



Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however, 'it's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



HG27: Ruth (4/4) *Love Will Find Way*

Ruth 4:1-22

Home Group Study Notes

28th February 2010 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group
with you, along with any previous notes and
other resources that might be helpful.*



Welcome (10 mins)

The story of Ruth and Boaz is a story of human love but also, more importantly, of divine love. Just for fun: think about which 'love' song (Classical or Pop) means the most to you, (perhaps even taking the lyrics along with you) and share your choice with other members of your Home Group, explaining why it means so much!



Looking Upwards (10 mins) *Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise, or listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers; etc.





Looking Upwards (40 mins) *Bible Study*

Read through the text for this study, Ruth 4:1-22 and any references given below, alongside those in the sermon notes, then answer the following questions - you may find it helpful to read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss your answers with your Home Group.

1: Paul began his sermon by using the illustration of Kim Phuc (the girl in the horrific photo synonymous with the Vietnam War) and her willingness to forgive those who caused her so much pain and grief. Did this story touch your heart? Do you know of any similar stories where, against all the odds, God brings healing in a seemingly irreconcilable situation?

2: The unnamed relative chose not to marry Ruth, simply because he wanted to protect his own name and inheritance. Have you ever missed out on God's blessing in a situation simply because you have taken 'the easy way out' rather than, just as Boaz did, test the consequences of your faith and your trust in God's sovereignty?

3: The word 'love' strangely, was mentioned for the first time in this story in 4:15 and even then, it is used to describe Ruth's love for Naomi rather than Boaz. Does this surprise you? Had you looked upon this story as one of kindness rather than love? Is this because we have a narrow view of what love is? Might this have something to do with the differences in culture between that which this story was set in and ours?

Ruth has proved herself to be worth more than seven sons (what an accolade) for she has *loved* Naomi. You see, it was not just Obed who was God's gift to Naomi, it was Ruth who bore Obed.

And reflected in that love of Ruth for Naomi, do we not see God's love expressed to us, as well as the love we are to show to each other? This is no fair weather love, changing in intensity or direction depending upon the circumstances. This is a love, which keeps on going to the very end, a love stronger than death. Even when that love is ignored (and how often do we ignore or take for granted the divine love?) it still sticks by us, as Ruth did with Naomi. And the reason why Ruth was enabled to do this was because, as we saw in ch1, she saw herself as the recipient of God's love: that is why she wanted to follow him and be a member of his people.

The NT says something very similar to us: 1 John 4:10: *'This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.'* Have you ever thought that the person sitting next to you or in front of you is not just an acquaintance who happens to be around on a Sunday? If they are believers in Jesus, they are as bound to you and you to them as Ruth was to Naomi. They may not be your mother-in-law, but they are your brother or sister-in-Christ. Have you thought how you might go about showing God's love to them? What sacrifice could you make for their benefit? Who knows!

But the one thing we have seen in this whole story is that true love, divine love, is practical and costly, if it is anything at all. As Naomi looked into the face of that little baby she had no idea that she was holding not only the one who was to be *her* kinsmen-redeemer. But the one whose descendent would be *the* kinsmen redeemer of the whole human race.

A Redemption which affects the Future, vs18-22

When we read genealogies in the Bible, we tend to look upon them as boring and, often, pass over them to move onto more meaningful passages. Do you do that? I used to when I was a young Christian. Yet, in Ruth 4:18-22, the genealogy is not some boring conclusion to a nice love story, it's actually the climax of the story and the continuing fulfilment of God's sovereign will being made known. So, with that in mind:

Matthew in his Gospel takes the genealogy, which closes this book and incorporates it in the family tree, which opens his book (and the NT). For this is the family tree of the true kinsman redeemer - Jesus. There are however, two modifications Mathew makes. He explicitly links Boaz with Ruth his wife and Rahab his mother. What is significant about that? Well, as we have seen Ruth began life as a Moabite - a pagan. Rahab began life as a Canaanite and a harlot. A pagan and a prostitute are embedded in the family tree of God's Holy Son. Isn't that amazing? But it is to this grand purpose that the whole of this story has been leading. Ruth needed redeeming, not just from despair but from the guilt of sin and it was her great, great, great and however many 'greats' grandson who was to do it. His precious blood was shed for pagans and prostitutes. He is not ashamed to be so identified with the sinful humanity he came to save and it was from this little town of Bethlehem that it all happened, vs11.

