

Introduction

- *Imposter syndrome* (don't fit) – Not considered a mental disorder (DSM-V)
 - ❖ But boy is it a door way into a rabbit hole of physiological research.
- For the next few weeks we are going to look at the book of Ruth.
 - Ruth didn't fit either. She did fit all the labels of being marginalized
 - Women, Widow, Poor, Moabite moved to Israel (see Deut **23-25**) - 10 generations
- Today we are going to look at the first two chapters
 - And three people in the book: Naomi (The mother), Ruth (Daughter-in-law), Boaz (redeemer)
 - We are going to look at their identity to self, society - And their identity to God.
 - Then we'll see how God works through their circumstances and actions
 - ❖ ...in their lives and in history.
- This book has been called an *idyllic rural romance*
 - **Idyllic** in that, there are very few characters flaws mentioned. (ie: Joseph)
 - ❖ Yet, is framed around the real human condition of suffering, death, identity.
 - **Romance** – love story Ruth and Boaz // But actually a story of God's love for His people
 - **Rural** in that, it is about just regular folks - canonized between books of leaders and kings
 - ❖ It is very accessible about how people actually experience God's providence
 - ❖ And shows the value/influence of Kindness, Sacrifice, Surrender (simple Obedience)
 - Literary genre has similarities to Esther
 - ❖ Main character is women. **Rural**: characters position in society.
 - ❖ There are layers in these stories: (1) Individuals character (2) God's providence (3) How God works with human participation in / through obedience to covenant
- The primary layer of this story is one of redemption (root of the word re – purchase)
- The title of our series is “A Living Redemer” (2:20 / 3:13)
 - Naomi is ecstatic when she discovers there is a family member willing to redeemed
 - Redemption of two widows, redemption of their dignity, redemption of family, their life...
- But it points to **THE** great story of redemption
 - There is a history of God redeeming >>
 - Lot rescued out of Sodom/Gomorrah and Israel rescued out of Egypt (Ex 6:6)
- Ultimately the hero of the story (and all scripture – and all of history for that matter) is **God**
- The series conveniently ends just before Easter
 - A celebration of our **greatest/ supreme/ pre-eminent** redeemer – Jesus

Time period and Setting

- Story takes place in the time of Judges
 - Before Israel had kings, there were local leaders called Judges.
 - We are told there was a great famine.

Ruth 1:1-5 (NIV)

- Location of Moab [MAP 1]
- Tel Aviv University did a study on fossilized pollen and found evidence of cyclic **droughts** in the Mediterranean region of Israel [1250 – 1125 BC] – solidly in the Iron age
 - (Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archeology) “Likely caused series of famines”
- Time line (Judges 4:1 - 10:6) [JUDGES]
 - Notice that only 100 years earlier the Moabites occupied and oppressed Israel

Naomi

- The famine must have been fairly severe. We are told that all the men in their family died.
 - Then word comes that there are crops/ food back in Israel and **Naomi heads out to go home**.
 - At some point at the trip (assuming the border of Moab) she decides to go it alone.
 - Travels (Dead sea retreated – dried up) [Map 2]
- Cares enough to release her daughters-in-law back to their families
 - She knows the difficulty that they face as a poor widow in Israel (Moabite women in Israel)
 - ❖ They could have a much better life with a ‘start over.’
 - ❖ Instead of stuck supporting their old mother-in-law she ‘releases’ them >> Sacrificial

Ruth 1:8-9

- This word ‘kindness’ here is important (H2617: Hesed).
 - ❖ Seen all over the bible as a description of God.
 - ❖ **Psalm 136:1-4** “His loyal love” - “His steadfast love” (written like a **call – response**)
 - Rhythmically goes through God creating, then God redeeming Israel out of Egypt
- Here we see Naomi’s sacrificial kindness – reflection of God’s kindness (*steadfast love*)
- One of the daughters-in-law (Orpah) reluctantly returns, but Ruth refuses to.

Ruth 1:15-22

- Take note here: Naomi renames herself. Her identity has been influenced by circumstances.
 - (v. 20) Not Naomi (pleasant), Mara (bitter) >> imposter syndrome
 - (v. 13, 21) Lord against. This has a feeling of Job to it.
 - ❖ Job 13:15 “Though He slay me, I trust in Him.”

- Defined by events – but then we may start accepting or wearing those definitions
 - (*dumb kid in the class*). Class clown, ladies' man (pervert), Drunk, Jar head...

