

CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER Sunday School- August 28, 2011

Unifying Topic: RESPECTING COMMUNITY STANDARDS

Lesson Text

I. Boaz Calls For A Community Court (Ruth 4:1-4)

III. The Kinsman Refuses To Redeem Ruth (Ruth 4:5-6)

III. Boaz Expresses His Intention To Marry Ruth (Ruth 4:7-10)

The Main Thought: Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. (Ruth 4:5, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Publicly following the community's standards, leads to understanding, acceptance, and trust. how can one best function in society? Boaz conducted his business according to the Law and in front of the ruling elders so that he would have the support of the community.

Lesson Aim: To examine the story of Boaz acquiring ownership of Naomi's land and the community blessing for taking Ruth as a wife to continue the bloodline of Elimelech.

Life aim: To promote a healthy respect for maintaining integrity within a community of faith.

- 4:1 Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.
- 4:2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.
- 4:3 And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's:
- 4:4 And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it.
- 4:5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.
- 4:6 And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.
- 4:7 Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel.
- 4:8 Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.
- 4:9 And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.
- 4:10 Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.

HISTORY:

In **Ruth Chapter 3**, Naomi and Ruth make a risky move in the middle of the night. Ruth goes to Boaz on the threshing floor and says in effect, "*I want you to spread your wing over me as my husband.*" Instead of this resolving into a beautiful love story, there in the midst of the circumstances of Ruth's widowhood seems to be another man who according to Hebrew custom has prior claim of kinsman-redeemer to marry Ruth. The impeccably honest Boaz will not proceed without giving this man his lawful opportunity. So chapter 3 ends again in the suspense of another setback.

LESSON:

Ruth 4:1-4 Boaz Calls For A Community Court

After the midnight rendezvous in **Chapter 3**, **Chapter 4:1** begins with **Boaz** getting up early in the morning and **going to the city gate** of Bethlehem where the official business was done. In ancient Palestinian cities there was usually no large open courtyard or plaza. Therefore, the gate area, which was similar to a shaded tunnel served as a common meeting place; a place for legal transactions. Boaz knew where to find his relative. The nearer **kinsman comes by**, and Boaz called him and they **sit down together**. The Law of the kinsman-redeemer is given in **Leviticus 25:23-34**, and the Law governing Levirate Marriage is found in **Deuteronomy 25:5-10**. The purposes of these laws were to preserve the name and protect the property of families in Israel. When obeyed, these laws made sure that a dead man's family name did not die with him and that his property was not sold outside the tribe or clan.

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4:2 Boaz's intimate knowledge of affairs of the town of Bethlehem was indicated as **he took ten men of the elders of the city** to serve as official witnesses to the transaction which he was about to propose. The number "ten" was significant to the Jews as a quorum necessary for a synagogue gathering and for the marriage benediction. From the most ancient times it represented an official gathering of those in authority. **They gathered together and sat down.**

4:3 Boaz cleverly presented his case to the relative. First, he brought in information not yet mentioned in the story: Elimelech, Naomi's former husband still had some property in the area; a share of the common field, and Boaz proceeded to tell the kinsman that **Naomi selleth a parcel of land.** Naomi is giving up what little property she has, and the duty of the nearer kinsman is to buy it so that the inheritance stays in the family.

4:4 Boaz proceeded to indicate that it was his desire to **advertise** ("*uncover thy ear*", RSV) meaning that he wanted to know the intention of the other kinsman. Since the nearer kinsman was in the line of succession, Boaz was required to give him the first right of obligation (*gō' ā!*) to redeem. To our dismay the kinsman says, **I will redeem it**, indicating that his intention was to pay the price for the family possession. We don't want him to redeem it. We want Boaz to do it. So again there seems to be a setback. And the irony of this setback is that it is being caused by honesty. The kinsman is only doing his duty.

Ruth 4:5-6 The Kinsman Refuses To Redeem Ruth

4:5 Boaz says to the nearer kinsman, "*You know, don't you, that Naomi has a daughter-in-law. So when you do the part of the kinsman redeemer, you must also take her as your wife and raise up offspring in the name of her husband Mahlon?*" This was a package deal! You see the kinsman would never actually own the land itself, but would actually hold it in trust for the son of Ruth **in order to raise up the name of the dead.** ¹Because of Boaz's wise (perhaps shrewd) way of framing the occasion, this was the first time the nearer kinsman considered this, and it was a pretty big question to take in all at once. When it was just a matter of property, it was easy to decide on; but if he must take Ruth as a wife, that was another matter.

4:6 Then, to our great relief, the kinsman says he can't do it; **he cannot redeem it.** These were glorious words in the ears of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz. He seemed willing to redeem Naomi's property if it didn't hurt him personally, or if he might possibly gain from it. But he would not accept the responsibility if it happened as a final result in a reduction of his own resources and a consequent unfairness of his own heir by marrying Ruth. So now he gives Boaz legal right of redemption.

