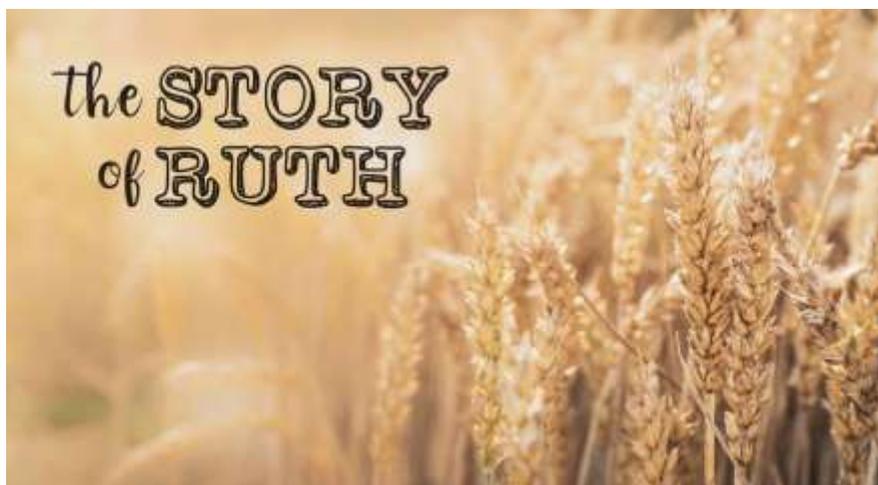


Daily Devotional

Booklet



WEEK 1 : DAY ONE : A GLIMMER OF LIGHT

Read: Ruth 1:2-22

Our reading this week takes place against the backdrop of one of the darkest seasons in the Old Testament, a time of lawlessness and famine. Naomi was a Jewish woman whose husband moved her to the town of Moab in search of greener pastures. It is in Moab that her sons marry Moabite women, and it is in Moab that her husband and both her sons die. It is in Moab, as a foreigner, that Naomi walks right into all too familiar valley of the shadow of death. Her whole world had come crashing down, she was grief struck and hopeless!

It is important to note that in those days a woman had no way of providing for herself. A woman's only hope for a good life would be to marry, and if her husband died, her only hope for survival would be if she had a son, and Naomi had two sons... both of whom had died! All this grief had left her feeling completely devastated! She had to face the reality of inevitable poverty and a life of misery and loneliness. She even goes as far as changing her name from Naomi, which literally means pleasantness, to Mara, which means bitter.

Naomi had come to the end of herself. Her last resort for survival was to go back home in hope that family would take her in. As the women embark on the journey home, Naomi urges her daughters-in-law to stay behind, knowing that she had no future to offer them, and as foreigners, they were likely to have a hard time in Bethlehem! After much emotion, Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth remained! *"At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her."* With a friend like Ruth, Naomi may have been devastated, but she was not destitute. She was aggrieved, but never abandoned, lost, but never lonely. May we know that in our darkest moments, we have a friend in Jesus, He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us! We serve God who clings to us! May the knowledge of the nearness of Christ bring you a glimmer of light in the dark.

Prayer: Lord, when life leaves me bitter, remind me of your nearness.

WEEK 1 : DAY TWO : NO GREATER CALL

We are living in times marked by unrepresented loss! Loss of loved ones, loss of jobs, loss of identity, loss of hope. We are surrounded by people who are in mourning, people who are suffocating with sorrow and paralysed by pain. In a time where the world is hurting, we are not called to sit passively by, we are called to shine a light in the darkness, to bring comfort to those who mourn, to be a voice of hope to the hopeless and to grieve with those who grieve.

This is the instruction Paul gives the church in Romans 12:15. *“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”* Jesus gives us a similar instruction in John 13:34, *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”* We serve a compassionate God! We see this so vividly beside Lazarus’ graveside where *“Jesus wept”*. We worship the One who not only holds the world in His hands, but holds our tears in a bottle, *“You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book”* -Psalm 56:8. We are called to love the world the way He does! We are after all Christs ambassadors in this world! There is no greater call than the call to love. It is in loving each other that we discover our purpose on earth. *“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfil the law of Christ”*- Galatians 6:2.