Ruth

- But Ruth saw the character of Naomi. Ruth saw the unmatched devotion to God (YHWH)
 - For some reason (we are not told the internal thoughts of Ruth), she is moved.
 - ❖ Perhaps it was the character of God in Naomi – as opposed to the character of the Moabite war god *Chemosh* (Num 21:29; Judges 11:24; 1 Kings 11:7)
 - She devoted herself to Naomi, to God (YHWH), all the way to her death.

Ruth 1:16-17 Where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.

- Comes from God's calling of Abram out of Ur >> to Jesus' new covenant with the church.
- Echoed in Hosea 1:9, 2:23 & Rom 9:25, **1 Peter 2:9-10**
- This statement by Ruth is one of those 'layers' in the story that I was mentioning
 - When you place Ruth in the context of the entire Bible story, it is the story within a story.
 - ❖ I am telling you – it is the most magnificent book. Nothing like it (*almost* like it was composed by God Himself...)
- I can't say the Ruth recognized the depth of her statement
- But she certainly recognized the kindness (virtue) of Naomi and devotion to God (YHWH)
 - Strong oath/curse idiom – see this all through OT (covenant warnings) - Samuel and Kings
 - ❖ In a way, she becomes a bond servant.
 - Naomi's sacrificial love results in Ruth's sacrificial love- passing on God's kindness (*Hesed*)
 - ❖ Makes me think of the Christmas candle lighting.
 - From one source the light is passed on to fill the church – from one to the next
- Now back in Bethlehem, Ruth goes to glean in the field
 - ❖ (ref: Duet and Leviticus, leaving 'gleanings at the edge of the field for the poor)
 - Recognize how challenging this is. (Woman, Widow, Poor, Moabite)
 - *Personal challenge going on unemployment* – hard to accept (~workaholic).
 - ❖ Identity in work, social status, sense of worth and value

Boaz

- Boaz (owner of the field) come to survey the progress, and he sees Ruth – gleaning
 - Asks if his foreman knows anything about her and he tells Boaz Ruth's story.

Ruth 2:8-16

- Boaz notices and treats her with dignity, as an equal servant, not a poor beggar (kindness)
 - Promise of protection, and freedom to take possession of gleaning (His fruit).

----- A little comment about the romance going on here...

- Commentaries going on and on about her Beauty – but the text never says that.
 - ❖ *Marly's concept: cute* (innocence), *pretty* (surface), *beautiful* (something much deeper)
 - ❖ Dostoyevsky – Beauty is not really about superficial aesthetics, it is about character, Inner Truth & Goodness: Moral beauty
 - Dostoevsky: Beauty and morality.... are inseparable
 - ❖ **Ruth 3:11** Boaz stays to Ruth, everyone knows, “ you are a woman of noble character.”
 - (H2428: *Khah'-yil*). We see this word show in **Proverbs 31:10** (noble wife)

Prov 31:26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of **hesed** is on her tongue.

----- Return to the table – the threshing floor

- Boaz invites Ruth to the table and shares the fruits (v. 14)
 - Like I mentioned, not a poor foreigner to be despised, but invited to the masters table
- *Vision on Guatemala* (Jn 15: praying over abide: vine-branches-fruit)
 - **Psalm 23:6** (hesed: “mercy” “faithfulness” “love”)
 - Table prepared – in the presence of enemies
 - Matt 22 – invited to the **wedding banquet**, of which do not belong
 - ❖ Still in the dark valley (shadow of death) – our enemies are present
- We have to see ourselves there – as Ruth <you don't belong> ultimate imposter ...
 - ... but you are invited to the table of God's bounty – you are invited to the wedding.

God

- Ruth returns with quite the bounty and story.
- When asked – she tells Naomi this swell guy named Boaz really befriended her.

Ruth 2:20 The **LORD** bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness (H2617: Hesed) to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers (H1350: Ga'al).
- Naomi recognizes God's providence in it all
- The significance of the *kinship redeemer* is a law laid out in Duet, Lev & Num.
 - Also is evidenced in the story of **Judah and Tamar** in Gen 38
 - It is God presented the responsibility redeem the family if the male dies with no offspring to support the family, retain the land, or carry on the family name.

