

Redeeming Redo

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Preacher: Jon Gemmell

[0 : 00] We welcome again this evening John Gemmell. Delighted to have John back with us. John, for those who don't know, is part of the staff of the Cornhill at Scotland, Cornhill training course, which will be getting back underway again in a few weeks time.

But it's great to have John with us this evening. He is preaching through the book of Ruth, and we've been having a terrific time these last couple of Sunday evenings looking at Ruth with him.

And we're going to turn back there now, if you'd like to turn with me in your Bibles.

And we're going to read together in Ruth chapter 3. We've seen the story unfolding so far when an Israelite named Elimelech flees famine, goes to the land of Moab with his wife, and tragedy strikes. All the men in the family die. Then Naomi decides to come back to her homeland and is accompanied by her daughter-in-law, the widow Ruth.

Last week we saw how she happened upon the land and the fields of a relative of the family.

[1 : 16] And we pick up the story then at Ruth chapter 3 and verse 1. Then Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, said to her, My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?

Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he's winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Wash therefore and anoint yourself and put on your cloak, and go down to the threshing floor.

But do not make yourself known to the man until he's finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he'll tell you what to do.

And she replied, All that you say, I'll do. So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her.

And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

[2 : 25] At midnight the man was startled, turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet. He said, Who are you? And she answered, I'm Ruth, your servant.

Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer. And he said, May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first, in that you have not gone after the young men, whether poor or rich.

And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman. And now it's true that I am a redeemer, yet there is a redeemer nearer than I.

Remain tonight and in the morning. If he will redeem you, good, let him do it. But if not, if he's not willing to redeem you, then as the Lord lives, I will redeem you.

Lie down until the morning. So she lay at his feet until morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came to the threshing floor. And he said, Bring the garment you're wearing and hold it out.

[3 : 34] So she did. And he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. And then she went to the city. When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, How did you fare my daughter?

And then she told her all that the man had done for her, saying, These six measures of barley he gave to me. For he said to me, You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.

She replied, Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out. For the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today. Amen.

May God bless to us his word. Well, good evening. It has been so wonderful to be with you these last three Sunday evenings to look at the book of Ruth.

Thank you all for all your encouragement and your questions and your comments. I feel like I'm getting a little bit sharper on this wonderful book. We have a big task before us tonight.

[4 : 36] Chapters three and chapter four together. We'll pause for breakfast in a little while. So let me read chapter four, and then we'll get to work.

Ruth chapter four. 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 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.

[5 : 41] 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 there was this 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. 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 belong to Elimelech and all that belong to Killian and to Marlon.

Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Marlon, 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.

[6 : 49] You are witnesses this day. Then all the people who were at the gate and the elder said, We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who was 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 bought to Judah, because of the offering that the Lord will give you by this young woman, the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman.

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. And he went into her and the Lord gave her conception and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer.

And may his name be renowned in Israel. He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age. For your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.

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.

[7 : 57] He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. Now these are the generations of Perez. Perez fathered Hezron. Hezron fathered Ram. Ram fathered Aminadab.

Aminadab fathered Nashon. Nashon fathered Salmon. Salmon fathered Boaz. Boaz fathered Obed. Obed fathered Jesse. And Jesse fathered David.

Let's pray. Blessed Lord, who has caused Holy Scripture to be written for our learning. Grant that we may hear, read, learn and inwardly digest them.

That through the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given to us in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen. Amen. We love a turnaround story. We love the story of Andrew Carnegie, the destitute lad from Dunfermline, who moved to America and became America's richest man.

[8 : 56] We love the story of Ralph Lauren, who was working as a checkout boy in the male outfit as Brooks Brothers and ended up being a global fashionista.

We remember J.K. Rowling, the impoverished single mom, whose life turned around through penning Harry Potter. We're inspired by Howard Schultz, who was poverty stricken and yet gambled it all, taking over the Starbucks coffee company and making it a global brand.

We appreciate Steve Jobs, the college dropout of immigrant parents who went on to found the richest company in the world. Jay-Z went from dealing drugs in the Brooklyn projects to being a music industry mogul.

