

TITLE: Buying Damaged Goods  
SCRIPTURE: Ruth 4  
SERMON DATE 29 June 2007 Baptisms

## Introduction

It seems that every week's worship at Stadium Village Church is a special party. For starters, just getting together with those who LOVE GOD and want to HONOR God by sacrificing ourselves, is exciting. The music helps us to go deep within our emotions and sing words straight from the Bible. Just our worship alone is enough to rouse me from a cozy bed.

But if you add to that privilege of worshipping the Almighty God, visiting pastors like Dale Crall and visiting missionaries to Papua New Guinea, like the Lockhart's, who started as students from this church, the excitement builds. We realize what God can do with those who YIELD themselves to him.

Besides visitors this past month, we have celebrated God's spectacular Pentecost – the gift of his Holy Spirit given to all who believe and receive Jesus. That's how former students like the Lockhart's, how ALL of us, can change to become God's agents of Redemption in the World.

The prayer walk May 20 around campus is an example of how some of you participated with God to bring God's power for change at the Univ. of MN.

I'm still not finished, for in the past 7 weeks we have welcomed 14 new members into our church family. 4 of those were baptized, well at least 1 was and 3 will be baptized today.

WHEW!! That's a lot going on. WE have many reasons to celebrate.

Even our Bible reading today brings cause for celebration.

WE have been reading the true story of the ancestors of our Savior Jesus. The Book of Ruth has only 4 chapters and as I said before, takes about 17 minutes to read. But it is packed full of drama and lessons for our lives, even though it took place 3300 years ago.

If you are interested in Business, be sure to analyze how Boaz, one of the true heroes in this story, manages to seal a tricky business deal.

If you are looking for a husband, be sure to note how Ruth, another of our heroes in this account, manages to make herself known to the wise and older man, Boaz.

If you are wondering how to be a good Mother-in-law, or how to overcome adversity and hardship, study Naomi in this story.

And if you want to partner with God in bringing HOPE and salvation to a person who is lonely and lost, to a person who has been damaged by circumstances, by people, or even by themselves, then look for lessons to be learned from the pages of this book of Ruth.

If you recall,

The first chapter is about the CHOICES of the Jewish family of Elimelech and Naomi: How they chose to immigrate to an unfriendly country called Moab, how after the deaths of the Father Elimelech and his 2 sons, his wife, Naomi, CHOOSE to return to her home town, Bethlehem in Israel, and how one of her daughters-in-law, RUTH, CHOOSE to return with her.

In the SECOND & THIRD chapters we read how Ruth was so Kind and Hard working. She chose to RESPOND to her mother-in-law, Naomi's, Naomi's land, her people and Naomi's GOD with noticeable goodness and humility.

This is not unlike some of you, who have come to Mpls. from a distance. You have responded to your circumstances by working very hard. You have experienced kindness and have chosen to BE kind.

Most of us have chosen to respond to life by Humbling ourselves before God. We have chosen God's path for our lives.

Three of you have chosen to publicly declare on THIS day, June 24, your desire to be completely united with God. Ruth also declared her unity with her mother-in-law in this famous passage:

Ruth 1

16 . . . “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.

17 *Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.”*

That’s the UNITY that we, who hang on to Jesus as our Savior, have. We will go and we will stay with Christ no matter where, we will unite with Jesus’ people, other Christians. We will be as One people, serving and obeying God.

We who follow Jesus, KNOW that God WILL ultimately provide for us. God may ask us to do VERY difficult things. But, Serving and obeying God are possible, because God WILL provide a way.

Look what happened to Naomi and Ruth. In the eyes of those around them, they were *Damaged Goods*. They were Hungry. They had no possessions or money. Both were widows. Everyone assumed that they were being punished by God. People thought that bad things happen to bad people? And besides, one of them was a Foreigner.

But God’s Message throughout the whole Bible is ALL About How God just loves to restore people who turn to Him. God Loves to bless those who ASK God for help. God’s Business is to buy back damaged goods, damaged people.

Perhaps you love a good bargain like I do. Some stores specialize in damaged goods. Just this week I bought a washer and dryer from a store that sells damaged, but working appliances. The price was 30% cheaper.

God not only buys back people who have been damaged by Sin, he also makes them like new. If people will allow God, God can restore brightness to tired eyes, put Hope in Hearts that have given up. God can answer prayers for housing and VISA’s. The God we serve is into the buying and fixing business. And he has all sorts of tools and tricks to do this.

In Naomi and Ruth’s case, God provided a special husband for Ruth who also took care of Naomi. Not only did they have their physical needs met, BUT God gave to them a SON. And in that Biblical Asian culture, a son was a families’ ticket to success. All their needs would be met, they thought, PLUS the family line would continue to the next generation.

Let’s read the end of their story. Let’s see how God brought them, redeemed them, from poverty and humiliation to security, success, and Significance.

