

Ruth – A Gentile Redeemed

Preached in New Hope Reformed Fellowship Church, Middleville, MI, on
Sunday morning, February 6, 2022 by C. VanSteenselen.

Text: Ruth 1-4

Psalter 83:1-3

Psalter 362:1-2

Psalter 238:2-3

Psalter 196

Congregation,

Today, the United States is full of issues. There is political division. Two parties are strongly opposed against one another. We have the challenge of races coming to the foreground. Sins are promoted. Think of abortion, unnatural relationships and the whole gender ideology. Besides this, we see that the virus goes around in our country. But what if we would have a severe famine? This as a result of God's judgment? First, it seems to be okay. Then there is a time we have no longer any provision or work. Even begging does not help us to get food on the table. You have five children to feed. All of them say to you, "Dad, we are hungry! We are hungry!" Even your wife says, "My dear husband, we all starve to death." However, you have heard about Russia. It is easy to cross the border. They have an abundance of food. You can find work there and obtain possessions. It is possible to build a life there. It is just for the time being. The only challenge is that it is a gentile country. There is no church and no people of God. What are you going to do as father? Are you going to go, or do you stay? A similar situation, we will hear today. Elimelech and his family are facing the same challenges. And they go their way. One of the effects is that a gentile, Ruth, will be redeemed out of her country. This is also our theme. We will have five main thoughts.

Theme: Ruth – A Gentile Redeemed

I. Going to Moab:

II. Returning from Moab

III. Temporal Provision

IV. Need for Redemption

V. Redemption Accomplished

I. Going to Moab

Let us first look at some background information of the book Ruth. Is it still read? Yes, the Jews read this book even today in their Synagogues. This is particularly true during the *Feast of Weeks*. One of the great feasts. It is fifty days after the Feast of the First Fruits. Today, we call this Feast of Weeks with a different name *Pentecost*. What happened at this feast? Well, there would be the offering of new grain unto the Lord (Lev. 23:16). Israel would celebrate the ingathering of the fruits of the land.

When is the book of Ruth written? This is not clear. Commentators do not give a unified answer. To some it seems to be an appendix on Judges and introduction to Samuel. Who is the author? Theologians differ also on this matter. They refer to Hezekiah, Ezra, or Samuel. The latter seems to be the author of both the book of Samuel and Ruth. The Talmud confirms that. The only challenge is that one part of the books happened after Samuel died. The book mentions namely David in chapter four (Ruth 4:22). Most likely that only happened when he was already king in Israel, and Samuel had died.

Let us now consider what is going on. What happened in this time? We read in verse 1, “When the *judges* ruled.” The exact date is unsure, even as the judge that ruled. Some say that it was Ehud or Debora. The annotations on the Dutch Bible argue for Tolah. Again others, like Patrick, mention Gideon. His argument is that Gideon judged in a time when there was a famine because of the Midianites (Judg. 6:3-4). What kind of time do we need to think of when Ruth happened? It was a very unstable, chaotic, and sinful time. We read the last chapter of Judges, “Every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:22). Many sinful things happened. Think of the life of Samson (Judg. 13-16). Micah hires a Levite as his personal priest. Yes, he wants to worship the LORD, but with an image (Judg. 17). Even worse is the sexual immorality in this time. We read in Judges 19 that Belial’s men want to have intercourse with an old man (Judg. 19:22-27). His host opposes them and offers his concubine to them. Sadly, these wicked men misuse her the whole night. In the morning she lies at the door of the old man’s house, most likely dead. But there was more. Also, other issues were present in the country. What was the problem? We read in verse 1, “There was a *famine* in the land” (Ruth 1:1). And this is the time that we meet a family. The name of the man is Elimelech and his wife is Naomi. They have two sons: Mahlon and Gillion (v1-2). Interestingly, the name Elimelech means “My God is

king.” but what are they going to do? Are they going to stay? Stay in this wicked country? Staying in a country under the judgments of the Lord? No. They will leave.