Or the youngest investor on Dragon's Den, Stephen Bartlett. He went from stealing leftovers in fast food restaurants as a teenager because he was so poor to building now a global marketing conglomerate and he himself having a personal fortune of 300 million pounds.

We love a turnaround story. We love the rags to riches story icon, a story arc. We love a turnaround story. And I think that's why we love the Book of Ruth, because it is a turnaround story.

[10:14] I want to argue tonight that it is the turnaround story, the turnaround stories of all turnaround stories, written and authored by the God of the universe, who is the turnaround-era par excellence.

I want to say it's not just a turnaround story for Ruth, though it is. Not just a turnaround story for Naomi, but it is. Not just a turnaround story for Boaz, even though it is.

I want to say that it is a turnaround story with much wider implications for us, as it teaches us how the sovereign God is going to turn around the plight of his people.

All his people. Forever. Ruth, as we've seen over the last two weeks, takes place in the time of the judges. A period of decline, of complete social disintegration.

And so when we got to the end of judges, we wondered, well, what's going to happen next? Is this the end? Will God's people be exterminated? Will God's promises fail? What is going to happen?

[11:24] How is this desperate situation going to be turned around? And I want us to see tonight that Ruth provides an overture to the next phase of Israel's history.

And it builds on a pattern that I want to say is exactly how the Lord Jesus turns around everything forever. Ruth tells us how we get from the anarchy of the judges to the monarchy in 1 Samuel.

I want us to show that it points backwards as well. And quite a lot of all that we see goes wrong in Genesis goes right in Ruth. We saw in week 1, Elimelech is just like his contemporaries.

What he does spatially moving to Moab is exactly what his people have done spiritually, turning away from the Lord and worshipping the Canaanite gods. Last week we saw Boaz is doing better than his contemporaries.

He's taking the law seriously. He's seeking to honour the Lord. He's seeking to show what the Lord is like to Ruth when she turns up in his field. He pours out grace on top of grace.

[12:37] But I want us to see tonight that Ruth 3 and 4 is all about people doing better than their ancestors. People doing better than their ancestors.

And I hope that as we see that we'll be overjoyed and have great hope that the sovereign God of all grace is able to turn around any people in any place at any time.

I want us to look at it under two headings. Chapter 3, A Better Foundation. And chapter 4, A Brighter Future. So let's get into chapter 3 together.

It happens in three movements. We get a little pep talk from Naomi back at the house. We get the drama at the threshing floor. And then we get the debrief after Ruth gets home.

And see that the verse 1, Naomi is concerned that Ruth would find rest. Permanent peace, permanent security, permanent prosperity.

[13:43] And see that concern is taken on by Boaz in verse 18. That rest again is mentioned, but this time Boaz will not rest until he has secured rest for Ruth one way or another.

We enter chapter 3. And that is the big question. How are Ruth and Naomi going to find rest? They've had temporal relief from Boaz's kindness.

He's been outrageously kind to them, providing for them, letting them glean safely in his field. But once harvesting is over, they would be back to the bottom of the heap, living on the outer fringes of society as destitute widows in a lawless land.

So look with me at verses 1 to 7, a precarious plan. At the beginning of chapter 2, it was Ruth who took initiative and said to Naomi, I'm going glean. Now it is Naomi who is the driving force behind the plan in chapter 3.

And it seems something like six weeks has elapsed between that encounter between Ruth and Boaz in the field in chapter 2. And since then, nothing has happened.

[15:06] And that's the problem. Nothing has happened. There seems to be a bit of a stalemate in the story. Boaz, who is a near relative, one of their potential redeemers, has seemingly faded into the background.

There's been no more lunch dates in the field. There's been no more praying for one another in the middle through an exchange. And so Naomi gets desperate and is going to help Ruth seize the initiative.

She gives detailed instructions. She knows it is threshing evening in the town of Bethlehem. Now the barley would have dried out having been harvested and it's time that all the men would gather and beat it out so that they would have barley to store and to keep them going.

Naomi gives Ruth three very sharp instructions. Wash, perfume, and put on your best clothes. Wash, perfume, and put on your best clothes.

I think putting on your best clothes is a reference to Ruth putting away her mourning widow's clothes. The clothes that she's been wearing since Marlon, her husband, died.

