

God's Redemption Plan is illustrated in the book of Ruth. (5-11-14 sermon)

There is a wonderful story in the book of Ruth that depicts the influence a godly mother has on her children. Because of a famine in Bethlehem, Elimelech took his wife and two sons and settled in the land of Moab. The two sons married Moabite women, but tragedy struck and Naomi's husband and two sons died in that land. Naomi heard that the famine was over and decided to return to her homeland. She encouraged her daughter-in-laws to return to their families and one of them did. Orpah, after hearing Naomi express concern for the women's future, returned to her family and her gods. Ruth, however, refused to leave Naomi and she vowed that she would be faithful to Naomi until death. Naomi knew the God of Israel and Ruth wanted above all else to take care of Naomi and be included in the family of God. Leaving everything behind that was dear to her; she dedicated herself to being obedient to her mother-in-law and dedicated her life to providing for Naomi.

God's love for the Gentiles is illustrated in this beautiful story though it was a time when Jews were given prominence over Gentiles due to their role in God's redemptive plan for humanity. Ruth was a descendent of Abraham's nephew Lot and Boaz was a son of Rahab, a former Canaanite harlot who by faith was rescued and married into the tribe of Judah. This could be a factor in the decision that Boaz made to pursue the marriage contract of the Moabite woman who had been so faithful and loyal to a member of his family, Naomi. The name Ruth means "mercy." Ruth asked Naomi's permission to go work in the fields so she could provide for them. Naomi told her to go. Ruth didn't just happen to stumble onto the field that belonged to Boaz, for God had a purpose for her to fulfill in the history of the Jewish nation. God directed her to the field of Boaz where she would be treated with kindness and his plan for Naomi and Ruth would be fulfilled. Boaz's character is a fore shadow of the person of Jesus Christ. Naomi was a near kinsman to Boaz who had legal rights to redeem the property. When he learned who Ruth was, he instructed her to stay close to his reapers and he gave strict orders to his workers on how Ruth was to be treated. Jesus, though he is God, became a man that he might be our kinsman in the flesh. ( John 1:14). He is not ashamed to call us his family (Hebrews 2:11, 14). He is mankind's Redeemer. Upon John the Baptist birth, his father Zacharias prophesied that God had visited his people and wrought redemption for them. ( Luke 1:68). In Ephesians 1:7, Paul declares that we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus. The story of Ruth should have clarified for the Jews the work that Christ came to do, but they still rejected him. In chapter 3 of the book of Ruth, Naomi spoke to Ruth, calling her daughter. She says, "My daughter, I must find a suitable home for you, one that will be good for you." She laid out the plan for Ruth to approach Boaz in a proper Jewish tradition to ask him to marry her. The law required a near kinsman to marry a widow without children to raise a family so that property could be kept

within that family. Ruth obeyed all that Naomi told her to do and approached Boaz at midnight after he had retired for the night. She startled him when she lay down at his feet. He asked who was there. She replied, "I am Ruth, your servant girl. Spread your cover over me, because you are a relative who is supposed to take care of me." Boaz responded, "The LORD bless you, my daughter. This act of kindness is greater than the kindness you showed to Naomi in the beginning. You didn't look for a young man to marry, either rich or poor." Boaz told Ruth he was willing to take care of her because of her good reputation as a good daughter she was to Naomi. But first he would have to approach the man who was a closer relative than he was to see if he had interest in Elimelech's land. Boaz would meet with him on the next day. (Leviticus 25:23) Boaz was careful to protect Ruth and sent her to Naomi before the breaking of the day so the people of the town wouldn't know that she had been at the threshing floor with him. He told her to bring her shawl and he poured six portions of barley into it and put it on her head and he left to go to the city. Ruth returned to Naomi who asked how things had gone. Ruth told her everything that had transpired and she showed Naomi the six portions of barley that Boaz had given to her saying she must not return home without a gift. Naomi told Ruth to remain with her until Boaz had finished the business he had planned for the day. Boaz went to the city gate and sat there until the close relative he had mentioned came by. Boaz called to him, asked him to sit down and then gathered ten of the older leaders of the city and had them sit also. Boaz explained to the relative that Naomi had returned from Moab and wanted to sell the land that belonged to her husband. Since he was a closer kin to Elimelech than Boaz, he needed to offer him first chance to purchase it. Boaz said, "I am next after you." The close relative said, "I will buy back the land." Then Boaz said, "When you buy the land from Naomi, you must also marry Ruth, the Moabite who is the dead man's wife. That way, the land will stay in the dead man's name." Because of this clause, the relative refused to buy the land lest it affect what property he could pass on to his own sons. As was the custom in Israel, the relative said, "Buy the land yourself" and he took off his sandal and passed it to Boaz in front of the witnesses as proof that he was relinquishing his right to the property. Boaz declared that he would buy Elimelech's property and marry Ruth so the property would stay in Elimelech's family. He declared that the men of the city were witnesses to the verbal agreement that he made with the relative. The leaders said, "We are witnesses." They declared blessings on Boaz and Ruth and their prayer was that Ruth and Boaz might be parents to children who would be famous and powerful in the tribes of Israel. Ruth became a wife to Boaz and they had a son whom they named Obed. The people declared that Ruth was better than having seven sons for she was a faithful, loyal daughter to Naomi. King David and Jesus Christ was in this family lineage. Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.(Psalms 23)