

Ruth

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 7th June 2009

Read Ruth 1:1-2:1; 4:1-22

Intro

- Written in time of Judges- 400 yr period, known for times of Israel hardening against God – did 'right in own eyes'. Tough times- idolatry causing Israel to face traumas. Famine in land of Israel- Bethlehem=house of bread/food- but none there!
- Moab 'through our father'- (and Ammon 'son of my kin') sons of Lot (Abraham's nephew) through incest (Gen 19:30-38). Opposed Israel coming into promised land & called wicked prophet Balaam to curse Israel (Num 22-25). They worshipped the god Chemosh and, as part of their worship, at perilous times offered human sacrifice; as did their king Mesha in 2Kings 3:27 when he sacrificed his son. In the same way the Ammonites also sacrificed their children to their god Moloch (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; 2Ki 23:10; Jer 32:35). A stone has been found written by Mesha bragging about his victories over Israel with Chemosh's help (Mesha Stele). Solomon sinned when he allowed a shrine of Chemosh to be built in Jerusalem (1Kings 11:7) which Josiah later destroyed. A child from Moabite background not to be admitted to congreg of Israel for 10 generations (Deut 23:3), but marriage not prohibited (only to the 7 Canaanite nations- Deut 7:1-3)
- Mahlon='weak, sickly'; Chilion='failing, pining'. Husband dies then 2 sons, and her name, Naomi, unfortunately means 'pleasant'- each time mentioned it was like a prod to her (like someone saying 'smile' when you're grieving).

1. Ruth exhibited extreme loyalty to her family- 1:16-18

- We love stories such as Lassie due to sense of a dog's loyalty. Loyalty today? What does it take for a person to speak against their friends- often just for the person to leave the room- paranoia in the workplace. Is our word our bond? Jesus- let 'yes be 'yes'. Do we finish what we start?
- Ruth means 'friend' or 'compassion'. Ruth made binding covenant- may I die if I abandon you. Boaz would later make an oath to her to redeem her if the next of kin would not (Ruth 3:13)
- David loyal to Saul, even when didn't deserve it. God honours loyalty- rewards people by raising them up. Loyalty closely related to humility.
- Satan aiming to destroy families. Restoration of family=mark of revival. What is it like being your husband or wife, mother, father, brother, sister, son or daughter, grandson or granddaughter? What is it like being your boss or employee? 'Setting an example is not the main means of influencing others; it is the only means ' (Albert Einstein).
- We live in a messed up and rejected world. Church to model family to world. Brothers & sisters, Abba our father. 'By your love for one another all will know you are my disciples'. Beautiful to see people's love for Pat- we are family.

2. Ruth's destiny was realised through sacrifice- 1:16-18; 4:9-18

- Ruth came to a crossroads in her life- God's way or hers. We often have same. Orpah went back to her culture and gods. God was calling Ruth higher even at the risk of extreme poverty and loneliness.
- Often God's way seems toughest and seems unfruitful, but the opposite is ultimately true. Delayed gratification. Instant everything society- overspending, not

knowing how to sacrifice.

- Ruth sowed good seed towards her future. How are we sowing for the future? 'Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny'- (Ralph Waldo Emerson American essayist & thinker 1803-1882). Ruth operating in faith- even more so than Naomi ('I have not seen such faith in Israel'-Lk 7:9). Ruth took initiative to bring in the income through gleaning (Ruth 2:2).
- Ruth received destiny & great fruitfulness- her son Obed=great grandfather of King David. She became a key part in Jesus' family tree (see Mat 1).
- Is God asking you to make a stand for Him? To give something up? To persist in something He has called you to even though there does not appear to be any benefit yet? Continue to do what He says and you will reap the reward.

3. Boaz was willing to pay the price of redemption- 4:9-10

- Go'el=redeemer. God loves families and wants them to prosper. It was a law that if an Israelite became a slave, or lost their property due to death of the husband the husband's brother (the go'el) had a duty to buy the land and marry the woman to keep the land and inheritance in the family name. If an Israelite became poor & had to sell their land (Lev 25:25; :47-49; Deut 25:5-10; Num 5:6-8).
- According to Deut 25:5 it was only obligatory for a brother-in-law to have to marry a widow, so, as Naomi and Elimelech only had 2 sons, Boaz and the other kinsman had the option, without the obligation. However, if a person chose to redeem the land they were then under obligation to marry the widow. The closer relative than Boaz chose not to, for fear perhaps that a child from the new marriage may be the only surviving son and their estate would transfer over to that son. Onan, Judah's son, likewise refused to produce a child for his dead brother's wife, Tamar in Gen 38:8-10.
- Boaz took compassion on Ruth, just as she had taken compassion on Naomi. The redemption resulted in great joy for both Ruth and Naomi. People today are in both physical and spiritual poverty. We have the riches of Christ to give them. We have an obligation to share redemption because we have been redeemed ourselves.
- Israel redeemed from slavery in Egypt by God. We have been redeemed from slavery to sin by Jesus (His very name means the Lord saves-Lk1:68; 2:38). We were ruined. The redemption price was His blood (1 Peter 1:18-19) -we have been bought at a price. Jesus became our next of kin, our go'el through the incarnation, to rescue us. Result=thanksgiving! (passages about Jesus as our redeemer- Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 3:13-14; 4:4-5; Eph. 1:7; Titus 2:13-14).
- In faith, Job, when suffering, said he knew that his redeemer lived and he would see Him (Job 19:25-27). When we see the suffering around us we must, like Boaz was, be willing to bring Christ to those who are in dire need of Him. There is a disease worse than cancer and more addictive than heroin and more widespread than AIDS- it is sin. Jesus said the sick need a doctor. We have the antidote to sin- let's use it.

Conclusion

- In the life of Ruth and Boaz we see great qualities to adopt for ourselves- a love for family and a readiness to sacrifice for others. As we adopt these qualities we will see great joy released as God is glorified in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

Song: *There is a redeemer. You laid aside Your majesty. My saviour, redeemer*