[16:29] If you like, Naomi is saying to Ruth, it's time you re-entered society. Perhaps that's why Boaz has been so on the back foot and reticent about doing more.

Once the prep work is done, Ruth goes to the threshing floor. She observes from a distance just as Naomi had said. And then when Boaz is asleep, she is to uncover his feet.

Now threshing floors were communal spaces. They were usually in elevated positions in towns to make the most of the wind. Men would thresh in the evening when the night breeze would come through.

And the breeze would separate the chaff of the barley from the barley that you wanted to keep, the barley grain. Having completed the task, the men would sleep close to their grain to protect it from thieves and to protect it from animals.

Threshing was a satisfying job. It was the end of the farming season. And so when your grain was there in a big pile, it was time to celebrate. And so you would have a hearty meal and a few lagers with the lads.

[17:44] So Naomi saying to Ruth, go to the threshing floor on an evening such as this. This is a precarious plan. One commentator says this, this is an outrageous scheme, delicate and dangerous.

Let me see if I can show you why it's so iffy. Firstly, the threshing floor was a place of renowned immorality. Men in celebratory mood, sleeping away from their families, who had just had the windfall of the harvest, were easy targets for desperate women who would loiter at the threshing floor in search of an opportunity.

Secondly, because of this, Ruth takes a huge risk, placing herself in the position of one of these women.

If this doesn't go well, she could easily be once again the rumors of the town. She could be tarnished as a nefarious woman. And therefore, if Boaz wouldn't marry her, it would scupper any chances she would have of marrying again.

This is audacious faith from Ruth. This is faith in action. This is faith trusting that the God who has brought her safely thus far would again open an opportunity to bless her, protect her and look after her.

[19:06] And thirdly, the account is written in such a way to build tension in Hebrew. Let me give you some examples. The word feet, uncover his feet, is a repeated idea.

The word translated feet can legitimately be translated feet. But it can also be translated as a much larger area of anatomy. It could be translated almost as uncover his lower half or everything below the waist.

Or do you see how many references there are to lying down? Naomi's instruction says uncover his feet and then lie down. It's not explicit that she's to lie down at his feet.

Uncover his feet and then lie down. And it could equally be read as lie down at his feet or lie down next to him. Snuggle in if you like. It seems as we read it, if you were a Hebrew reader reading it for the first time, your heart would start to be racing.

What's going on here? This doesn't seem to be altogether wholesome. And yet Ruth, so full of faith, says, verse 5, all that you say, I will do.

[20:26] All that to say that the author has deliberately written this to bring tension to us as we read. And verses 6 and 7, she does the preparatory work really well.

She goes to the threshing floor. She did just as her mother-in-law had commanded. She waited for Boaz to eat and drink and his heart was merry. He went and lay down at the end of his heap of grain.

And then once he was asleep, she came softly. And that brings us to the second act of chapter 3, 8 midnight, meeting verses 8 to 15. Now as we get to this point, as we get to verse 8, we are supposed to be hearing a deafening echo of an earlier story from Genesis in this encounter. Their minds would have immediately gone back to Genesis 19, as I'm sure many of your minds have gone back to Genesis 19. The story of Lot and his daughters who escaped Sodom and Gomorrah.

Do you remember Lot's wife turned back and turned into a pillar of salt? And then they find themselves in the cave and the two sisters, Lot's two daughters, speak to each other and they say, we've got no future.

[21 : 41] And so rather than trusting the God who had rescued them from Sodom, they set about engineering a future for themselves. And what is their plan?

Get their father full of food and full of wine. And then when he's in a drunken stupor to go into him and lie with him that they might have offspring and a future. And so on consecutive nights the two daughters do this.

They both conceive daughters and the son of the eldest daughter is called Moab. That's the origin story of the Moabites.

And now fast forward, here we are again, a man full of food with a merry heart, it says. It doesn't explicitly say that he was drunk like Lot, but it does say he had a merry heart and I think that's supposed to be ambiguous as well.

And here we have a Moabite woman in the middle of the night skulking up to him. However, this is a far more wholesome and honourable story than that origin story.