If we want to know what God is calling us to in this season, then we should look no further than to the people we are surrounded by. It is in our people, that we discover our purpose. Ruth did this! She saw Naomi in pain and instead of passivity, she chose action! She wept with her, she walked with her and she loved her deeply, we see her passionate love revealed in the speech she gives her, *“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. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried...”*- Ruth 1:16-17

Prayer: Lord Jesus, break my heart for what breaks yours and give me the courage I need to take action.

WEEK 1 : DAY THREE : THERE IS A CONSEQUENCE TO OUR COMPASSION

Ruth literally translated from the Hebrew means friend or companion. What moves me so much is that although she was also in mourning, she didn't allow the pain of her circumstances harden her heart, she didn't allow her grief to change her. She remained true to her name. She chose to be a friend and companion; she chose to love fiercely! Even recklessly! Her decision to stick with Naomi was not without risk! She took a massive leap of faith by leaving her family, her home, and everything that was familiar and safe and pursued instead an uncertain future, in a foreign country where she was likely to face racism and be in constant danger. She did this all in the name of love and compassion, and there was a consequence!

Through the fierce love of Ruth, Naomi was moved from being bitter and empty to having a guardian redeemer! We see a redemptive end to this story unfold in chapter 4 where Ruth blesses Naomi with a son. There is always a consequence to our compassion. Jesus reveals that the greatest consequence to our decision to love others, is that we reveal Him to the world! *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*- John 13:35 Jesus has called us to be a "Ruth", a friend and companion, to those who are need. He has called us to walk alongside the broken and shine as bright stars when the world of those around us is overshadowed with sorrow. As we do this, we reveal Him to the world! Every action has a reaction! No good deed is without a ripple effect!

We have within our power to provide hope to the hopeless because we have the power to love, and there is always hope when there is love. We have the power to put an end to someone's loneliness because we have the power to love and there is no loneliness where there is love! We have the power to bring joy in the despair because we have the power to love, and *"Joy is the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved."*-Henry Nouwen

***Prayer:* Lord, even as I face my own struggles, help me to be like Ruth and show compassion to those who are hurting.**

WEEK 1 : DAY FOUR : GRIEVE WITH THOSE WHO GRIEVE

One of the things that often hinders us from action in our compassion towards one another is the crippling feeling of helplessness. This feeling of being unable to bring relief and remedy to the situation is often so heavy, it moves us to complete inaction. We don't know what to do, so we end up doing nothing, we don't know what to say, so we say nothing!

The story of Ruth teaches us a valuable lesson, and that is this: there is absolutely nothing that we could do or say that would ever rectify the situation! Ruth's love for Naomi didn't bring her husband and sons back from the dead. Her loyalty and commitment didn't make Naomi instantly better! It was actually after Ruth's declaration of love and Loyalty that Naomi declared herself bitter and empty! *"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty."*- Ruth 1:20-21. Ruth's companionship didn't solve Naomi's problems, because pain demands to be felt! One cannot walk around grief, only through it.

May we find assurance and relief in the fact that the reason we feel helpless to remedy someone's pain is because we are...it was never our assignment to rectify the situation. God has not called us to put an end to people's grief, rather to grieve with those who grieve! Our Job is to simply walk alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ so that as they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, they do not walk alone. Our job is to show solidarity and friendship, to be present and engaging. To be an ear for them when they need to talk and a voice of encouragement when the pain becomes too much to bear. Our job is to do as Ruth did, to shine the light of friendship which will enable our hurting companion to see where to place their next foot as they journey through their grief.

***Prayer:* Lord Jesus, when I feel discouraged, remind me that it is not up to me and give me the courage I need to be a friend**

WEEK 1 : DAY FIVE : ITS NOT GOOD FOR MAN TO BE ALONE

An important perspective in this chapter of Ruth that we must not overlook is Naomi's perspective! Naomi had an extremely important role to play in the way Ruth expressed her love- Naomi had to let Ruth love her! Naomi's first reaction was to urge Ruth to stay behind... she makes this request more than once, she comes across as quite determined to walk this journey of grief alone, but once she realises Ruth was equally determined, Naomi did something very brave, she let Ruth walk alongside her in her moment of deepest pain. *"When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her."*- Ruth 1:18.

Vulnerability is not something that comes easy to many people. When we are in pain, we have our own version of Naomi's speech. We may not declare, "go back to your people" But we do declare, "oh, don't worry, I'm okay" even when we are in the most desperate circumstance! We have this terrible habit of putting on a brave face and big smile to mask the pain that is torrenting within us, and when someone dares to ask how we are, we respond without even thinking, "I'm fine". But we were never meant to walk this journey alone! Our souls crave intimacy and meaningful connection with others!