In the second place, let us look at their journey to and stay in another country. We read of the decision of Elimelech in the verses 1 and 2. They will go. But where will they head to? It must be a place of physical welfare. The name is Moab. What is Moab? This group of people are descendants of Lot. Lot’s daughter had received a child by her father. The result is that a child is born. His mother calls him Moab. What is the location of the country Moab? It is on the right side of Canaan, next to the salt sea, south-east of Bethlehem. No, this country was not without danger. It was hostile to Israel. Think about king Balak and Balaam. This king wanted to curse Israel by the prophet Balaam (Num. 22:1-24:55). Another challenge was that Moab served false gods. Its name was Chemosh. What is the purpose of Elimelech to go here? It is only “to sojourn,” as we read in verse 1. That means to live there as stranger. They had no specific timeframe in mind. No, we read rather “they continued there.” From verse 4, we know that they stayed there for ten years. Think about how long this is, ten years from now. That would be until 2032. And that in a non-Christian country. What will happen during this stay? This family will face certain issues.

Different issues happen during these ten years. This is what we find in the verses 3 through 5. No, it has nothing to do with the country itself. We do not read that they face hostility. But the question can be asked, where is God? He seems to be absent. But what issues do they face? Those with the family itself. First we see that Elimelech, the husband of Naomi and father of the two boys died (1:3). A time of mourning follows for Naomi, Mahlon and Chilion. After this time, another problem arises. The family adapts to the culture. Mahlon and Chilion take for themselves two Moabite wives. Their names are Orpah and Ruth. No, this was in itself not forbidden. But it was only allowed when they would want to be converted. That is certainly the question at this moment. And if this is not enough, they face another challenge (1:5). Also, Mahlon and Chilion die. The result is that Naomi is left alone. Three family members are dead and she receives two gentile daughters-in-law in their place.

Application

Let us draw a few lines from these verses. A first question to us is this, are the times in our passage and ours not similar in many ways? We find in our days

much sin, a lot of chaos and instability in our country. Think about the political unrest, the murder on children in the womb and the gender issues. Even as in the times of the Judges, “everyone does what is right in his own eyes.” How do these things affect us? Congregation, another line is this. For all of us it was true, to have the name Eli-Melech, “God was our King.” When was this the case? At the time we were created in paradise, we were in perfect harmony with God. Adam and Eve spoke with God every day. There was no fear. What happened? It was even worse than Elimelech and his family. They had at least a famine. No, we had it very good. But by our own fault, we walked away from paradise. Why? Because we wanted a name for ourselves! What is now the result? Many issues. The loss of the Father, and a threefold death. All, as we are born, are dead in sins and trespasses. Our loved ones pass away by physical death. The unconverted will perish in an eternal death. But, friends, there is still hope if there is repentance. In our text we find much misery. But what happens? Naomi will return. This is what we consider in our second thought.

II. Returning from Moab

In the verses 6 and 7, we find an arising from Moab. We read in verse 6, “And she arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab” (Ruth 1:6). Do you see them going? Three women. Their names are Naomi, Orpah and Ruth. The one that has the lead is Naomi. She had decided to go. The other women follow. They are her daughters-in-law. Yes, both daughters seem to be interested to return to Israel. But why did Naomi want to return? Was it because she had lost everything? No. The main reason is that the LORD (Yahweh) had visited his people. That means, He had given them bread. This was a spark of hope for life. Notice, congregation, that in this verse for the very first time the name of Yahweh is used to describe God. We find this name 21 times in Ruth. What will Naomi do? She will return. We find this word two times in our verses. She will return from something, Moab (1:6). And she will return unto something, that is the land of Judah, the land of promise (1:7). You might ask, what will happen at the border of both countries? Naomi will test the faith of her two daughters-in-law.

We read in verse 8 that Naomi says, “Go, return each to her mother’s house” (Ruth 1:8). She kisses her two daughters-in-law, and then all weep. Both daughters say, “We will go with you.” But now Naomi insists to them: Please, return to your home country. What is the reason that Naomi insists? She sees that

there is no positive material future for them. It will be hard to find a husband. It is challenging to receive safety (1:11-12). What does then happen? Both weep. Now Orpah returns to Moab (1:14), but Ruth remains. Again, Naomi insists to Ruth, “See your sister-in-law has returned. Why would you not return?” (1:15). For Ruth, it had become a different matter. For her the spiritual welfare was far more important. It was her to do about God Himself and God’s people (1:16). Then Naomi stops entreating her. And both continue their journey. What happens then? Both arrive in Bethlehem.