[22 : 53] Boaz is startled when he discovers Ruth sleeping at his uncovered feet. So Naomi's instruction might have been ambiguous, but Ruth's interpretation of it was altogether righteous.

And so Ruth has done much better than her ancestors. This will be above board and very, very wholesome. It's like a rewriting of one of the most uncomfortable stories in Genesis.

Somebody enabled to do better than their ancestors. And so verse 9 says, Boaz says, who are you? We've moved on a long way from the field.

In the field he asks, whose are you? Whose husband, wife, daughter? No, it is. Who are you? Ruth replies, I am your servant. Spread your wings over your servant for you are a redeemer. That seems weird. She doesn't think that Boaz has turned into an eagle on the threshing floor.

[23 : 59] The meaning of this is explicit. Ruth is inviting Boaz to marry her. In chapter 2, Boaz prayed that Ruth would be repaid and find a full reward from the Lord under whose wings she has taken refuge.

Now, Boaz will be the possible answer to his own prayer as he has the opportunity to protect and prosper Ruth by spreading his wing over her as her husband.

However, there's another ambiguity here because spreading your wing could easily be put your garment over me. And this is the middle of the night in the place of immorality.

So we're still not quite out of the woods yet and we're not quite sure how the story is going to pan out. However, I think there's a much bigger story at play. Look with me at Boaz's response.

May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men whether poor or rich. Boaz says you have made this last kindness greater than the first.

[25 : 17] What was the first kindness? Well, it was the costly decision Ruth made to commit herself to and accompany Naomi to Bethlehem having believed and be thoroughly converted to Israel's God.

So why is the threshing floor seen a greater kindness than that? I mean, a full-on conversion turning your back on all that you knew to go to a place where you didn't know anyone except the bitter woman you were standing next to.

That seems like quite a kindness. But this, Boaz says, is a greater kindness. And I think the explanation is there, isn't it?

Ruth could have married again. That was not, that was more than possible. She's still relatively young. There are no shortage of eligible lads or older suitors.

In fact, Boaz seems to suggest that she could have had the pick of the crop. The poor ones for love or the rich ones for status seems to be what he's thinking about.

[26 : 20] And that for Ruth would have been absolutely fine. Her husband is dead. She's re-entered society. She can get remarried.

However, that would have left Naomi destitute and alone. And what is going to become significant later at the end of chapter four, it would have been that Elimelech's name is cut off.

The name dies in the land, the inheritance goes from the land. So in lovingly enacting Naomi's plan, Ruth is on board with the requirements for redemption.

As well as proposing to Boaz, she is seeking to protect and prosper Naomi and preserve the family name that is on the cusp of being extinguished.

Boaz's assessment and diverse 11, you are a worthy woman. Boaz was introduced at the beginning of chapter two in the narrator's comment as a worthy man.

[27 : 27] It seems in the book of Ruth, similarities attract. This literally is a match made in heaven. But we are not home and dry.

verse 12, there's a fly in the ointment or more particularly a redeemer who is nearer. This is not going to be straightforward.

Boaz though has it in hand. He now communicates what he's going to do for Ruth and Naomi. Do you see there was ambiguity about spread your wing over me?

It could have been like share your duvet with me. Well, verse 13, the verb is remain tonight or literally lodge tonight. A very wholesome verb.

A verb that suggests they are a long way apart. They're in the vicinity of each other. Remain tonight.

[28 : 29] Now, again, I think Boaz's story here, Boaz's role, would have been heard as a very familiar echo to the first readers. perhaps you heard it.

Let me recap the details. A man falls into a deep sleep and awakes to find a strange woman close to him. Any pennies dropping?

It's Genesis 2, isn't it? The man falls into a deep sleep and when he wakes up, there's a woman.

Adam. When Adam meets Eve, yeah, what's the next bit of action?

Adam stands passively by, impotently allowing Eve to be deceived by the snake. He eats from the forbidden, she eats from the forbidden tree and then offers it to Adam who partakes as well.

Adam categorically fails to be on the front foot protecting and seeking to prosper his wife. Here though, Boaz does much better than his ancestors in a remarkable way.

[29 : 40] Do you see how proactive he is? He does better than Adam, he just doesn't stand by and say que sera sera. He says I'll sort this and I'll sort it today.