Pushing people away in the time of our greatest need is counter intuitive to who God has made us to be and it will only hinder our ability to heal! *"It is not good for man to be alone"*-Genesis 2:18. We need each other just as the body requires all its parts! The foot would not get very far on its journey if it wasn't for the toe providing balance and the leg providing movement!

When you find yourself in a season of pain where you too feel empty and bitter, may you choose to be brave like Naomi, and let people in instead of pushing them away. May you choose to speak up and reach out to those you trust instead of being crippled by the weight of a burden you were never meant to carry alone.

Prayer: Lord, when I'm in need, give me the courage to ask for help

WEEK 1 : DAY SIX : JESUS, OUR FRIEND

Loving the way Ruth loved Naomi is an impossibility apart from a revelation of Christ's love for ourselves! This truth is revealed in Jesus' very instruction to love!! "...As I have loved you, so you must love"- John 13:34. It is Christ's love that compels us to love, it is His love enables us to love and it is His love that fills us to overflowing so that we have love to give!

In our pursuit to love the world around us and grieve with those who grieve, may we not neglect our own needs! May we not choose to love in our own strength and exhaust our inner resources, but may we choose to drink deeply from the well of Christ's everlasting, unconditional and enduring love for us! May we remember today that Christ is to us as Ruth was to Naomi. He is a friend and companion that has promised to never leave us nor forsake us! He too, clings to us! His love is perfect! It is not selfish or proud or rude, it does not keep a record of wrongs! Paul describes His love as being so high and so wide and so long and so deep that our minds would never be able to fully comprehend it.

The only way we could come close to even understanding Christ's love is through an experience of it! He even says that God's love is so powerful that there is nothing in all of creation that could separate us from it! "*And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love*"- Romans 8:38.

Christ's love is not conditional on our love in return, there are no strings attached and for that reason, His love, much like Ruth's love, is a reckless kind of love, reckless because even though there is a possibility that we will never choose Him, He chose the nails anyway!

Prayer: Thank you for your love Jesus!

The Story of Ruth

Grieving together

Worship: You never let Go

Word: Ruth 1; Galatians 6:2; John 13: 34-35; Romans 12:15

Questions:

- 1- Have you ever experienced the power of companionship in a time of deep pain? How did the experience strengthen you?
- 2- Why do you think it is of such grave importance to Christ that we love each other?
- 3- Have you ever experienced a wonderful consequence to an act of compassion? If so, share your story with the group.
- 4- How does the reality of knowing that it is not your job to heal the pain of grief empower you to walk alongside those who are hurting better?
- 5- Why do you think it's important to let people near in a time of pain and struggle?

Work:

Take a moment this week to do one of the following things:

- A-** For those who are empty, spend a moment in Christ's presence and let him love you
- B-** For those who are hurting, take a moment to reach out to someone you trust and ask them to walk with you in your pain
- C-** For those surrounded by grief, reach out in love in a practical way

WEEK 2 : DAY ONE: UNEXPECTED KINDNESS

Read Ruth 2: 10 *“Then she bowed down , face to the ground, and replied to him, “How is it that I’ve found favour in your eyes, that you notice me? I’m an immigrant “.*

It is always a wonder when one gets a favour from a stranger as a stranger too and the question of “why me ?” always comes out automatically as a reaction to the one who is offered kindness. Today, in your time of reflection and devoting your time to God – I invite you to take a step back with me before you pray in looking at Ruth: a young lady, a widow who has just arrived in Bethlehem from her land of Moabites. Ruth was in indeed a foreigner and she was doing some work to ensure that herself and her mother-in-law (Naomi) gets something to eat from gleaning the edges of the harvest. Ruth never folded her arms and sat without doing anything, because she wanted to be part of the journey of redeeming her life. The passing on of her husband didn’t push her to give up in life.

When Ruth bowed down, it was after the time when Boaz declared her special and protected in the new country she has occupied (the home nation of Naomi her “mother in law”). As an immigrant in another country, you would not expect to receive a humane treatment, which is a sad reality in many countries. Glory to God that He has created people like Boaz in all countries.