In verse 19, it says, “So, they two went until they came to Beth-lehem.” Finally, Naomi is back into the land after she was ten years in a gentile country. Things have changed, even Naomi’s outward appearance. She looks old. The people are shocked. They say, “Is this Naomi?” (Ruth 1:19). Naomi’s response is, “Please, change my name. Do no longer call me Naomi but Mara.” What is Mara? It means “bitterness.” Why does she want this change? She says, “I went out full, but returned empty. The LORD has afflicted me” (Ruth 1:21). The whole history of Elimelech and his family is summarized in verse 22, “So Naomi returned [that is: repented], and Ruth the Moabitess [a gentile]” (Ruth 1:22). No, it does not end in the negative. We read, “they came...in the beginning of the barley harvest” (Ruth 1:22). That means, the LORD had indeed visited His people. He had shown His goodness unto them.

Application

Congregation, the question comes to us, Have we returned from Moab? What do we mean? Have we repented from sin and from the world? Practically that means to weep over it, to feel sorry about it, to say goodbye to the world. Also, in true repentance there is a turning from and a turning unto. You ask, a turning to what? To God and Christ. Did you turn to God? What do we mean? To be in prayer before Him. To cry out, “Thou alone can help me. LORD, Save me!” Why do we ask this? Well, many today say to have faith and to believe in Jesus Christ. But, they live in the world. There is no heartfelt religion. May I, therefore ask this, if you say to believe, what is the result of that faith? What are things that have been changed? What is practically different?

Another line we can draw is this. How many do like to have their faith tested? Often, people get angry if that happens. They do not want it. They would say, “Why do you not believe me?” But, friends, this is Biblical. In 2 Corinthians, we read, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5). If your

faith is real, why would you be afraid of testing? Then the result would be a confirmation. Another question, if faith would not give you any material advantages but only difficulties, would you be able to stand?

We have seen with Naomi that the LORD has brought her back. He provided for Israel. This is also true for Naomi and Ruth. We will think about this in our third thought.

III. Temporal Provision

At the beginning of chapter 2, we see Ruth's request to glean. This begins in verse 1. She asks permission of her mother-in-law to go to a field to glean barley. It shows that she is a hardworking woman. Maybe you ask, how did she know about those laws? We do not know. Naomi allows her to go, and Ruth goes. She leaves it up to God's providence where she will find a place. By God's providence, she comes to the field of Boaz. It shows God's provision for a gentile. How did she get to know that law of the poor? How did it come that she 'accidentally' came on the field of Boaz? It is only by God's care. What happens when Ruth is in that field? Boaz inquires after her. This is seen in the verses 4 through 16. While Ruth is gleaning, Boaz comes on the field. He is rich and a landowner (2:1). He has a heart for the poor (2:11-12). It seems that he is converted (2:12). At his coming, he greets his servants. Then he inquires after Ruth. He says, "Who is she?" (2:5). The answer that his servants give is that it is Ruth, the Moabite. Notice how they point to the fact that she is a gentile. Then, Boaz responds, "Let her reap." Maybe you ask, Why is Boaz interested in her and willing to help? Was she not a heathen? Yes. The reason is that Boaz' mother was also a heathen. She has a well-known name. Who do you think she is? Yes, it is a woman that had lived in sin. Later, she became a true believer. Who is it? Rahab, the harlot. You can read this in the genealogy in Matthew (Matt. 1:5). That is the reason Boaz is so interested in this stranger. No wonder that later she becomes his wife. Boaz says to Ruth, "Remain here, I will protect you. You may get a drink when you need it" (2:8-9). Ruth is surprised. But Boaz shows her, "I know what you did. You left your country. May the LORD bless you" (2:10). Later, he invites her for the meal. Afterwards, Ruth continues to glean until the evening (2:11-17). She gathers her portion.

After gleaning, we read in the next verses that she goes home. Then she shows her mother-in-law what she had gathered (2:18). Naomi asks where she has

gleaned. She sees the blessing. Ruth's answer is that it was upon the field of Boaz. Naomi says, "This is God's goodness. Also, he is our kinsman." That means a goel or redeemer. Ruth continues, "He even told me to stay in the field until the end of the harvest." Naomi agrees for her to remain there. So, Ruth keeps working at Boaz' field.