I'll sort this at the closest possible opportunity. I'm on the front foot. I'm going to look after you and if that means becoming my wife then all the better.

Adam categorically failed. Boaz does better than Adam. In the morning under the cover of dawn, Ruth prepares to leave.

Boaz seeking to protect Ruth's reputation does it before one can recognize another. and he takes a huge measure of barley and he folds it up and wreaths out a cloak and he puts it on her and for the second time in the story she struggles home under a huge amount of grain.

man. We come in to the end of the chapter in verses 16 to 18 and I'm sure Naomi's been up all night wondering what on earth has happened at the threshing floor.

[31 : 00] and she suspects it's good news because here comes Ruth heavy burdened with a load of barley and she says to her how did you fare my daughter or literally who are you and I think she means who are you now are you still Ruth the Moabite widow or are you Ruth's or are you Ruth Boaz's wife to be Ruth brings Naomi up to speed with where they are at she gives Naomi the grain and says to her these six measures of barley he gave to me for he said to me you must not go back empty handed to your mother in law this is the second time that word empty has appeared in the narrative the first was from the lips of Naomi herself when in her pain filled anguish she exclaimed that she had gone away full and had returned empty and now it seems

Boaz is keen that she will not remain empty handed anymore and this is the guarantee the down payment of all that he's promised to do and bring about as fulfillment in the lives of Naomi and Ruth they just need to be patient and see how it all plays out I was conscious that doing chapters three and chapter four together was a big chunk but I think here's the one place as an advantage that we build up momentum and Boaz says I'm going to do it immediately and if this had been a normal series I would have seen come back next week to see how it happens but we'll plow straight on and see chapter four a brighter future and the guess who wandered by the author says not only that but

it also seems that ten elders just so happened to be there to witness the negotiations now I think it's a very canny pitch from

Boaz he's a shrewd operator he says turn aside friends sit down the ten elders are there wondering what they're being summoned to witness and the redeemer says 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 Boaz's opening pitch is this is a real estate deal and you've got the chance to get it for a bargain off market well the closer redeemer he seems very interested he says I'll redeem it it's a win win a bit more land great opportunity he's already thinking of what he's going to plant there perhaps have a few sheep perhaps he'll do something like a home enterprise however

Boaz then says there's also a bit of small print the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi you also acquire Ruth the widow of the dead in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance that changes the terms of the deal radically a win win turns out to be a lose lose the redeemer when he took on the land would have expected to take on Naomi that was just par for the course but I mean she's an older lady above childbearing age she's not going to have a huge appetite she's not going to be a huge burden and when her three score years and ten are up well the land's all mine just added to my portfolio but adding Ruth to the equation transforms the deal the redeemer would take on responsibility for Naomi and responsibility for Ruth and Ruth is still of childbearing age therefore his responsibilities would include providing an heir for Ruth or more particularly providing an heir so that a limelich name would continue in the land and they would inherit the lion share of Naomi's estate and he would also risk his own estate because he might have to share it with the heir and the redeemer says no it's too costly it's too risky it's too much I'm afraid I'm out now verse seven sounds weird that instead of signing a contract you give away a sandal and then I guess the guy hops home I don't know but it's a slightly altered version I think of what is stipulated in Deuteronomy 25 I think it's saying that the nearer redeemer has a legal obligation to redeem Naomi it's like the expediated process of what we read in

[36 : 58] Deuteronomy 25 and I think the whole purpose that the author gives us such the detail about the sandal and the transaction is to show the beauty of what Boaz chooses to do he was legally responsible he had to do it and didn't Boaz wasn't legally responsible he could do it and he did the redeemer opted out because the deal was too costly for him Boaz willingly paid that cost the redeemer doesn't want to impair his inheritance whereas Boaz is willing to share his inheritance and he does it out of love and he does it out of grace and he does it with great expectancy and I think the tone of the passage is that he does it with great joy take all that rightfully belongs to his son as an inheritance and shares it with us joyfully as an unimaginable inheritance that we're included in you see