The beauty of God’s mystery is that our God places angels in our paths to offer us with some special assistance to reveal to us that God is always all-knowing. Therefore, in our eyes when favours look so unexpected, remember that God always goes before us to prepare goodness for you and me.

When last did you experience an unexpected favour (from a family member, friend , colleague); and how have you responded to the moment of witnessing the kindness ?

Prayer: King of Glory, you know us before we can be aware of ourselves. Empower us to bow down to you not to any persons living here on earth. In our times of experiencing unexpected favours , do not allow us to bow to those who have what we do not have. Instead, Lord help us to show gratitude to those you have made to be blessings to us and give all the glory to you Ever-giving God. Amen!

WEEK 2 : DAY TWO : YOUR DEEDS ARE KNOWN

Read Ruth 2: 11 “ *Boaz responded to her , “Everything that you did for your mother-in-law after your husband’s death has been reported fully to me: how you left behind your father, your mother, and the land of your birth, and came to a people you hadn’t known beforehand. ”*

Sometimes, one’s treatment towards others disregards the fact that his or her treatment becomes a source of his or her treatment by others in future. It is very strange how one’s treatment of a vulnerable person can be the lock to the door of blessings in future, at the same time one’s treatment of those who are not from his or her race group/nation – when the treatment is good, it unlocks grace for him or her.

Your sacrificial actions of love for someone else who is not from your family, who is not from your circle of people you are comfortable has a very special impact into the hearts of others. In such a way that, when you do it so natural – it’s like you are planting a seed that will bear fruits to you and your generation, it will also bear fruits for those who will hear (get their hearts moved) about the good things you did to others contrary to what the society would generally do to a stranger.

Are you aware, how your actions have made others feel?

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To what extent have you gone out to make others feel special and important?

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Prayer: Creator of heaven and earth, you always celebrate when we love others without conditions. Inspire our hearts with your Spirit, Oh -Lord to love even the unlovable and the unloved. Help us then Lord not to love others in fake ways instead reveal to us our weaknesses so that we may not be captured by our weakness, instead you must make us realise that you enslave us to your grace for all people. In Christ Jesus, we pray now and forevermore. Amen!

WEEK 2 : DAY 3 : THE BLESSINGS OF GOOD DEEDS !

Read Ruth 2: 12 *“May the Lord reward you for your deed. May you receive rich reward from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you’ve come to seek refuge. “*

When you treat others with a good heart that longs for nothing but goodness for others, surely like in Boaz your actions towards others melt the hearts of others. How I so wish that everyday you and me, can naturally treat others with such dignity that will convert not just them but the hearts of the witnesses to our goodness.

Blessing someone else is the work of a true child of God, I believe so because when we treat others unkindly, we do not carry a mandate from God that calls us to “love others as ourselves”. Therefore, we should be ashamed to call ourselves as children of God in the making of such hurting deeds, rather we can feel great as children of God upon our repentance from the ways of treating others badly.

Ruth probably gave herself away in caring for Naomi her mother-in-law without any intentions of gain, and consequently by her deeds towards Naomi – blessings are following her and will follow her for the rest of her life.

I bless you in the name of the Lord, that His face will continue to shine upon you in all seasons of your life because our God is gracious, **Amen!**

Therefore, I challenge you that you start to be a blessing to others if you were not before through your words that you utter to them and about them, through your thoughts about them, through your influence towards their lives/career, through deeds that God you do towards and around them. Lastly, if your deeds cause others to feel good, please continue being a blessing to others because more blessings are waiting for you ahead of your path in life.

Prayer: Father God, make us see and hear how we make others feel and forgive us for failing to love others. Hear us we pray in the name of Christ Jesus. Amen

WEEK 2 : DAY 4: THE LORD'S FAVOUR CONTINUES

Read Ruth 2: 13 *“She said, “ May I continue to find favour in your eyes, Sir, because you’ve comforted me and because you’ve spoken kindly to your female servant - even though I’m not one of your female servants”.*

In this passage, one notices the re-enforcement of abnormality of a good treatment for a foreigner and in this book of Ruth this is applicable on both sides. In other words, Naomi was well treated in a foreign land by her daughter in law in her own land and in the land of Naomi. Now the relative of Naomi which is Boaz returns the favour to Ruth in a foreign country for Ruth.

Therefore, Ruth pleads for the consistent good treatment from Boaz. Ruth was aware that in terms of the social standards she did not deserve the kind of treatment from Boaz as a foreigner, however, treating well someone who is not like you is the desire of God’s heart. And for that matter treating someone else in general pleases God.