Application

If we desire to have a spiritual blessing, what do we do? Ruth was working hard. What about us? Do we use all the means possible? Ruth did. In that way she was blessed. No, we do not mean to say that it all depended on Ruth. No. That was only on Boaz. Another line we can draw is this. When God begins to work, then Christ, like Boaz, begins to see this sinner and to inquire, "Who is this?" He cares about sinners. Why? His own mother was a poor human, a sinner too. That is why he is interested in sinners. He will protect them. Later, he will even marry such repenting sinners. It will turn out to be an eternal feast.

How many temporal blessings have we had, congregation? What do we do with them? Is that sufficient for us? Or do we need the Giver too? The problem is that in the coming giving of God there comes an end. What then? Then we need a Redeemer. This was also the case with Ruth. The harvest would be over. How would she then survive? This could only be by a redeemer. Our fourth thought.

IV. Need for Redemption

In the first place, the need for redemption is seen. This is clear in chapter 3, from verse 1 through 5. Let us first look at verse 1. There it shows that Naomi cares for Ruth. She sees a certain need. We read, "Shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" (3:1). She seeks the best for Ruth's future. What does she do? Well, she gives advice (3:2-4). The reminds her that Boaz is a relative. He will remain this night in the field because of the harvest. Ruth should go to him. See where he sleeps, and then during the night sleep at his feet and ask him for help. Ruth agrees. She says, "I will do what you say" (3:5). It shows that she is obedient and has respect for her mother-in-law. What does Ruth do? She goes and expresses her need for the future.

The expression of this need is seen in the verses 6 through 15. In verse 6, we see that Ruth determines where Boaz will sleep that night. After the meal, Boaz goes to sleep. Silently, Ruth comes and lies at his feet. In that night, it happens! Boaz is stunned! What is that at his feet? An unknown woman. How can that be? He

asks in verse 9, “Who art thou?” (3:9). Ruth answers, “I am Ruth tine handmaid” (3:9). She further asks him if he would “cover his wings” over her. That means to care for and redeem her. Boaz is namely the goel, that is the redeemer. She asks if he wants to redeem her. She expresses her need. Boaz is glad by her request. He blesses her and says that he will do whatever he can. However, there is another redeemer that is closer to her. If he will redeem her, then he should do it. That is according to the law. He also says that she can remain there until the morning. This happens. Early in the morning she arises to leave. Boaz gives her some extra food. And Ruth returns home with this food. Her need is answered.

We read in the verses 16 through 18 that Ruth shows that the need is answered. In verse 16, Naomi asks how it went. Ruth gives a report about what happened and how Boaz had given her food. Naomi is pleased (3:18). She says that Ruth can entrust the case to him. Naomi responds, “Wait. Boaz will do what can soon.” In other words, Ruth’s need is answered by a faithful promise.

Application

In this passage, we saw that Ruth needed redemption. Have you had a time that you saw the need for redemption? That you needed to be delivered from sin? If that is missing, friend, you may ask if it is right in your life. God does show one’s need. The Holy Spirit will convict of sin (John 16:8). How does that feel? It is painful and at the same time a sweet time. It is like having hurt a father. At realizing, it gives pain, but it is a pain out of love. If you do not know this, ask the Holy Spirit to show you. It is absolutely necessary. Another question to you, have you expressed your need to Jesus Christ? My unconverted friend, you need to express your need to. Ask the Lord Jesus Christ to care for you, to spread His wings over you. Dear believer, what was Christ’s answer to you? Did He speak by the promise? Did it come from the Word? Was it not true that God gave a promise? Ah, yes, He tests and tries it. It can be dark at times. There can be many doubts. But He will fulfill His Word. Ruth in our passage received an answer by the promise. But would it ever be accomplished? That is our fifth thought.

V. Redemption Accomplished

Let us turn to the last chapter in Ruth. All seems to go well. A short time and Ruth will be redeemed. But then the first setback appears on the horizon. What happens? Well, in verse 1, we see that the next day Boaz goes to the gate. This is the place where the city is reigned. Boaz sees the closer goel (kinsman) passing

by. He calls him to come and sit down. Then he calls ten elders of the city. This was a way to discuss government issues. A manner to do judicial acts. He asks the goel, “Buy the property of Naomi back. Redeem it” (4:3). This was in the Old Testament a special law for the poor. Then the goel answers, “I will redeem it” (Ruth 4:4). There seems to be a deal, BUT! Boaz says, “If you do so, you need to redeem Ruth also, the Moabite.” This was a second law in the Mosaic laws to raise descendants for a person that had died without children. It was to continue his name. But now the answer of this goel. He says, “No! This will destroy my inheritance. You, Boaz, have to redeem it” (4:6-8). He confirms his statement by giving his shoe to Boaz. What a setback! When it comes to the gentile Ruth, there is no interest. What a self-centeredness. It is about my inheritance and my name. How must it go further? Will Ruth be redeemed?

