

# un·compromising faith

IN THE DAYS OF THE JUDGES

SERMON TITLE: Redemption-Restoration-Worship

DATE: May 15, 2022

SCRIPTURE: Ruth 4

PASTOR: Jason Malone

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The days of the judges were not happy and hopeful. They were dark and despairing. Israel was called to be a holy people – faithful to their God and showing the nations his power and love. Sadly, rather than bless the nations, Israel became like the nations. They bowed to idols and embraced pagan lifestyles. In short, they compromised. As the last line in Judges puts it: “Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.” Thus, these stories serve as both a warning and an invitation to us. They warn us against conforming to cultural narratives and they invite us to hope in the face of despair. They ask us, “What does it mean to have an uncompromising faith in a faithful God?”

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## **SERMON SUMMARY**

Maybe you’ve seen it coming. Perhaps you read ahead to the end of the story because you had to know how things finished out. For folks who would have heard this story millennia ago, they would have been rapt with attention because, at this point, all that is known is that Boaz has promised to redeem Ruth. While that’s what we’re invited to hope for, the introduction of the “other redeemer” has complicated matters tremendously. The tension is still thick in the air as we open the curtain on Ruth 4.

The final section begins at Bethlehem’s city gate, with Boaz going quickly to finalize the right of redemption just as he had promised Ruth. And, wouldn’t you know it, the other redeemer just happens to walk by so that Boaz can stop him for this terribly important conversation. As it were, when Boaz mentions Elimelech’s field, the other man agrees to purchase it as a redeemer, the assumption being that this property would serve to enhance his financial interests. With that agreement, we are momentarily left to sit with its implications because even though it means that Ruth and Naomi will be redeemed, it isn’t the way we want it to happen. Boaz, who has been the paragon of integrity throughout, will surely step aside and allow this nearer redeemer to care for these women, won’t he? It’s a sucker punch of a narrative twist.

But Boaz isn’t going quietly into the night. He had buried the lede. He intentionally waited to introduce Ruth and Naomi as a part of the redemption to this other man who had, perhaps, not heard of them. It turns out to be a deal-breaker for the other redeemer. Having this Moabite brought into his life and being tasked with perpetuating the line of Elimelech and Naomi — would only serve to impede his own security and interests, and he wants nothing to do with it. Into the gap left by this redeemer’s rejection steps Boaz who will gladly accept this responsibility. Now Ruth and Boaz are to be wed in the light of day and the eyes of the people just as the agreement had been reached the night before in the quiet darkness of the threshing floor.

The Lord — who is invoked in the blessing of the elders who witness the right of redemption assumed by Boaz — provides Ruth and Boaz with a child, and he fills up the pervasive emptiness that both Ruth and Naomi had experienced throughout much of this story. Just as we think that the happy ending is complete with the bow tied neatly across the top of the narrative, there is one more wonderful twist in the road. The baby Ruth and Boaz had together — it turns out it was a little boy. And this little boy they named Obed. That’s well and good, but it also happens that this little boy who was bounced by his grandmother Naomi’s knee would grow to have a son named Jesse. And Jesse, as it were, would have a son named David.

This is where the whole scope of redemptive history provides a vista that original audiences were unable to see in full because not only did this provide a marvelous bit of background for the Davidic monarchy, which represented the provision of God for his people, but it would also be echoed in the pages of the Gospels. Matthew’s Gospel introduces the story of the Messiah with a genealogy, and it includes, in nearly identical language, the genealogy that we see here at the end of Ruth.

So here we are, with the sweep of millennia before us, and we see the path that Ruth's story was carving out all along, and it is more breathtakingly grand than we could have imagined. This is the story of a grieving family faithfully cared for by the unseen hand of a sovereign God through the kindness of others. It is, in fact, also a road to see the divine purposes of God to provide his king for his people, David. And that man, David, leads us down a path to an even more remarkable scene of God's provision in the form of the King, Jesus the Messiah.

The God at work in Ruth is not different from the One who is actively involved in our lives today. The story itself is a wonderfully compact but powerful invitation to trust that God is sovereign and loving and good and at work in our lives. But it is also more than that because the invitation to trust isn't simply built upon this one example in this one family at this one period in history. Instead, it's also because this one example points us toward the ultimate demonstration of God's sovereign, loving, kind, and gracious care for his people in the message of hope found only in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### ***SERMON SCREENSHOTS & KEY POINTS***

We believe that God is redeeming people.

We believe that God's vehicle to accomplish his mission of redeeming people is the church.

We believe that we are called to make disciples who make disciples and grow leaders in the church to serve the church.

We consider the Upstate of South Carolina to be one of our circles of influence.

- Risk is transformed into ***REDEMPTION***.
- Bitterness is transformed into joyful ***RESTORATION***.
- Waiting is transformed into ***WORSHIP***.

Worship—All that we are responding to all that he is, says, and does.

"The Lord is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O Lord, do not abandon those who search for you." Psalm 9:9-10

### ***COMMUNITY GROUP QUESTIONS***

1. Read Ruth 4.
2. How would you summarize the storyline of the Book of Ruth? How would you characterize the three primary characters? (Naomi, Ruth, Boaz)
3. How do you see risk transformed into redemption in the story of Ruth?
4. How do you see bitterness transformed into joyful restoration in the story of Ruth?
5. How do you see waiting transformed into worship in the story of Ruth?
6. When are you most inclined to think that God has forgotten you?
7. How do you practically "preach the gospel" to yourself...reminding yourself that Jesus truly is your HOPE?
8. What are you currently waiting on as you worship? (Take time and pray about each of these things in your Community Group)