God’s favour is always there for you and me, so the only thing from our sides we ought to do is to selflessly share good favour with others, share with relatives, share with strangers of all forms. I believe very strongly, that whether we love or not love others – God’s favour is there for all of us. And God is calling you now and forever – to love others who are not like us and those who are like us as we love ourselves. Let us love one another!

Are you experiencing pain and hurt in any ways, that affect your goodness towards others? Do you know your pain’s root cause and its purpose in your life?

I beg you not to ever give up in your life’s path to treat others with good favour, in-spite of how the people around you say. Never give up in your dreams to be a better person even when others reject you. You know why? – it’s simple because God’s favour continues to be there for all of us. Just share the good favour with others in life.

Prayer: Lord who is full of favours to us as your people, stay with us in all our paths now and forever more! Amen.

WEEK 2 : DAY 5: TABLE INVITATION TO STRANGERS

Read Ruth 2:14 – 15(a) *“At mealtime Boaz said to her, “ Come over here, eat some of the bread, and dip your piece in the vinegar”. She sat alongside the harvesters, and he served roasted grain to her. She ate, was satisfied, and had leftovers. Then she got up to glean”.*

Boaz’s invitation to Ruth is that of a master inviting a slave to come and seat around the table to have a meal equally like the master. This invitation was very abnormal to the social context then during the Ancient times. However, because God was there before the manifestation of the Ancient times to lead his people to His righteous ways. The act of invitation by Boaz, was a moment of demonstrating God’s will in the human lives – as we notice in the passage that Boaz truly served Ruth, a foreigner as a sign of good reception in the land of Bethlehem where Jesus through Ruth’s lineages was born.

Little did Boaz know that when he invited Ruth, the stranger/foreigner/powerless – he invited the ultimate bearer of Jesus, the bearer of salvation. I remember when I grew up at home in Eastern Cape, there was a saying that says “treat strangers well, because the stranger could be Jesus “. I realised later in my journey of faith that; this proverb was biblically based to encourage good treatment amongst all kind of people. When you follow the chronological order of manifestation of the incarnation of Christ Jesus, Ruth became the great grand mother of Christ Jesus. This is amazing to imagine that a foreigner who was a widow, left her comfort to care for her mother-in-law who was also a widow to the country of birth of her in-laws. Though she had an option to start a new life and enjoy the stable life at her home, now God blesses her so endlessly in her treatment of her mother-in-law.

When last did you invited someone outside your circle into your table and serve that person? reflect on your reasons and purpose!

Have you adjusted your table enough so that your guests can all reach to the food on the table ? (please reflect on how you have adjusted your table “up or down or wide enough? “)

Prayer: Lord of mystery, though we were (and are..) not worthy to gather the crumbs under your table - you invited us and served us, and you continue to invite us. Ignite us to invite all people to the tables and serve them. Amen

WEEK 2 : DAY SIX : DON'T HUMILIATE

Read Ruth 2: 15(b) - 16 *“Boaz ordered his young men, “Let her glean between the bundles, and don’t humiliate her. Also, pull out some from the bales for her and leave them behind for her to glean. And don’t scold her”.*

The locals have a tendency of scolding and humiliating those who come from outside and now Boaz instructs these men not to treat Ruth in the normal ways of treating women who are in need. Ruth had no man; she had no protection and had no dignity. In the ancient times, a man was a beholder of dignity and image for a woman. Therefore, Boaz had to publically clothe Ruth with some dignity especially as the one who is a widow and a foreigner. Boaz was very kind towards Ruth, and one could also say that Boaz made Ruth his own property in how he has treated her and demanded others to treat her like his own daughter or wife. Boaz the farmer, the businessman would demand the same treatment from the men in the society for his own wife and daughter, he demanded the same treatment for her though Ruth by then was not his wife or daughter. Boaz had to publicly own Ruth for her to be treated well by the locals.

How have you treated a stranger in your circles to celebrate her or him as one of you?

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Prayer: Dear Lord, forgive us for we have failed to glorify You enough in our receptions of those who are foreigners and those who come outside our families and friends. Amen

WEEK 3 : DAY ONE : RUTH'S NEED FOR A REDEEMER

Read Ruth 3:1

One day Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for?"