I think just as Orpah provided a foil for Ruth showing the outrageous conversion that takes place in Ruth's life so I think the nearer redeemer provides the foil for Boaz highlighting the outrageous nature of his grace towards Ruth and Naomi which is a pattern of the gospel that all that God has done for us in his son the Lord Jesus redeeming us paying for us giving us an inheritance that was his that he chooses to share with us and it's interesting that verse 9 and verse 10 the two stipulations about the land and about Ruth and Naomi are both 18 words long in Hebrew and I think that's saying that Boaz is excited about both he's excited about the land and he's excited about Ruth he's excited about the real estate but he's also excited about perpetuating the name of Elimelech one other interesting detail before we leave the city gate

I'd like to fly a flag of speculation verse 10 also Ruth the Moabite the widow of Marlon it's not until we get to verse 10 of chapter 4 that we realize that Ruth's husband was Marlon and I think in chapter 1 verses 1 to 5 the author writes it so we almost expect it to be the other way round we read that Elimelech and Naomi had two sons Marlon and Kilion and then we read that they both took Moabite wives Orpah and Ruth so we expect the first named son to be married to the first named Moabite and the second named son to be married to the second named Moabite and yet here we find at the end of the story the Ruth's husband was actually Marlon this is new news here's my hypothesis and there's no way to prove it so you can disagree I'll go well you can't prove that either Marlon was the one I think who shared with Ruth during their married life the amazing truths about the God of Israel how he was good and he was kind how he cared and how he took care of them he

was the one who witnessed to Ruth about the loving kindness of the God of Israel I want to argue hypothesize lay before you this evening that Marlon was a true believer and I think this is in keeping with the chapter of the whole because true believers names continue in Ruth and those that wimp out half-hearted don't true true believers in Ruth chapter four get named and remembered and unbelievers don't just look back to the first three verses of chapter four in the first three verses Boaz is named three times the redeemer on the other hand the nearer redeemer is spoken of six times explicitly but he's never named he exits stage left and we don't know anything about him which is ironic because he wanted to his inheritance

I think Marlon is the true believer therefore it's his name that continues it's his name that's remembered it's his name that continues it's his name that has a part in the very genealogy of the Lord Jesus now like a scene from the musical the people who have just been sitting there quietly speak they speak and they say wonderful things it's a very genesis inspired prayer we are witnesses may the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah Jacob's two wives well actually two proper wives of

[43 : 05] Jacob's four wives do you remember Laban's sneaky switcheroo at the altar when Jacob thought he was marrying Rachel but in fact it was our older sister and then seven years later he gets to marry Rachel and then they are embroiled in a bit of a who's going to have more children competition it's a very dysfunctional family really in a very unhappy family life and here we see that this is going to be better than those ancestors because instead of a dysfunctional family that kind of came about through sneak through treachery and deceit we see Boaz knows exactly what he's getting in for it's a much firmer foundation and then they pray may the woman may your house be like the house of Peres whom Tamar brought to Judah to this is this is a really unwholesome story from

Genesis 38 let me remind you of the plot Judah had three sons and the oldest one was imaginatively called Ur and he married a woman called Tamar but Ur was a scumbag so the Lord put him to death this then triggered a leverate marriage where Onan the next son Judah's second son took on the spousal responsibility vacated by Ur to Tamar however Onan knew that if Tamar had a son by him his own inheritance would be impaired so he ensured that Tamar couldn't conceive by him and this angered the Lord so the Lord put him to death however Judah had a younger son called Shelah and Judah told Tamar to wait until he was grown up and then he would take on the leverite duties and provide Tamar with an heir Judah however never planned ever planned to let

Tamar marry Shelah and it seems reminiscent of the threshing floor Judah goes on a lad's weekend and ends up sleeping with Tamar who's disguised herself as a prostitute having taken off her mourning garments and disguised herself anyway the end of the story is she conceives twins Perez and Zerah and Boaz as we read is from the line of Perez let's be clear that's not a very wholesome story to have in your genealogy that's not something that they share every Christmas about how they came to be who they were that's the bit of the tapestry that never quite got sewn properly and you see this is far more wholesome we're back in leverate country we're back with generational difference between Boaz who's older and Ruth who's the generation below but it literally is a rewriting of