Yes with Naomi and Ruth, yes later with Jesse and David - but a thousand years later it was to happen with another young couple Mary and Joseph, both of whom could trace their ancestry right back here. And do you know what? In all the tiny details of people's lives during the intervening years God had been steadily at work, ready to bring into the world his Son, born of a Virgin, born to die - so that a Kim Phuc, a John Plummer, a Paul Carr and whatever your name happens to be, might live with purpose here on earth and look forward to the hope of eternity through the wings of refuge the true kinsman redeemer: Jesus Christ our Lord.

During his earthly ministry Jesus did not ask for a penny. He reached out to embrace the lonely and disaffected and never was there a moment's thought of what it would cost him: 'The Son of Man has come' he said, 'not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a *ransom* for many.' And when the moment came when the price for our rescue had to be paid, he withheld nothing, and with the final gasp of his breath he cried from the cross 'it is finished', not the cry of despair - but the shout of victory - 'It is paid.'

As the Son of God looked down the long corridors of eternity and saw you in your plight as Boaz saw Ruth, his heart was moved for you, such that he said I am willing to die for you if that is the only way your debt of sin can be cancelled - I will pay whatever it costs. And he did. That is how much he loves you and me. Here we have a husband willing to pay the ultimate price for his bride.

A Redemption which is Effective, vs11-17

The most important part of this story is only mentioned in a couple of verses! There is probably no news that is more exciting than to receive an invitation to a wedding and/or to receive news of a birth announcement. And yet birth announcements are very routine things. They tell you a few standard bits of information, and there is only a small range of possibilities for most of them. The child is either a boy or a girl, usually weighs between five and ten pounds, is probably between eighteen and twenty-two inches long, and was probably born within three weeks of the due date. But the announcement is thrilling nonetheless, because a child whose coming was eagerly anticipated has finally entered the world.

The story of Ruth opened with three funerals and ends with a wedding. Could be made into a film, couldn't it? However, this story has in fact, a triple climax. There is blessing for Ruth and Boaz vs11&13: *'May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife ... and she gave birth to a son.'* There is also a blessing for Naomi vs16: *'Then Naomi took the child, laid him on her lap and cared for him. The women living there said, "Naomi has a son."* But then there is a blessing, which far outstrips them all, vs17: *'And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.'* This is how Israel, and as we shall see, the whole world, was to have a King. But I guess the focus of the blessings for this family are in the words addressed to Naomi: vs14 *'Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a kinsmen - redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better than seven sons, has given him birth.'*

This little baby Obed is the missing piece in the filling of Naomi's emptiness. Already in this cameo picture we see Naomi beginning to sparkle with life as she gazes at the little bundle on her knee. She is the old Naomi again - pleasant, and no longer Mara - bitter. This gift of God will provide for her in her old age - it is the baby who is her kinsmen - redeemer. And for the first and only time in the whole story we come across a word we might have expected to have encountered long before. Did you spot it? *Feel it in my fingers, I feel it in my toes ... love is all around; it's everywhere I go!* The word 'love' vs 15. And love, as we all know, will find a way - hence the title for my sermon 'Love will find a way'.

Throughout this story, the word used to describe loyal caring relationships is 'kindness'. The kindness of Ruth to Naomi; Boaz to Ruth; Ruth to Boaz; and the kindness of the Lord to them all. But this is a kindness, which goes beyond legal obligations, one that is true to the spirit of the law and not simply the letter. But we find the word love here used in an unexpected way. It's not used to describe the understandable love between and man and a woman - but the extraordinary commitment of a young Moabite for her aged Israelite mother-in-law who doesn't even seem to appreciate it. That is why these women have to remind her!

4: 1 John 4:10 is always a challenging verse when we consider our relationships with other members of our church family. If love, as Paul suggests, is "... *practical and costly*." What might you be able to put in place that will improve your relationships with others?

5: Have you ever passed over genealogies when reading the Bible in order to move onto more meaningful passages? Why do you think a genealogy, such as the one on Ruth 4 (and Matthew 1) is so important? What do they tell us about people? What do they tell us about God?