This is the third week where we are unpacking Ruth's story, I'm sure that we are all familiar with the story of Ruth. At this point Ruth has been supporting her mother-in-law by gleaning the fields of Boaz. Naomi realized that they needed a more permanent solution to secure their future.

Naomi understands the culture, rules, and regulations of that time and place. Therefore, she knows that Boaz is a Kinsman Redeemer. A Kinsmen Redeemer was a male relative who had the responsibility and privilege of acting on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, danger, or need. The Hebrew term (*go el*) directly translated means one who delivers, rescues, redeems. This was true for people and property. '

Ruth and Naomi needed a redeemer. As widows they could not claim their husband's property. As widows without male children, they had no way of finding support, unless they relied on the generosity of others. Up until now Ruth has been collecting leftovers in the fields, however, this is a short-term solution to a long-term problem. Harvest will end, Ruth will age, this could not sustain them forever. A Kinsmen Redeemer could marry Ruth, claim their husband's property for them, pay of possible debts and secure that they were looked after for the rest of their lives. Ruth and Naomi could not save themselves; they needed a redeemer. Someone to offer them hope, care, and support.

How many times in our lives have we realized that we need a Redeemer? We too, cannot save ourselves, our solutions are temporary solutions to a permanent problem.

Prayer: Dear Lord, there are many times when we come to the realization that we need a Redeemer. May we not continue to strive to save ourselves, but may we turn to You our Redeemer. In Jesus name, Amen.

WEEK 3 : DAY TWO : THE ROLE OF A REDEEMER

Read Ruth 3:2

“Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight, he will be winnowing barley on the threshing-floor”.

Boaz’s role, if he accepted the responsibility of being the Kinsmen Redeemer would be the following: He would agree to set Ruth free from her current situation. He would be there to care for Ruth in the future. He would offer her hope, care, support, and certainty. Without him accepting this role, she would be destitute.

To agree to care for someone else to this extent required a lot. It meant that Boaz would have to make certain sacrifices. He would pay the price if any debt was owed. He would commit to caring for Ruth no matter his own circumstances. This would mean a costing for him. In addition to this if he ever had children the first-born son would be in the lineage of Ruth’s first husband, not in Boaz’s lineage. There was very little to gain for Boaz, other than an addition to his family and responsibility.

A true Redeemer is one who will sacrifice for the sake of the other. A true Redeemer is one who will set someone free from their current situation. A true Redeemer is one who will pay the debt. A true Redeemer offers a hope and a future.

Ruth’s story beautifully illustrates the need for a Redeemer and the role of a Redeemer. God is our great redeemer who sacrificed for our sake, who promises to set us free, who pays our debt and offers us a hope and a future.

Prayer: Loving Father, thank You that You are our Redeemer. Thank You that You treat us better than we could ever hope for or imagine. Thank You that You have included us in Your family. In Jesus name, Amen.

WEEK 2 : DAY THREE : THE ACT OF SURRENDER

Read: Ruth 3:3-8

“Wash and perfume yourself and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing-floor. Let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.” “I will do whatever you say,” Ruth answered. So, she went down to the threshing-floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do. When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet, and lay down. In the middle of the night something startled the man, and he turned and discovered a woman lying at his feet.”

What a powerful moment of vulnerability. Ruth chose to become vulnerable by placing herself in the most vulnerable position possible. At the feet of a man in the middle of a field, in the middle of the night. Ruth knew that to claim the rescue of the Redeemer she had to surrender. This surrender required action. This action involved risk.

Sometimes we want the best of both worlds. We long for God to rescue us and redeem us, but we don't want to be vulnerable in front of God because what if the Redemption doesn't happen, what if God doesn't choose to save us?

However, we learn from Ruth that part of God's redemption is our Surrender, part of our surrender is our action, and part of our action is a vulnerability or risk.

When last were you vulnerable with or before God?

Prayer: Gracious Father, may we have the courage to lie at your feet in vulnerability so that we can learn to trust You. In Jesus name, Amen.

WEEK 3 : DAY FOUR : THE BLESSING OF SURRENDER

Reading: Ruth 3:9-11 & 15

“Who are you?” he asked. “I am your servant Ruth,” she said, “spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer.” “The Lord bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all you ask.”

Verse 15: “He also said, “Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out.” When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and put it on her. Then he went back to town.”