The word REDEEM means = to Buy Back, *from Latin re = back, again + emere = to take, buy*

To buy back, repurchase, to ransom, To free from distress or harm, To change for the better

God used an ancient system he had set up called the kinsman Redeemer. If you remember, this is a family member that can purchase land on behalf of the family member who had to give up the land because of some problem. The relative, or KINSMAN, would buy back of Redeem the land for the original family member.

The land is something that belongs to God. According to the Jewish culture, God loans it to us and we should not loose it. God set up a system whereby every 49 years the land would be returned to the original owner, no matter who paid what price for it! This system would eliminate poverty and excessive wealth. I think we need something like this for executives who make unconscienceable salaries today!

RUTH 4 PAGE

4:1\* ¶ Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there.

TOWN GATES WERE THE MARKET PLACES, THE PLACE WHERE LEGAL DECISIONS WERE MADE WITH THE ELDERS OR WISEMEN OF THE TOWNS.

When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So he went over and sat down.

GOD HAD ARRANGED THE TIMING SO THAT THIS VERY MAN SHOWED UP AT THE GATE AS BOAZ WAITED.

2 Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, "Sit here," and they did so.

NOTE BOAZ'S EXCELLENT BUSINESS SKILLS: HIS TIMING, HIS RELEASE OF FACTUAL INFORMATION, HIS CALM MANNER

3 Then he said to the kinsman-redeemer,

"Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech.

4 I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no-one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line."

"I will redeem it," he said.

WHO WOULDN'T WANT A PIECE OF CHEAP LAND TO INCREASE YOUR WEALTH?

5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property."

6 At this, the kinsman-redeemer said, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it."

7 (Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.)

8 So the kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it yourself." And he removed his sandal.

9\* ¶ Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon.

10 I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records. Today you are witnesses!"

11 Then the elders and all those at the gate said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.

12 Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah."

13\* ¶ So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

14 The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel!

15 He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth."

16 Then Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him.

17 The women living there said, "Naomi has a son."

And they named him Obed.

He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Ruth, the Foreign woman who entered Israel, (her country's enemy), with no male protector, with no resources except a desire to serve her mother-in law's God, that same Ruth, bore a son that would become Israel's greatest king.

Is that Redemption or not? Is that an amazing turn of events, a change for the better, freedom from distress and harm?

Do you see how God can work? God can restore, make new, buy back and refurbish.

This is a God who NEVER Changes. This is a God who can do for US what he did for Ruth.

HE can give us a new land called the Church, new people, a new family called the Followers of Christ... Christians. He gives us HIMSELF as a guide, a counselor and a helper.

Just as Ruth had new responsibilities in the new land, we too are given new responsibilities and new abilities to fulfill God's new jobs for us.

Allen, Han and Xiaolin, you are officially entering the new land today. You will officially have a new boss for your new life. God will be your new boss. Your old boss, must go. In the Bible Paul calls it Dying to ourselves. No longer is YOUR WILL the Boss, but you must seek GOD'S will for your every move. (every move I make I make in you...you make me move Jesus, every breath I take I breathe in you )

Ruth understood the secret of right living. She obeyed and worked hard. God rewarded her by giving her a REDEEMER and a Child and a Name that would be remembered for all times.

You three, (all of us who are Jesus' followers) have been given a Redeemer. Jesus has bought us back from Satan.

(You know Satan won the legal right for us and for the earth when people disobeyed God. Jesus fought Satan and won us back. We have been redeemed and the redemption cost, the ransom, was Jesus' perfect and expensive life.

One of these days we will see the Land returned officially to God too. That's when Jesus returns the 2<sup>nd</sup> time.)

You can have children too. Each time you tell someone about Jesus and they accept him, then they have been Born again, and You helped to give them birth...they become your spiritual children.

And like Ruth, your name will be remembered in the Book of Life, the Lamb's Book of Life, that is kept in heaven as a record of all those who will live into eternity. It will be noted that you helped many others to live better and to reach heaven.

You read about the witnesses at the gate? You too, must be witnesses of what Jesus has done. In a few minutes you will witness to us about YOUR stories of how God has worked in your lives.

If ever you forget about how God has worked in your lives, we can remind you. We too will be witnesses of God's power and work within you, how when you were lonely, or afraid or without a visa, God was there to help you.

Yes, my friends, God is still present within our lives making all things work together for his glory and eventually ours.

Ruth saw this in her own life. Naomi experiences this redemption. And Boaz, although he acted as the redeemer, understood that it was GOD who gives life and 2<sup>nd</sup> chances and HOPE for the Helpless. But we must participate WITH God, as he did, by wisely, generously and lovingly reaching out to others.

Allen, Han and Xiao: You will be challenged to BE like JESUS for other people. Some will be easy to love with Jesus' redemptive love. But others will try to push you away. The very thing the heart desires, they will fight against. How much effort will you put into showing them God's redemptive power?

Will you seek God as Ruth did? Will you reach out to others as Boaz did, even at a great personal expense?

The choice is yours. On this day, may you resolve to participate WITH GOD in his program to buy back damaged souls.

This is God's call for all of us.