- **Sum:** Naomi is useless to them; she has nothing to offer when it comes to finding security.

...In fact, Naomi says, I'm actually bad for you. God's hand is against me.

Ruth's commitment:

- * Orpah – Not wrong; rep. the "normal" action.
- * Contrast Ruth, who forsakes her known security and identity (land, people, gods, place of burial with her own people) and commits to Naomi.

Literary purposes:

- The story ends well; these same women will announce Naomi's good fortune.
- These scenes with Naomi and the women cause the reader to see the dramatic turn of events from devastation to blessing.

Homiletical recap:

In this chapter we see the backdrop in which God will demonstrate his providential *hesed* through human *hesed*.

Providential *hesed*:

- * **Bitter** – The Lord did stand behind these events. But the story's not over...
- * **Sweet** – He visited his ppl. by giving bread; Naomi & Ruth return at harvest.

Ruth's *hesed*: Why'd she do this? Love for her mother-in-law, who is helpless otherwise.

It's important to understand the setting in which these laws occur: In Israel, under the Mosaic Law, where it was extremely important that...

- One's family name would not be discontinued, that one's name would be carried on through one's descendants.
- The land, which God had distributed to each family, would remain in that family.

Levirate-marriage:

- *Levir*, Latin for "brother-in-law"; thus levirate-marriage is "brother-in-law marriage."
- According to Mosaic Law, the brother of the deceased husband was to marry the widow (in other words, the widow marries her brother-in-law) in order to continue the lineage of the deceased husband.
 - This only occurred in situations where a husband died without having produced an heir.
 - The widow would marry her brother-in-law in order to have a child with him.
 - This child would legally be considered the son of the deceased husband.
 - And thereby the heir would carry on the name of the deceased husband.

Kinsman-redeemer:

Definition: Kinsmen-redeemers were near relatives who were responsible for the well-being of a family members facing some sort of distress (e.g., economic—buying individuals out of slavery; justice—"avengers of blood"; etc.)

An important role for the story of Ruth: the redemption of land

- Based on concern that the land stay within the possession each family, as well as the economic well-being of individuals...
- The Mosaic Law said that if someone sold their land due to immense poverty...
 - Either they would wait until the year of Jubilee to receive back their land...
 - Or, the kinsman-redeemer could buy it back for them (i.e., redeem it).

The legal customs in the book of Ruth:

- Now both of these customs are present in the book of Ruth. Sort of...
- Unique situation:
 - Technical levirate-marriage is not possible—both brothers-in-law are dead.
 - Some sort of modified levirate-marriage customs gets mashed in with the land redemption laws and gets attributed to the function of the redeemer (cf. chapter 3).
 - And I think the simplest and best explanation is found in Boaz's understanding of the situation (chapter 4):
 - Not only did a kinsman-redeemer need to redeem the land...
 - But he also need to marry and produce an child with Ruth "in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance [the land]"
 - In other words, redeeming the land would only be so good if there was no heir to receive the land afterwards!

Two things about Boaz:

- * A potential kinsman-redeemer
- * A great man (in what respect?) ...

Her happening happened:

- * Not chance.
- * Ruth did not purposefully pick this field.
- * Shows the incredibly fortunate nature of Ruth's "happening."

2:1 Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. ❖

2 And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." **3** [Summary→] So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. ❖

4 Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the LORD be with you." And they said to him, "May the LORD bless you" [character; cf. *gibor*—v.1]. **5** Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" **6** The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab." **7** "And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while."

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. **9** "Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw." **10** Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?" **11** Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. **12** "May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge." **13** Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

14 At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left. **15** When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. **16** "Also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean ["gleaning"], and do not rebuke her." **17** So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

18 She took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took it out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied. **19** Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz." **20** Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead." Again Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives" [redeemers]. **21** Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.' " **22** Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that others do not fall upon you in another field."

23 So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Homiletical recap: In this scene we begin to see even more clearly God's providential *hesed* worked out through the *hesed* of His people.

