

The Redeemer

DAVE BAST

C. S. Lewis, the 20th Century's best known Christian writer, entitled his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*. The book mostly tells the story of Lewis's conversion to Christianity as a young Oxford professor in the 1920s, thus bringing the joy to his life he long had sought. Well, *Surprised by Joy* would make a pretty good title for the little book of Ruth, as well. So, join us today as we continue digging into this miniature biblical masterpiece. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast, and we are going through...working our way through chapter by chapter the book of Ruth, Scott. There are four chapters, four programs in this series; and maybe it would be helpful just to kind of recap the story to this point, where we have been and where we have gotten to.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; so, this is the third program, so we are going to be focusing mostly on Ruth Chapter 3; but in the first two chapters, we saw the story began in Judah—in Israel—with some Israelites: Naomi and her husband, Elimelech and their two sons going to Moab because there was a famine in Israel and they couldn't find any food. So, they moved to Moab, stayed there maybe ten years, and they were ten very bad years for Naomi. Her husband died first, and then after each son had gotten married to a Moabite girl, each son died; and so, eventually Naomi finds no life in Moab, only death. Meanwhile, the famine has ended back home; so, she goes home, tells her daughters-in-law to stay behind, but one, Ruth, refused to do so and returned with her to Bethlehem, which was their hometown there in Judah.

DAVE BAST

Right; and in memorable words, Ruth kind of committed herself unconditionally, unreservedly to not only Naomi, but to Naomi's God—to the God of Israel; saying: Where you go I will go, where you lodge I will lodge, your people will be my people, your God will be my God, in an act of faith that had no real reason behind it. It just sort of seemingly comes out of the blue because Naomi doesn't have a future; and when they do get back to Bethlehem, there is another very moving scene, where Naomi says to the women: Don't call me Naomi anymore (meaning pleasant...)

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

Call me Mara, meaning bitter, because God has treated me in a very bitter way. My life has become bitter.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right, yes; their lives had pretty well ground to a halt, and in the ancient world, male-dominated patriarchal society, women without men in their lives were desperately vulnerable. So the only hope they really had was

to rely on the social safeguards God had put into place through his law, principally the gleaner law because it is harvest time, as it turns out, when Ruth 1 ends, we are told in a note of hope, that the barley harvest was beginning; and so, in Chapter 2, Ruth goes out into the fields counting on somebody somewhere doing what God said, which was: Leave plenty behind when you harvest. Don't harvest everything. Leave some for the poor; and so, Ruth goes out and...as providence would have it...ends up in the field of a man named Boaz, who not only follows the gleaner law, he takes special notice of Ruth and gives her even extra provision: Make sure she is not harmed or molested, but also make sure that at the end of that first day of gleaning, Ruth was going to go home, not with a modest amount of grain, but with a lot; and she does.

DAVE BAST

Right; and Boaz, we are told, right from the outset is a worthy man and a righteous man—a good man; and he proves it by his actions. He even shares his lunch with Ruth, you know. Boaz is obviously feeling himself drawn to Ruth; and so, as she leaves from this day of gleaning, he actually invites a blessing on her. He says: You know, I have heard about you and what you have done for your mother-in-law. So, he prays for Ruth. He says: The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge. Beautiful phrase, God's wings—the Lord's wings, which cover us; and of course, what Boaz does not know quite yet is that he is going to be the answer for his own prayer.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, that is right.

DAVE BAST

He is the one through whom the blessing comes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because, as things unfold here, by the time Ruth goes home to Naomi and Naomi maybe was not expecting much, but they had a rich dinner that night because Ruth brought home plenty of food, hears the name Boaz and says: Oh, he is actually a relative of ours; and the gears—the wheels—start turning in Naomi's head that maybe there is going to be a future for them after all. If they can get things to work out with this Boaz person, they might have a future after all.

So, the whole story as it unfolded in the first half of Ruth, and as we are going to see it unfold now in the second half of Ruth, in this program and the final program...it is really...you could just read it as a straight-up story, you know: This happened and then this happened and then this happened; but we know reading it that it is a story of providence.

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That this is the hidden hand of God moving in these peoples' lives, even as God's hidden hand, and it often is hidden, moves in our lives even now.