6: There's no doubt that our short series into the book of Ruth has touched the hearts and minds of many with its message. What, for you, has been the most significant aspect of this study? Who do you most identify with? What will you 'carry' with you into your future Christian life as a result of this study?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



HG27: Ruth (4/4) *Love Will Find Way*

Ruth 4:1-22

Home Group Sermon Notes

28th February 2010 - Revd Paul A. Carr

Introduction

Paul began his talk by describing the moving story behind one of the most disturbing snapshots of the Vietnam War: the one where a 9 year old Vietnamese girl is running down the road, naked, screaming in pain and horribly burned from a Napalm attack. The girl's name was Kim Phuc and hers, and that of the pilot who dropped the bomb, John Plummer, is an amazing story of God's love, forgiveness and restoration. If you wish to hear this story in full, please go to the home group sermon page on our website and download/listen to the introduction to Paul's talk.



What is the moral of this story? It's simply this: There is no limit to God's restoring love. From what many would consider to be a hopeless situation and an insignificant girl, God began to restore a nation. On that bleak day when Kim lost her family and was herself engulfed in flames, she would not have been able to predict the unlikely outcome of her ordeal - that through a series of apparently chance events, she would come to know the healing power of God's love and in turn be in a situation to share that love with thousands of others - as she is still doing today. Through her testimony many have discovered for themselves the peace that can be had under the divine 'wings of refuge.'

This is the message of the book of Ruth. Not only have we seen this widowed former pagan move closer to the One True God, we are about to discover something even more wonderful, that *through* this inconsequential woman God is going to embrace the whole world with his saving love. Most of you should know that the story revolves around three people: Naomi, Ruth and Boaz. Naomi's story is the story of everyone in Israel at the time of the Judges. However, not only is this the story of one family and one nation, it is our story. We can no more rescue ourselves than Naomi, we need someone to provide a way for us to be restored, to give us an inheritance which will last into eternity. And that is precisely what the final chapter of this story promises - a kinsman redeemer who can begin to mend the most messed up of lives, restore us and secure for us a destiny which no one can ever take away. So let's turn to the final chapter of Ruth and hear what God has to say to us as we conclude this wonderful story:

A Redemption which is Costly, vs1-10

The background to this, remember, is the law of Moses in Deuteronomy 25/Leviticus 25, where a close relative of a widow could marry her. Now up to this point in the story the reader has been hoping (as has Ruth and Naomi themselves) that this was going to be Boaz. But in ch3 an ominous cloud loomed on the horizon, the news that there was someone else, a much closer relative, relegating Boaz to second in line. You can imagine that if word got out to this other relative that Boaz had designs on Ruth, it would up the negotiating stakes considerably with the unnamed relative driving a hard bargain, playing on Boaz's emotions. So this has to be handled with an air of cool detachment. However, in a carefully planned, but apparently accidental, meeting the other relative turns up at the gate of the city, the natural meeting place where matters of business and finance were conducted in full view of the city leaders.

Wisely, Boaz doesn't mention Ruth at all; he speaks solely in terms of property belonging to Elimelech (Naomi's dead husband) which, according to Israelite law, passed on to the next of kin - this unnamed relative. However, there were the needs of the widow to consider. She would have to be provided for. After all, Naomi is old and would not have any more children to whom the property would automatically be transferred. So yes, he could give Naomi some money and he in the meantime he will have extended his 'real estate' holdings. In the words of Arthur Daley, this looked like a 'nice little earner.' But then Boaz drops the bombshell: 'Oh, you do realise that there is something else - Ruth the Moabitess.' Not only do you have to consider the law in Deuteronomy about redeeming property, there is also the associated law in Leviticus about marriage and offspring, vs5. And so the man has to decide: 'Deal or no Deal!'

Vs6: *At this the kinsman - redeemer said; 'Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate.' You redeem it, for I cannot do it.* 'Ruth for a wife! You must be joking? Everyone knows there is a jinx attached to her. After all, the men in her family seem to die in mysterious circumstances! Who's to say I won't be next? It may simply be the realisation that if he marries Ruth and she has a son, then the land automatically reverts to him, in which case he loses both the money he has laid out in his initial investment *and* the land. This was one price this man was not willing to pay.

Not so Boaz. He was willing to pay the price in full, to take on all the responsibilities in providing for these two women. And he was going to be seen to be acting with integrity through it all: hence all this business about exchanging sandals - the equivalent to a signature at the bottom of a contract, in full view of witnesses. In Boaz, we see a reflection of the kindness of God. This, of course, is the difference between a true redeemer and a false one. The false redeemer, as we see it in the unnamed relative, is full of self - interest. He was only interested in what he could squeeze out of the situation. The concerns of the two women didn't really enter into his thinking at all. Not so with the true redeemer.