Providential *hesed* – "Her happening happened" (v.3) – God's sovereign hand guiding.

Human *hesed*:

- * Ruth's initiative – She came back to take care of Naomi, and now she's making it happen.
- * Boaz's generosity – Ruth is to glean and keep gleaning in his field; Ruth's "gleaning"; no one is to bother her; water jugs; mealtime (w/ leftovers!)

We even see the theme of God's providential *hesed* through human *hesed* in **Naomi's** (deliberately ambiguous?) **statement** (v.20).

Background

- * Threshing – Loosening seed from chaff.
- * Winnowing – Separating them; process of tossing them up into the wind.

3:1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? **2** "Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight. ❖ **3** "Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. **4** "It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do." **5** She said to her, "All that you say I will do."

6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her. **7** When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down.

8 It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. **9** He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative [redeemer]."

10 Then he said, "May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness [hesed] to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich. ❖ **11** "Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence. **12** "Now it is true I am a close relative [redeemer]; however, there is a relative [redeemer] closer than I. ❖ **13** "Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning."

14 So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor" [to guard against misunderstandings]. **15** Again he said, "Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it." So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.

16 When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her. **17** She said, "These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.' " **18** Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today."

What is going on here?

* Naomi's language is full of sexual associations: wash, anoint, dress / let Boaz drink first / euphemisms—uncover, feet, lay down.

* Immediately one is to think of previous stories in which a widow successfully seduced relatives in order to have children (e.g., Lot's daughters seduced Lot; Tamar seduced Judah [cf. ref. to Tamar and Judah in ch. 4]).

* The narrator leaves us wondering, is Naomi's plan for Ruth to do the same?

...So now we find that Ruth's and Boaz's actions are pure—a rhetorical contrast has been made.

Why the bizarre actions?

* Probably due to the inappropriate nature of a woman proposing to a man in this culture.

* The meaning of the acts is clarified by Ruth's statement in v.9. To spread one's garment over another was an idiom for marriage, hence Ruth's actions of uncovering the feet and interpreting her actions with her statement... (v.9).

* And in so doing, she is also referring back to the blessing or prayer Boaz uttered in 2:12.
~ Boaz had said that Ruth had come under God's wing (same word for "skirt").
~ Now, Ruth requests of Boaz that he cover her with his skirt (or "wing").
~ In other words, she is challenging Boaz to be the blessing he had wished upon her, to be the answer to his own prayer!

Homiletical recap: Again we see God's providential *hesed* being accomplished through human *hesed*.

Human hesed

- * Naomi's initiative, seeking the security of her daughter-in-law.
- * Ruth's obedience, courage.
- * Boaz's character, honoring the legal customs, and generosity.

Providential hesed: And we see God's hand moving in these bizarre circumstances in order to carry out his purposes.

A clear **example** of God's providential *hesed* being accomplished through human *hesed* is Ruth's request in v.9 for Boaz to be the blessing of God that he himself had wished upon her.

A better act of hesed?

- * First act of *hesed* – Abandoning everything she knew for the sake of *hesed*, when she could have found security by marrying a Moabite.
- * And technically, Ruth could have married any Israelite.
- * But instead, she outperformed her previous act of *hesed* by "choosing" to marry a close relative—who can redeem the Elimelech's land and perpetuate his name.

"**Closer**," i.e., nearer in terms of the "family tree" and therefore has the right of the redeemer].

Review

- * Presumably, Elimelech's land was sold as a last ditch effort before sojourning.
- * The unique legal situation: land redemption + levirate-marriage.

"Buying" and "selling"

- * Note debate.
- * But for our purposes, whatever's going on, Elimelech's land needs to be redeemed by an eligible redeemer. According to Mosaic Law, it needs to come back to Elimelech's clan.

"Jeopardize my own inheritance"?

- * \$\$\$ - W/ the extra cost of a wife, he might end up having to sell his own inheritance.
- * The first child born to Ruth would be legally considered Mahlon's. Therefore, if Ruth only bore him one child, his inheritance would go to Elimelech's clan.

