

RUTH 4:16-22

Not All Genealogies Are Boring

If the Bible was merely a collection of stories, we would read it differently than it requires. Scripture is the story of God redeeming broken humanity. It is the story of reconciliation and restoration. Every story, then, must be read through that lens. Some narratives, like the story of Ruth and Boaz, make this abundantly clear.

The main character of Ruth is neither the widows or even their kinsman-redeemer. It is God. He is omnipresent on every page. He was there during the famine in Bethlehem. He was there throughout the family tragedies in Moab. He was there in Naomi and Ruth's return to Bethlehem. He was there when Ruth picked wheat in Boaz's field as well as when Boaz noticed Ruth and when the two get married. God is at the center of the story. He is equally the center of our story.

The story of Ruth concluded with the marriage of Boaz and Ruth and their birth of their firstborn son. What follows is an appendix to their story. Although their narrative has concluded, God's work in the world had not. Through their union, which came about through much pain and suffering, came the ultimate redemption of Israel.

The son born to Boaz and Ruth was named Obed. His birth restored everything that had been lost in chapter one. His birth also meant the restoration of the family name. He inherits the property of Ruth's late husband, not Boaz. It is at this point, the reader would expect a concluding word, "And they all lived happily ever after." Instead, the writer produces a genealogy.

The genealogy proves this story was about the redemption of Israel, not just the provisions of a widow. God's work in history is the real plot point, not the marriage of a poor woman to a rich man. Thus, if we miss both God's providence and grace, we have missed the point of the story. The story ends, not with "The End," but with a "To Be Continued."

The genealogy begins with the line of Boaz. Perez (the son of Judah) fathered Hezron who fathered Ram who fathered Amminadab who fathered Nahshon who fathered Salmon who fathered Boaz. Although most would not recognize these names, it traces the history of Israel from the Patriarchs to the age of the Judges.

The union of Boaz and Ruth produced Obed who fathered Jesse who fathered David. This last name is, by far, the most recognized name. He became the greatest king in Israel. Anointed by God to unite the Kingdom and to reign in righteousness. He is the picture of Israel's king. He is the patriarch of the Davidic line whom God promised would forever have a man upon the throne.

Yet, even here, the story does not conclude. Clearly, the writer wanted to make a connection between Ruth's poverty climaxing in David's reign. It also explains David's relationship with the Moabites in his own life. They were cousins through Ruth.

The hope of Israel was David and his sons. Though true, we would argue that the hope of the world is David's son, Jesus Christ. This entire book is about a God who will redeem the forsaken and lost – those just like Ruth – through His Son Jesus Christ. Thus, this story isn't about Ruth or a baby, but about the God's greater work of redemption throughout the world and throughout history.

This means that salvation is the providential work of God. We are part of a cosmic story, authored by God, of redemption that ends in His glory. We are all like Ruth (impoverished and hopeless). Christ is like Boaz. He is our redeemer.

This is the true beauty of Ruth. It is not how tragedy was salvaged by love. It is about how brokenness was redeemed by grace.