Ruth 4:7-10 Boaz Expresses His Intention To Marry Ruth

4:7-8 The manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing: When land was sold, the one previously owning the land would give his shoe to the one who had bought it, signifying that he freely gave up his right to walk upon the soil in favor of the person who had acquired the possession. The one declining removed a sandal and the woman he declined to honor spat in his face. But in this case, because there was no lack of honor was involved, they just did the part of the ceremony involving the sandal. They concluded such a transaction publicly by relinquishing; taking off a sandal. **This was to confirm all things;** this sealed it. There was no going back.

4:9 This is saying that, Boaz will buy the property from the land of Naomi—he is purchasing all that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion and Mahlon. Boaz has these witnesses (the elders) testify to the fact that he is purchasing the land with the intention of marrying Ruth and raising up her first born under the name of the deceased, so that his name retains an eternal inheritance that even death cannot remove.

4:10 Boaz further clarified his intentions by announcing Ruth to be his intended wife. He announced two things:

1. The reference of "*purchase*": **have I purchased to be my wife** gives the concept of redeeming. ²This explains why a marriage ceremony is important, and why it should be recognized by the civil authorities. Boaz had a love for Ruth that was public, a love that wanted to be publicly witnessed and registered.

¹ http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/comm_view.cfm?AuthorID=2&contentID=7553&commInfo=31&topic=Ruth&ar=Rth_4_5

² http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/comm_view.cfm?AuthorID=2&contentID=7553&commInfo=31&topic=Ruth&ar=Rth_4_5

2. He further announced that he was willing **to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance**. This meant that he was willing to carry on the line of Elimelech and Mahlon which had been temporarily cut off by their deaths. Therefore, by Boaz purchasing Ruth to be his wife, their son would be considered the fulfillment of their seed and would guarantee their continued inheritance remaining in Israel. This way the **name of the dead would not be cut off from among his brethren or from the gate of his place**. All the people around them were **his witnesses that day!**

SUMMARY:

There have been setbacks after setbacks in Naomi and Ruth's lives but God is about to bring this to fruition. There are three parties now involved: Boaz, Ruth, and the kinsman-redeemer. Boaz is going before the ten elders of the community as the rest of the community watches and witnesses. Boaz cared about Ruth as well as the community standards, and did what was acceptable in their laws. He did not disrespect what was set in place as a kinsman-redeemer. He wanted to marry Ruth but there was another kinsman-redeemer standing in the way. He used such strategy! **First** of all, he was friendly with the kinsman in their first encounter and asked him to sit down. **Secondly**, the city gate was a good place to do business. Therefore, calling community court of the elders also brought forth all to witness this transaction of land purchase and redemption in their community.

Thirdly, he puts before this kinsman the land that Naomi has to sell which was Elimelech's; if he wanted to use his right of redemption, he says then buy it, if not, tell him and all those around him how things stand because the only ones in the picture to redeem it was the kinsman and Boaz. Well, he says he wants to redeem it! Well, here comes the catcher the kinsman didn't realize.

Fourth, Boaz lets him know that the day he buys it, he also is buying it from Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the one who died to restore his name to his inheritance. That means he would have to marry her. The kinsman then has a change of heart; he now cannot redeem it. Do you see this strategy working? By bringing the kinsman before the elders, he couldn't say Boaz tricked him; he couldn't say that all was not told to him. Do you see you can't put the "*cart before the horse?*" He didn't let the kinsman see what the horse was pulling. Therefore, he strategically showed him the land first. If he had known all from the beginning, it probably wouldn't have been a smooth transaction. The kinsman really thought it was just a land transaction, now he learns the land would not just belong to him but to Elimelech's family. The kinsman did not love Ruth as Boaz did. Therefore, this way, it let the kinsman down easy by bringing in the facts slowly because Boaz was not trying to shame him. It would be shameful if he didn't want to preserve his brother's name by marrying the widow.

Caring for someone means always doing the right thing no matter how it does not go in your favor and not wanting to shame another even when you're right! Be willing to let go and let God! In this story love conquered all because God **was** in the midst! The kinsman tells Boaz to buy it and then pulls off his sandal, which sealed the deal of their business transaction—that he has relinquished his right of redemption; he would not preserve his brother's name. It's always good to have a witness for some business transactions especially when you think the other person won't live up to it. *Matthew 10:16b "... be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."*

Now Boaz is allowed to make his important announcement before all the witnesses—his declaration to marry Ruth and to revive the name of the deceased for the inheritance—Elimelech's name will live on when she has a son with Boaz!

APPLICATION:

Our character is always under a magnifying glass. Ask God to help you to not be the magnifier but the one who cares and respects the other. Life may not always be fair, but you will always be the victor in God's eyes.