- We have to push pause on the story >> but...
- **Spoiler alert:** debated leaving a cliff hanger, but decided that wasn't honoring to scripture.
 - God sets up something much bigger than just these three people.
 - ❖ Ruth and Boaz have a child, and that child becomes the grandfather of king David
 - ❖ **Matthew 1** presents the lineage all the way to Jesus
 - We realize (thought Boaz plays a role) God is the redeemer >> setting up the redemption for **all** who believe

Two personal lessons: (Be redeemed: Identify as a redeemed child of God)

- We began with Naomi. Her identity bitter from circumstances
 - We see that God provides. (glean: Lev 19:9; 23:22). Much more >> God redeems!
 - Naomi/Ruth is redeemed >> **No matter your circumstances** >> God's redeemed child
- Fallacy of "*finding yourself*" – usually means going out and trying on sins, destructive habits
This this is your identity: letting circumstances defining you; or you defining yourself as god...
 - Why not start at the tried and true, multi-millennia old wisdom and start with being redeemed in Christ.
 - God more than 'provides,' He is setting up salvation
- **Be redeemed.** Start there. Live knowing and acting as a child of God.

(Obedience as a response: effects of reflecting God's hesed)

- God used (hesed) *kindness* [mercy, steadfast love] to propagate the message of His salvation.
 - Culture of dignity, virtue and honoring covenant
 - ❖ Our response to God's *hesed* is being a reflection Him.
Being redeemed means being of noble character. Treat others with *hesed*
 - Dignity, mercy, love... that can only be from our surrender to God.
 - Contrast: Culture of power and moral degradation <legacy of sin>
 - ❖ I'd like to contrast the idea of Ruth's decision. We don't get to know her inner thoughts, but I picture her comparing the character of (YHWH) shown by Naomi - and what she likely grew up with - the Moabite war god *Chemosh*

Big story – Those practical / personal notes are easier for me to apply when I see the bigger story

- Typology: Type of characters (symbolic of)
- We should see ourselves in each of the characters. (*what we are/see and what we could be*)
 - Naomi is Israel; wrestles with God. Struggles with the unfair circumstances of life. Yet, continues to trust Him in His covenant. Trust in God's promise.
 - Ruth is the sojourner, alien, gentile; outsider. Being **invited to the table** of God's providence and blessing.
 - Boaz is the type of Christ. **Not** – Jesus Himself, but reflecting the grace, kindness, love:
 - The character of Jesus.
 - Being transformed into the likeness of Christ (**2 Cor 3:18**)
 - Follow me as I follow Christ (**1 Cor 11:1**)
- This is a book telling us of the history of God's redemption and inviting us to join Him and...
- Be redeemed! Live redeemed!

40 min

Prayer

- The great story of our Redemption
 - You God have a redemption plan for each of us
(2:20) “[God's] kindness (H2617: Heseḏ) has not forsaken the living or the dead.”
- God has set a table before us and invited us to partake
 - You are invited to the table. – even if in the midst of your enemies
- Redeeming the bride – the church (you)
 - Out of the suffering of the world.
 - Out of the false identity of circumstances and sin
- That means – be virtuous (obedience) – Trust (faith)
- Identity >> Character >> Redeemed

SEED QUESTIONS/NOTES/OUTLINE

Job 19:25 Redemer (H1350) or Vindicator : see Job 16:19

Job 13:15 “Though He slay me, I trust in Him.”

Gen 48:16 Jacob blesses Ephraim, Angel of redemption on him.
Elimelech>>Boaz are Ephrathites

Deut 23:3-6 No Moabite shall enter the assembly for ten generations.

Deut 25:5-7 Kinship redeemer

Lev. 25:25

Num. 35:19

Deut 23:25 Leave edge of the field for the poor to glean

Deut 24:19

Lev 19:19

Lev 23:22

Judges 3 Ehud leads Israel from Moabite suppression (~1344 BC)

Series of famines 1250 – 1100 (Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archeology)

Matt 1 Lineage to Christ. (Ruth 4:18-22 Lineage to David)

PS 136: “His *hesed* is forever” – as if call and response

JN 13:35 “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

ROM 3:24 “[you] are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus“

1 COR 1:30

“And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption”

EPH 1:7 “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace”

COL 1:13-14

“He delivered us from the domain (power) of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”

Deuteronomy 23:3-6

23:3 “No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the LORD forever, **4** because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way, when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. **5** But the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam; instead the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loved you. **6** You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever.

A little bit of jargon

Westernized the understanding of salvation: as punching our ticket to heaven.

It is so much more.

a priori (Before experience) / *posteriori* (After experience)

Sometimes known as Wittgenstein's ladder: You can only see (understand) after climbing the ladder.

- Anselm's: *Credo ut intelligam*. (I believe, that I may understand)
- "I do not seek understanding so that I may believe, rather, I believe so that I may understand"

- God's work and purpose – in, with, under, though – human decision.
- **Not** because of – **Not** contingent on.