❖ **4:1** Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the close relative [redeemer] of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, "Turn aside, friend, sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. **2** He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down.

❖ **3** Then he said to the closest relative [redeemer], "Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. **4** "So I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy *it* before those who are sitting *here*, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem *it*, redeem *it*; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you [i.e., "you're first in line"] to redeem *it*, and I am after you.' " And he said, "I will redeem *it*."

5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance."

6 The closest relative [redeemer] said, "I cannot redeem *it* for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem *it* for yourself; you *may* have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem *it*." ❖

7 Now this was *the custom* in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of *land* to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the *manner of attestation* in Israel. **8** So the closest relative said to Boaz, "Buy *it* for yourself." And he removed his sandal.

9 Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. **10** "Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his *birth* place; you are witnesses today."

11 All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel [i.e., blessing of fertility]; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem. **12** "Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah [i.e., offspring via levirate-marriage], through the offspring which the LORD will give you by this young woman."

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. **14** Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. **15** "May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons [sons which Naomi once had], has given birth to him."

16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. **17** The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

18 Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron, **19** and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab, **20** and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon, **21** and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, **22** and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.

Summary:

- * Boaz has kept his word to Ruth (in ch. 3). *This very day he has gone to the gate to settle the matter.*
- * He abided by the customs and gave the nearer redeemer an opportunity to redeem.
- * But when he wouldn't, Boaz himself did the honorable thing and redeemed both the land as well as Ruth, in order to preserve the families name in that land.

Literary inclusio: And so now the same women to whom Naomi announced how bitterly God had dealt w/ her announce to her the significance of her grandchild's birth!

Homiletical recap:

Human hesed – Boaz takes action.

Providential hesed

* Ruth: barren → conception.

* Reference to David:

~ Shows how drastically the tables have turned for Naomi: bitter woman with no sons → great, great grandmother of David.

~ This story shows how God preserves the line of David, and ultimately Christ.

Sum: But again we see the theme of God's *hesed* carried out through his people demonstrating *hesed* towards others.

Review/sum - Ruth is a story about God's providential *hesed* shown through human *hesed*.

God's providential *hesed*:

Summary: We see God's hand providentially working His purposes to reverse circumstances of great tragedy into circumstances of immense blessing.

Application: Trust God (we have the same God; this is *our* God).

Through human *hesed*:

Summary: But God does not accomplish His purposes by means of some ambiguous nebulosity. God uses His people (Ruth, Naomi, Boaz). He demonstrates His *hesed* through His people showing *hesed*.

Application: From this story, we are to learn what real examples of practical *hesed* looks like. (And if Old Covenant individuals showed *hesed* to one another, how much more should we, those who a part of a much better covenant, show *hesed* towards one another). Be God's means of demonstrating *hesed* towards one another.

Christ:

Culmination in Christ – The ultimate demonstration of God's *hesed* demonstrated through human *hesed* is in the person of Christ, who is both God and man demonstrating self-sacrificing *hesed* on behalf of his people (cf. John 3:16; Rom 5:8)

Kinsman-redeemer typology – The role of "redeemer" picked up by subsequent OT writers and applied to the saving works of YHWH. And so, from retrospect, we see that the role of the redeemer becomes a "prophetic paradigm" for God's ultimate saving work in Christ.

Preservation of David's lineage: God preserves the lineage of David... and ultimately preserving the promised "seed" (Gen 3:15; cf. OT theme of barren women in Jesus's lineage) leading to Christ. And just as God providentially preserved the lineage of the savior, He is still working to carry out His plan of salvation for His people.

Application:

- We worship Christ—the center of these themes found in "the Gospel of Ruth."
- And since we know that the only way we are able to show *hesed* towards one another by God's grace, let the grace of God, demonstrated in the book of Ruth and ultimately culminating in Christ, propel you to show God's *hesed* towards others.

⁹ "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

1 John 4:9-11

¹⁹ "We love, because He first loved us."