DAVE BAST

Yes; and one of the things I really love about the book of Ruth is the difference between the characters' viewpoint as they are in the midst of this story and our viewpoint as readers, because we have sort of a God's eye view of what is going on. They don't know it. It is so much like living our lives, you know. We cannot see all of the things that God is up to, and how he is planning things that will turn out for our blessing. We only feel it in the moment when we are plunged into grief or when we have experienced loss; when life has turned bitter, as it did for Naomi; but, the story of Ruth shows us a God who is at work in all of these things. So, we get to this point in the story where Ruth goes out to glean, and what we don't realize...what they don't realize but we do, the reader, is that from here on it is all going to be happy; all the bitterness, all the sorrow, is done and over with after Chapter 1. From Chapter 2 onwards we see this joy coming, which is

going to surprise Naomi, it is going to surprise Ruth, and it is even going to surprise Boaz—surprised by joy.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, and the other thing that we know as readers, and certainly those of us who have read and reread the book of Ruth many times...we also know that this couple...this Ruth and Boaz...are going to become forerunners of Jesus. They are going to be...Ruth is going to get listed in Jesus' family tree in Matthew Chapter 1; and what is amazing is, not just the hidden hand of God's providence, but the fact that God is going to bring something that big...and what is bigger than the incarnation of God's own Son and the salvation of the world...God is going to bring something that big out of a story this little, and out of acts of faithfulness as small as Boaz's were, never underestimate God's providence or what he will accomplish through the tiniest details of our lives.

DAVE BAST

Right; so, that is another thing that makes this story so beloved, I think, and so heartwarming. It is ordinary people. No kings in here, there are no generals, there are no big battles, it is day-to-day life of regular folks, and God is at work in the details of their lives; and not only sort of superintending their story and the wonders of providence, and all that, but they need to act, too. They need to do the right thing. So, it starts with Boaz doing the right thing by obeying the law and leaving something for the poor...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right, right.

DAVE BAST

And we are going to see how Ruth and Naomi both take action as we continue this story from this point in just a moment.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Dave Bast, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this third of a four-part series on the book of Ruth; and we just summarized the story, bringing us to the end of Ruth Chapter 2, where Ruth has encountered this generous man, Boaz, and Naomi has said: He is not just generous, he is a relative of ours; at Ruth 2:20, Naomi says:

May Boaz be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead. The man is a close relative of ours; one of our redeemers.

That term, Dave, redeemer and kinsman redeemer, is pretty important; and so, just real quickly before we jump into Chapter 3, a little reminder of what this...the term I think is *goel* in Hebrew...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

What is this function in Israel back then?

DAVE BAST

These are very important concepts, not only for the story of Ruth but ultimately for the story of the Bible...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, that's right.

DAVE BAST

So...and here is another level of meaning that we see in Ruth, but just for a background, maybe, and very briefly...we won't read the passages from the law, but there were two words that were used of family

members who had a special role to play according to God's law. One term was *levir*, which is the Latin* word for brother-in-law, and that gave rise to the practice of what was called *levirate marriage*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Levirate marriage, yes.

DAVE BAST

The practice that God commanded, when a man died childless his brother should marry the widow. In other words, she needed to marry her brother-in-law, not just to take care of her, but in order to preserve the family...

SCOTT HOEZEE

To keep the family going.

DAVE BAST

To keep the family going, the family line of the dead brother, and keep the land, because the promised land...so this has all got huge implications and deep symbolism...

SCOTT HOEZEE

For the Covenant, yes.

DAVE BAST

For the Covenant, right, and the promises of God, which in the Old Testament were quite physical and literal.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And God's law also took care of other scenarios. God tried to cover the waterfront here, what if this happens? Somebody becomes a widow and there are no brothers? Well, now it moves down the family line, and this is where the kinsman redeemer, the *goel*, comes in; that there is a line of succession, and we are going to talk more about that, actually, in the next program as well, when we see how that goes for Boaz in particular, but all of this is God's attempt to keep the land with the families to whom it was given as a gift in the first place; to keep Israel going because Israel is going to be the place from which the Messiah will come. So, these were all social and familial safeguards that God put into place so that no family would ever lose its land in perpetuity, nobody was ever supposed to be poor in perpetuity; families were not supposed to come to tragic ends with no heirs...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, all of this is going on, and now we find out in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 that Boaz is in that line. We are going to find out eventually he is not first in line, but he is in the line...

DAVE BAST

Yes, he has the potential, in other words, to become the kinsman redeemer, the *goel*. Not only was the role of that person to kind of save the land or the inheritance, but sometimes people ended up being sold into slavery or had to sell themselves because they could no longer afford to live, and the *goel*—the redeemer—was supposed to rescue them from that, too. So, it was land and people both that they were charged by the law to protect, to preserve, to help.

So, we will pick up the story with Naomi's recognition of this potential for Boaz.

