

A Sermon preached by Martin Tanner in St Mary's, Market Drayton on Thursday 10th November 2016 at 10.00am

SS7 RUTH Ruth 4 v11a to the end

The Book of Ruth begins with emptiness, but ends with a joyful future.

Naomi. Ruth. Boaz.

God blessed each of these three through the birth of a son, Obed.

Obed became the father of Jessie, and Jessie became the father of the great King David and so Ruth & Boaz became part of the lineage of Joseph and so part of the lineage of Christ himself.

If BOAZ is Ruth's kinsman-redeemer then OBED is Naomi's kinsman-redeemer. For Naomi has a grandson and her inheritance restored;

Blessings abound: -Widowed Ruth has a husband and heir;
 -Batchelor Boaz has a wife and heir;
 -And Widowed Naomi has her inheritance restored;

And THEY ALL have a secure future.

This child, Obed, would not only bring blessing to HIS family, **but TO ALL the people of Israel AND to the world.**

The story of Ruth is an illustration of GOD'S GRACE.

An example of God working through history, orchestrating events to further his plans.

A demonstration of God's fullness.

Boaz redeemed Ruth from her life of poverty and sorrow and gave her a new security, a new hope and a new joy. **So RUTH could now experience God's fullness – his abundance, richness, sufficiency – a sense of completeness.**

In the early part of the story Ruth is often referred to as "the Moabite". A signal is being given. The writer is saying "Take Note" "Watch Out". "Something is going to happen". And it does.

After Boaz redeems her, she is NO LONGER referred to as "the Moabite" – an outsider, a foreigner, an alien. INSTEAD the Elders pray she may be part of the community of faith, be like Rachel and Leah, who gave birth to Jacob's children, the children who became the heads of the Twelve tribes of Israel.

The principle here is this: **Redemption leads to inclusion.**

The outsider becomes part of the people of God.

(2)

One of the offers of Jesus (John 10 v10) is,

"I have come that you may have life, life in all fullness."

Jesus does offer us abundant life. BUT, like Ruth's journey, **our journey may also take us through times of difficulty and challenge.**

One day Christ will return and then we shall experience God's ultimate and eternal fullness BUT we are warned that before this happens there will be **"trials and tribulations and great distress"**. We need to know how to live through difficulty and challenge.

Many believers struggle to the end of their lives with **unrealised hopes** and never see the fruit of their faith.

NAOMI never lived to see her great-grandson become Israel's greatest King or know of the wisdom of her great-great grandson, Solomon. She died never hearing a single line of the Psalms read or sung. Or heard any of the wise saying of Proverbs.

We have to accept that we see through a glass "*only darkly*" never seeing the full picture, never knowing where our lives fit into the overall story.

We have to leave these things to God for we are "*here today and gone tomorrow*". And, yet, our lives still have meaning and purpose, even though we don't fully understand.

Ruth, Naomi and Boaz are examples of how God can bless and transform the lives of those who are faithful and obedient to him.

I WONDER what would have happened:

- IF Ruth hadn't gone back to Bethlehem with Naomi?
- IF she hadn't obeyed Naomi's instructions?
- IF Boaz hadn't been willing to redeem her?

There are lots of "ifs", but the fact is that they were all part of God's plan. A plan that will succeed because it is of God.

(3)

WHO would you rather be?

-A Ruth or a Boaz

-Or the man with no name who wouldn't redeem Ruth as kinsman-redeemer?

Do you not want to experience God's fullness in your life?

If we do, then we need to be alert to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, so that we can be obedient to God's will.

We need to focus **NOT on our own needs and problems**, but try to look OUTWARDS towards others and UPWARDS towards God.

-To look for ways to serve him and to serve others;

-To be open to where he is at work so that we can co-operate with him;

-To trust and to rejoice that however insignificant we may feel, we are each part of his wider plan.

God offers us his fullness **-the things in life that are best for us-** the means to fulfil the ultimate purpose of our life, to truly become the people he has created us to be.

In conclusion,

the story of Ruth encourages us to believe that,

as Paul writes in Ephesians 3 v20, God

"is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine",

that his blessings can extend

BEYOND OUR OWN LIVES and circumstances

so that others, also, may discover GOD'S FULLNESS.

A Book that begins with emptiness ends with fullness.