Will Boaz go home? No. He remains. He will fulfill his promise. All what he can do, he will do. What does he do? We read in the verses 9 and 10 that Boaz says to the elders, “I have bought all that was Elimelech’s...Moreover Ruth the Moabitess...have I purchased to be my wife...” (4:9-10). He buys all the property of Elimelech and his sons. It is not know how much this cost him. Also, he get Ruth as his wife. Why? To raise a name for the dead (4:10). Then he calls the elders to a witness. The elders confirm. They even pronounce a blessing upon them. They say, “May Ruth be like Rachel and Leah, the builders of Israel’s people” (4:11-12). What a wonder! Ruth is redeemed! Boaz truly cared for her and Elimelech’s name. He kept his promise. But what will be the result of this redemption?

This redemption results in a number of things. We can read this in the verses 13 to 22. First, Boaz takes Ruth as his wife (4:13). This mean that he marries her. Yes, it is like his own father. He marries a gentile. Second, in their relationship they receive a child (4:13). His name is Obed. That means “to serve [or] worship.” This was ultimately the purpose of the redemption, to raise a name of the dead. Note that in verse 16 a son is born to Naomi and not to Ruth. Third, Naomi will receive a blessing. In the verses 14 and 15, the women say, “You have a blessing of the LORD, you received a redeemer.” Fourth, there is an extension until three future generations (4:18-21). This is important. It is the result of Boas redeeming Ruth. More importantly, who is the third generation? Yes, it is the grandson of Obed. Who is it? A well-known name. The second king in Israel. Do you know? Yes, David, the son of Jesse. And lastly, we see the

greatest blessing. Many generations later, what Son will be born? If you read the genealogy in Matthew, it is 30 generations later. Yes, this Son is Jesus Christ, the great Son of David (Matt. 1:1). Indeed, Boaz has raised up the name of the dead.

Application

Believer, what does your redemption exist of? Can you still do it with the law? Is it possible for you to be “right with God,” but without Jesus Christ? Our text shows that this comes short. If it is right, it is about the spiritual Boaz, Jesus Christ. His purchased all spiritual goods for His people. What is that? Justification, sanctification, the right to enter into heaven, adoption. May I ask you something else? Does your redemption show fruit? In our text we see that it brings forth children and a blessing. What about your life? If it is right, you will have an eternal blessing. An eternal marriage to praise God.

Unconverted friend, you still receive a temporal provision from God, but the harvest will be over one day. What then? What do you need? A longtime Provider. Who is that? Yes, the spiritual Boaz, Jesus Christ. Go with all your need to Him. As Boaz wanted to see Ruth, Jesus Christ wants to see you coming. Why would you perish? You still have time. Do not waste it. Why not? If you would, it would deliver you to eternal hunger and thirst. Have you had such moments already? If it does not change, it will be forever. You have sinned against God and you have to pay for it. But God still calls: Repent, believe the gospel. If that happens, you will feel a spiritual hunger and thirst. But if the Holy Spirit continues to work also a spiritual fulfillment. That is what we wish all of you.

Conclusion

Congregation, we have heard about a gentile redeemed, Ruth. She came from Moab into Israel. The LORD provided for her temporal needs, but she needed a long-term redemption. How did we enjoy this history? It is fascinating. We might recognize many things. But is it spiritually also our history? Can we say, “John, Jack, Karin, Joy, A gentile redeemed?” The coming time we will look into this book in more detail. But is what we have heard true in principle? Then one day, there will be a consummation of the marriage with Christ. Then you will have an eternal blessing of the LORD. Or is this history only in your head? Are you still in Moab? Ah, then you will perish, my friend. Think of Orpah, where is she now? We do not read of any conversion. What does that mean? She is now in

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hell, gnawing her teeth. Do you want that future? I believe not. Repent therefore from the world and from your sin. Turn unto God. He will provide a Savior. Then you will receive a true blessing. Then you will also see them in heaven: Ruth, Boaz and Jesus Christ. What a blessed Savior. Amen.