Genesis a much better foundation a much more wholesome way about building a future people are doing better than their ancestors all over the place in the book of Ruth Genesis has been a downward slide an appalling trajectory and it turns out that the upturn is going to be because people out of their love for God are enabled to do better than their ancestors and so we finish with a lasting legacy again we're conscious of the backstory Ruth had been married to Marlon for 10 years and yet was without a child so the insinuation is that Ruth is barren however verse 13 says the Lord gave her conception and she bore a son even by this stage in the Bible we know this equation barren woman enabled by God to conceive equals a landmark moment in God's dealings with his people

God is doing something new to bless and prosper his people and grant them a future now the women who were aghast when Naomi came home in chapter 1 now praise the Lord for his amazing grace to Naomi the focus is now not on Boaz's action but on Obed as the redeemer of Naomi who will carry on the name of Elimelech in Israel note that it is resurrection shaped he will be a restorer of life literally a giver of life and the empty Naomi who came back with nothing now has a house full because little Obed is on the scene and not only will Obed restore life to Naomi but his grandson

Obed grandson David will restore life to Israel out of the national ashes of abject failure and rebellion from judges right up until the reign of Saul God through David will resurrect a nation to new heights of life and vitality and we finish in chapter 4 with a genealogy [48 : 27] Ruth is written so beautifully that chapter 1 verses 1 to 5 has 73 words in it and Ruth chapter 4 verses 18 to 22 has 73 words in it it says that this is a perfectly complete story this is a story where God has left no stones unturned this is a story that comes to the most satisfactory ending with reading the word David the genealogy has ten names in it that's very Genesis all the genealogies in Genesis have ten names in them let's take for example Genesis 5 which gets us from Adam to Enoch ten names number seven on that list is the significant turning point and that is Enoch here we have ten names from Perez to David number seven on the list is quite a meaningful turning point and his name is

Boaz and I think there's a subtle hint there that Boaz is a bit like Enoch he walks faithfully with the Lord and the Lord turns around the nation through him this really is a redemption redo friends God graciously acting on behalf of his people to turn them around this is not the ultimate answer though the big problem in the Old Testament is that David who we read of is not really the David they needed it would be better but it wouldn't be best he would be a catalyst for improvement but he would still fall a long way short and the first readers would know this they're reading this in exile and Israel has not been the personification of faithfulness or else they wouldn't be in the situation that they're in David is long gone and again they are at the bottom at least in the time of the judges they were in the land but they've sunk even lower now and are in exile in Babylon the Davidic king is nowhere to be seen they're ruled over by

Babylonian emperors to them it would all seem even more hopeless and yet reading Ruth would have reminded them that the God of Israel was always working to bring about a future hope for his people it would have assured God's people that things hadn't gone eternally wrong but their God had a great history of writing turnaround stories for his people for his people in the darkest day he's always always at work however this great turnaround story would not be temporary relief like it was for Ruth or it was in the time of David would be an eternal turnaround and a new better and perfect David who would do that forever redemption redo for us it is Jesus who will do better than all his ancestors combined he will be the true and better

Israel in every sense he will be the eternal perfect king in every sense he will achieve a costlier and more permanent redemption for more people in every sense and so this redemption redo points to his redemption redo and Jesus will write the ultimate and lasting turnaround story for the world and for each of us the reformation of God's people happens by people doing better than their ancestors and the ultimate reformation of God's people will happen through one person Jesus doing perfectly better than all his ancestors in everything Ruth is the story of Jesus choosing his ancestors and Jesus takes the exploits of his ancestors in Ruth and amplifies applies and accomplishes all that they did on a global scale and across an eternal plane this

Jesus is the one in whom there is redemption forever and an inheritance that you cannot even begin to imagine turn around story for each of us is possible to be written if we will but trust and turn in this Jesus the better Boaz the greater David let's pray father god we thank you for your word we thank you for its richness its beauty and its clarity we thank you that as we hear your word clearly we are attuned to your ways your patterns your purposes and your grace father god thank you that you have a history of turning things around thank you that in your son you have turned around world history thank you that in the gospel you are able to turn around individual lives to turn around whole families entire communities and even nations father help us be those who are always trusting in [53 : 57] Jesus who is the great and eternal turnaround and we pray this in his worthy name amen amen our