Ruth^{3:1} So, Ruth's mother-in-law, Naomi, said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home for you where you will be well provided for. ²Now, Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. ³Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes, then go down to the threshing floor, but do not let him know you are there until he has finished

eating and drinking. ⁴When he lies down, note the place where he is lying, then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.” ⁵“I will do whatever you say,” Ruth answered. ⁶So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.
So, I love that! Naomi is a woman with a plan.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; providence is good, but we are not supposed to be passive in providence. We are not supposed to just sit back and say: Well, God will take care of it. No, God wants us to use our heads and use our actions to move his providence along, and Naomi has a plan, and so she is basically telling Ruth: Make yourself as pretty as you can, Honey, and go down there...

DAVE BAST

And don't forget the perfume.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And don't forget...

DAVE BAST

You know, she is sweaty. She is dirty. She has been gleaning all day.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, she does, and they have had a feast and maybe a little wine, and so everybody is kind of drowsy and sleeping, but she goes down there wearing the best stuff she has, a little spritz of perfume to make her even more attractive to Boaz...we think he has already found her to be a lovely person...but then we read this...in the middle of the night she does this, right? She lays down, and in the middle of the night something startled Boaz and he turned and discovered a woman lying at his feet.

⁹“Who are you?” He asked. “I am your servant, Ruth,” she said. “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman redeemer.” ¹⁰“The Lord bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier. You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor; ¹¹ and now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character.”

So, Ruth has made a fairly bold move here at Naomi's request to basically say: I want to marry you.

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

This is how it went in that day, spreading the garment over. It is not just her being sexually promiscuous or outré or anything. This is how it went to signal your intention, and Boaz signals his intention in return.

DAVE BAST

Boaz stresses the point that she is noble. She is a person of good character. So again, this is not really racy what she is doing, but the interesting thing is, she is really claiming the provisions of the law; and once again we see Ruth, this foreign woman, this Moabite who has not been raised, you know, by the Bible, but she loves the Bible and she is living it; and so she is kind of entrusting herself to Boaz, who, according to Naomi, is their kinsman and potential redeemer rescuer; so, it is just a beautiful interchange; and Boaz is touched by it because he thinks, in effect, you know: Hey, this girl could have anybody. She is wonderful, she is beautiful, she is good, she is virtuous, and she is choosing poor old me? I am kind of an old, dried out...I missed my time, you know; but no, it is all going to work out, we think.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; so things are definitely moving in a happier direction than where Chapter 1 ended. We are even getting beyond where Chapter 2 ended, but there are a few curveballs yet, a few things that are going to have to be

taken care of, and some of that will come up in the final program; but we will look at a couple of the initial obstacles of the encounter...we will look at that in just a moment.

Segment 3

DAVE BAST

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Dave, we are coming to the end of Ruth Chapter 3. Ruth, as we just saw, has signaled her intention to Boaz that she would like to marry him.

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He has indicated he would like to marry her; however, as the story goes on, we are going to find out that there is a little bit of a hiccup, which won't get resolved until the next chapter...

DAVE BAST

Right, but there is a complication, and Boaz immediately proceeds to tell Ruth about it; so, let's just follow the story along from Ruth 3. It is just so wonderful, it kind of writes itself.

¹⁰“The Lord bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier. You did not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. ¹¹And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all that you ask. The people all know that you are a woman of noble character. ¹²Although it is true that I am a guardian redeemer (or *goel*) for our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. ¹³Stay here for the night, and in the morning, if he wants to do his duty as your *goel*, good; let him redeem you; but if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives, I will do it. Lie here until morning.

SCOTT HOEZEE

¹⁴So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could recognize her, and he said, “No one must know that a woman came to the threshing floor,” ¹⁵and he also said, “Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out.” And when she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her. Then he went back to town. ¹⁶When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, “How did it go, my daughter?” Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her, ¹⁷ and added, “He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, ‘Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’” ¹⁸Then Naomi said, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For that man will not rest until the matter is settled today.

So, dum, dum, dum...

