

## RUTH 2:17-23

### A True and Better Boaz

John Newton was a slave trader whom God redeemed and called to pastoral ministry. He is best remembered for authoring the most recognizable hymn in English history, “Amazing Grace.” His nephew, William Wilberforce, was a British legislator who almost singlehandedly led England to abolish both the slave trade and, later, slavery itself.

Near the end of his life, Newton famously said, “My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: That I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior.” Or, to put it another way, “Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.”

Previously, Ruth had her prayers answered. The Lord provided for her and Naomi thanks to the generosity of both Boaz’s field and his table. Starting in vs. 19, Naomi naturally wants to know all the details. Where did she find so much food? How is any of this possible?

She then discovers that Ruth met a man, and not just any man. He is their redeemer.

Naomi’s first response when hearing the name “Boaz” was to change her own name. Remember that upon her return to Bethlehem, she went from Naomi (“pleasant”) to Mara (“bitterness”). Suddenly, she becomes a woman who recognizes and gives blessings (see vs. 20-21) and is identified as Naomi again. It is at this moment she realizes that God had not abandoned her amid her despair and sorrow. He had always been there, even when her sadness clouded her vision.

Boaz is a relative and thus qualifies to be a Kinsmen-Redeemer. If someone were impoverished and unable to pay their debts, their options were limited. They could pay their debts until the Year of Jubilee. They could sell the land their family had owned for generations. Some could sell themselves and their family into indentured servanthood. The best option was to have a kinsman-redeemer. Such relatives would redeem the property and restore it to the original family owner.

If the kinsman-redeemer were single, he could revive the family lineage by marrying the widow. The offspring would inherit the name and the property of the husband who had died.

Boaz is such a redeemer in the narrative. More than a love interest, he is the redeemer of Naomi and Ruth. At the core of the Ruth story is redemption. We, then, are like Ruth – destitute, hopeless, and impoverished by our sins. Our only hope is either more slavery and misery or a Redeemer to set us free.

Jesus is a true and better Boaz. Consider the parallels between them. Both are from the tribe of Judah. Both were born in Bethlehem. Both are redeemers. Boaz merely redeems two impoverished widows left destitute by the sting of death. Christ, on the other hand, redeems all impoverished by sin and death. Boaz redeemed land. Jesus redeemed souls.

The Ruth narrative ends (spoiler alert) with the birth of a child who, himself, will be the ancestor of David, the greatest king of Israel. Later, Jesus, the descendent of David, offers himself as Israel's final King and Redeemer. He does not take for himself a throne, but a cross. He does not conquer the Romans, but death. He does not liberate land, but sinners.

Ruth opens with death and concludes with life. Jesus enters into a world haunted by death and sin, only to conquer it by being raised from the dead. Boaz is an incredible redeemer. Jesus, however, is far greater than even he.