The story continues that Boaz does become Ruth’s kinsmen Redeemer and he does rescue her, agree to Redeem her himself or make sure that a closer relative does. In the end he has permission from the other relative and Boaz does redeem Ruth. What a blessing this is for Ruth, she no longer needs to glean the fields, she no longer needs to stress about the future, she has been set free. Ruth’s vulnerability and surrender becomes a blessing for Ruth.

Notice that this also becomes a blessing for Naomi. Suddenly Naomi is secure, Naomi has a future and a hope. No longer is Naomi destitute because of Ruth’s actions of surrender. Notice that this also later becomes a blessing for Israel. Ruth and Boaz have a son called Obed. Obed is the father of Jesse, and Jesse is the father of David. Israel’s greatest king was a direct result of Ruth’s surrender. Notice that this also later becomes a blessing for us. David was the ancestor of Jesus; therefore, Ruth was the ancestor of Jesus. Jesus was from the line of Ruth, so her action, her surrender, becomes a blessing even for us.

When we realize that we need a Redeemer, when we surrender to that Redeemer, we are blessed, but we are not alone in this blessing, others are blessed because of this act, often without us even knowing.

Prayer: God our Father, we place our trust in you! Lead us, guide us, carry us through the hardships we face. Amen

WEEK 3 : DAY FIVE : GOD THE GREAT REDEEMER:

Reading: Jeremiah 20:13

“Sing to the Lord! Give praise to the Lord! He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked.”

Jeremiah in this passage was in distress. He was in a bad place when he prayed for God to rescue him from that situation. In this verse Jeremiah reminds us that God is the one who rescues the life of the needy. In other words, like Boaz was to Ruth, God is to Jeremiah. Like God is to Jeremiah God offers to be this for us too.

God desires to be our redeemer, the one who cares for us when we are weak, the one who offers us hope, care and support.

Paul also realizes that God is a Redeemer, in 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 Paul speaks about the thorn in his flesh. He shares that God showed him that God’s grace is sufficient for him and that God’s power is made perfect in weakness. Paul goes on to say “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (verse 9-10).

Paul and Jeremiah both realize that in their weakness they need a Redeemer and God is this redeemer. It is exactly their need of a saviour that means that God saves, it is their weakness that shows God’s strength. Like Ruth’s need shows Boaz’s provision, our need shows God’s grace, strength, mercy.

The one thing we are called to remember is that no matter the hardship, the situation, the struggle, God’s grace is sufficient, and we are made strong in our weakness because of the power and grace of God.

Prayer: O God, please, when we are weak make us strong. When we are in mourning, comfort us, when we are sinful bring us back. In Jesus name, Amen.

PRAYING FOR HEALING: DAY SIX

Reading: Hebrews 2:10-12

“In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, “I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation, I will sing your praises.””

There are a few beautiful images in this passage. Firstly, it is beautiful that Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brothers/sisters. This implies that Jesus is not ashamed to claim us as one with Him, to state that we are together in this world. Jesus is not ashamed to be part of our family or have us as part of His family.

In the time of the writing of Hebrews life was lived collectively, not individually like we know. Therefore, if you behaved in a way that brought honour you would bring honour to your entire group or family. If you behaved in a way that brought shame you shamed your entire group or family. For this reason, people were often almost picky about who was part of their group.

Therefore, for the idea that Jesus publicly has no shame in us being part of His family is quite a statement. The previous few verses describe why Jesus is not ashamed of us being part of His family. The reason for this is because of God's great mercy. It is because God brings us to glory and makes us holy, in other words, sets us free.

Think of the story of Ruth and Boaz. Boaz sets Ruth free from her situation and names her as his family. Jesus does this for us too. The story of Ruth was the foretaste for us of the story of Jesus. May we come to know Jesus as our Great Redeemer.

Prayer: Father God thank You that You are not ashamed to call us Your own. Thank You that You set us free. In Jesus name, Amen.

GROUP NOTES

Welcome: Spend some time sharing what your favourite part of the story of Ruth is.

Worship: Listen to the Song Jesus My Redeemer by Chris Tomlin

Word: Read Ruth 3

- Boaz was a Redeemer for Ruth and Naomi, in what ways is God our Redeemer?
- What do you need rescuing from?
- What does it mean to be vulnerable before God?
- Why does vulnerability, trust, and action all go hand in hand?

Work:

Spend some time this week writing down what God as Redeemer means for you.

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