DAVE BAST

It's a cliff hanger...is Boaz going to make things work? Are they going to find happiness together? Will they end up getting married? Will somebody else interfere? We don't know. We will have to wait until next week when we look at Chapter 4, but we can say this much here: Once again, Boaz proves his generosity. I mean, nobody has ever gleaned like Ruth. In one day, she has basically taken a whole truckload of grain home.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It's as if she knocked over the Wal-Mart or something. She really has been blessed beyond measure—no pun intended there—but because of Boaz's generosity; but again, that is sort of the trajectory of the whole book, that we have been moving from an awful emptiness that we saw in Chapter 1, more and more and more toward fullness. We are not even to the full measure yet. That comes only at the end of Chapter 4; but

already, just once again, sending her home with still more grain. She had already come home the day before with a ton of grain. I mean, Ruth and Naomi might be set for a few months right now, not to mention how the future might go; but again, all of this drama goes around that kinsman redeemer or guardian redeemer, depending on your Bible translation; it is *goel* in the Hebrew; but, right; the hiccup is, Boaz is number two in line...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we know now that Boaz is a man who follows God's law. I mean, he is a god-fearing man. That is why he kept the gleaner law; not everybody in Israel did, but Boaz did. He was faithful to God; and so, he knows he cannot jump the gun. He cannot just ignore God's law and take Ruth for himself and run away. He is not going to have the guy who is first in line—the first kinsman redeemer—he is not going to have him killed, or you know, poisoned or something. He is going to have to do it right, but he is going to have to do something.

DAVE BAST

He is; and at this point, I think we begin to see some of the deeper message of the book of Ruth. We have talked about some of the wonderful things we can take and apply to our own lives. How when life seems to be turning bitter or taking away our fullness and leaving us empty like Naomi, God has an idea in store for us of restoring, of refilling us with good things. Our lives are going to turn out okay, and maybe it will take until we get to heaven, but... So, we see that; we see how providence arranges and organizes the details. What seemed like a bunch of coincidences, that Ruth just goes here and happens to be there, and this guy happens to see her; but God is overseeing it all, but at the same time, we need to take steps; we need to... So we have seen that in the story; but now, we go a little bit deeper with this idea of redeemer, because in fact, that becomes a name that God chooses for himself in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, in the book of Isaiah.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; Boaz here is now going to be, not just a good man in his day and a good kinsman redeemer in his day, Boaz in this story is going to become almost a stand-in for God, and is a foreshadowing of what God is going to do also through Christ; and there are some prophecies that even talk in that same language about what God is going to do through his chosen servant.

DAVE BAST

Right; so here is Isaiah 41:14, for example, and Isaiah is full of this...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

This is one of Isaiah's favorite terms...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Big image there, yes.

DAVE BAST

“Do not be afraid, you worm, Jacob...(poor little Jacob), little Israel (in the next line). Do not fear, for I myself will help you,” declares the Lord. “Your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel...” So, there is God casting himself in this role. I mean, the reason he specified this in the law on a human level is because this is what he is going to do as the savior, the protector, the rescuer of his people, Israel; and when they are in trouble, when they are bereft, when they are in a hard place and prisoners, God will step in directly as the redeemer, as the kinsman redeemer.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; I mean, ultimately as lost and bitter and empty as Naomi and Ruth are in Chapter 1, ultimately that is all of us, right? That is the whole cosmos after we fell into sin. We have been lost. We are doomed without somebody being a kinsman redeemer for us; and so ultimately of course, these are all arrows pointing right at Jesus.

DAVE BAST

Yes; here is another one of these prophecies that really does speak of Jesus, but also shows the Lord in this light as the redeemer. It is Isaiah 43; kind of a famous passage:

¹But now, this is what the Lord says, he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have summoned you by name. You are mine. ²When you pass through the waters I will be with you. When you pass through the rivers they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire you will not be burned.

Just these beautiful words; and again, this fundamental image of what God does. So, Boaz becomes, in the story of Ruth, a picture of God himself, and ultimately, a figure who foreshadows the Lord Jesus.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and as we noted earlier in this program, and as most everybody knows about the book of Ruth, not only does Boaz foreshadow Christ, Boaz is going to become the great, great, great, great grandfather of Christ; and so, it is just all wonderfully wrapped together here—Old Testament and New Testament—with Boaz foreshadowing the one whose birth he is also going to make possible by doing the right thing; and ultimately, we know, marrying Ruth.

DAVE BAST

So again, more than just a happy story, more than just a warm, kind of fuzzy feelings as people find one another in hard circumstances and fall in love and get married. Ultimately, it is a story that can speak to all of us, whether we are married or single, whether we are young or old, whether we are rich or poor: The Lord who redeems us is Jesus, and we praise and bless him for it.

Well thanks for joining our *Groundwork* conversation. I am Dave Bast, with Scott Hoezee, and we would like to know how we can help you continue digging deeper into scripture. So visit groundworkonline.com to tell us what topics or passages you would like to dig into next on *Groundwork*.

***Correction:** The audio of this program misstates that *levir* is the Hebrew word for brother-in-law, when in fact *levir* is the Latin word for brother-in-law. The Hebrew word for brother-in-law is *yabam*.

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/the-redeemer>

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