

Ruth 4 All is Well

We have come to the end of the book of Ruth.

What has happened?

The author has told us a great story, including a moment where we all get to have a little tiny heart attack. “I will redeem it”, said the kinsman-redeemer.

By this time we know that Ruth and Boaz are right for each other, and we say, “No!” And then Boaz brings up some information that is new to the other relative, and we all get to breathe a sigh of relief.

What happened in this chapter?

Boaz follows the ancient customs and does the right thing. (we won't go into exactly what those customs were like or what they mean because they were ancient already when the story was written down, and people cannot seem to agree on what they mean. And, I don't think it matters too much to the message of the book of Ruth)

Boaz and Ruth are married.

Ruth's future is secure in the home of a husband.

Naomi's future is secure.

The community rejoices.

Obed is born, he will become king David's grandfather, and even, one of the ancestors of Jesus, the Christ, our redeemer.

What happened?

Empty fields are full.

Empty threshing floors are full of grain.

Empty stomachs are full of food and drink.

Empty laps and arms are full of baby.

Empty hearts are full of faith.

Empty futures are full of hope.

How did it all happen?

It all came about through suffering, tragedy, confusion, emptiness and grief.

It came about through a foreign daughter-in-law who is surprisingly strong and full of love and faithfulness. It is well possible that Naomi and Elimelech had never been that crazy about the mixed marriage.

It all came about through an older, wealthy relative who is surprisingly strong and full of love and faithfulness. Powerful people who do the right thing for the poor are rare in the Bible and in our world.

How did it happen?

It turns out that the Lord who **is** love and faithfulness is at work in these ordinary people. He is at work, restoring food to Bethlehem, the 'house of food'. And he is at work in things that 'just so happen'.

The Lord is at work doing more than anyone could ask or imagine, blessing those people who do the right thing out of love.

Ruth's **future** is secure. She has a baby boy. She has a place in the family of God's people and a place in the line of the great king, David and the greatest, the king of kings, Jesus. That's the blessing of the Lord for her love and kindness to Naomi and Boaz. She was not looking for it, counting on it, even hoping for it. It's pure grace.

Boaz has a son, Obed, and a place in the family of God's people, a place in the line of the great king, David and the greatest, the king of kings, Jesus. That's the blessing of the Lord for his love and kindness shown to Ruth and Naomi. He was not looking for it, counting on it, even hoping for it. It's pure grace.

Naomi has a son. It sounds strange to us, but that is what the women of Bethlehem say. Naomi has been filled again, with faith, food and now, with family. She had given up all hope, she was convinced that the Lord's hand was against her. Her own kindness to Ruth has been blessed by the Lord. She was not counting on it, even hoping for it. It is pure grace.

Through Ruth, Boaz and Naomi the Lord has blessed the people of Bethlehem and Judea, and Israel and all the people of the world, all the way down to you and me today who **know** that Jesus is the redeemer we need. Jesus was raised from the dead. Jesus is alive today. The people of Bethlehem did not have much to do with these events. We, of course, have even less reason to hope that we should be connected to or benefit from what happens here. It is pure grace. God's gift and blessing to us.

In this story, the story of Ruth, **the Lord is at work in ordinary people**. They live ordinary lives of hunger, pain, grief, celebration, risk and obedience, belief, disappointment and new beginnings. And these ordinary lives are drawn up into the great story of God's work to show his love and faithfulness to all people.

In **this** story, in our story, in our ordinary lives, the Lord is at work. The Lord is at work in our ordinary human lives of hunger, pain, grief, celebration, risk and obedience, belief, disappointment and new beginnings. The Lord is at work, writing a story that is bigger than we are, drawing us up into his purposes to show his love and faithfulness to all people.

In the story of Ruth we see resolution. We see the happy ending. We see that all is well and all are full and fed. The Bible tells us that our story will have a happy ending. A wounded and bleeding creation will be restored. People will lay down their weapons and receive the gifts of each other's cultures. Voices will be raised in praise and joy to the lamb who has been slain for us all. And, somehow that will be the beginning of a whole new story. (CS Lewis The Last Battle)

The challenge for us is that **we cannot know where we** are in our stories. We cannot know how near we are to resolution of our own pain, how troubles will be resolved and how wide will be the impact or effect of anything we do. We cannot know how near we are to the great resolution of **all things**, to the day when 'all will be well, and all will be well and all manner of things will be well'. (Dame Julian of Norwich)

As a congregation we are at a place together with the V. Family where so much is up in the air. * note to reader....(Henry, a member of our congregation was in a serious bicycle

accident and three weeks later is still in a coma when this sermon was preached.) There are so many questions. And no matter how good a future is promised to us, the pain of the 'now' is real and intense. Somehow in God's timing we've just read a story that shows us that in **all things** God is at work for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8)

How is God speaking to us in Ruth?

He may be helping us to trust even **in** our grief and confusion.

He may be preserving child-like hope and wonder even when we feel like collapsing into cynicism.

The Lord may be helping us to open our own hearts to 'Naomis' and 'Ruths' around us. (poor, disconnected) St. Albert homes are filling up with Philippina nannies. We see them often on the streets and in the community. The Lord may open our own hearts to 'Boazs' around us. (the wealthy). Thirty-one summers ago I worked for one of the most successful farmers in our community. My dad pointed out to me that one of their burdens was to be resented by those who were not quite as well off. The Lord is Lord of all and calls us all to love and care for **'each'** other.

God who is always at work for our good may be encouraging us to be at work for the good of others. To do what is right and show kindness. Any 'other' will do, any day will do. This week will be a time for some of us to do the right and the kind on SERVE.

*(*note to reader – SERVE is a week long youth mission experience. In this worship service we commissioned a team of twelve for their trip to Vancouver)*

God who is in control of all around us may be using this story to settle our hearts and help us to experience deep inside, that all is well.

The Lord be gracious to you.

The Lord be gracious to me.

All God's people said, Amen.