







## GOOD THINGS, LITTLE PACKAGES RUTH – The Three Redeemers





## RUTH



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#### Ruth 1:15-18 (ESV)

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#### 2 Samuel 7:12-17 (ESV)

12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, **15** but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. 16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.'" 17 In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.



#### Ephesians 2:12 (ESV)

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.



#### Ephesians 2:13 (ESV) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.





















For those of you who still have not met me yet, I am Pastor Todd Johnson.....Pastor of Discipleship here at BVBC and I am so glad to be here with you this morning. Everyone in the BVBC family has been so warm and welcoming to our family as we have gotten settled in over the past couple of months.....thank you for the cards, thank you for the gifts, thank you for the smiles and well wishes...you have made us feel quite at home, and we are thankful for that.

Ok so, today we are continuing our Sermon Series entitled Good Things, Little Packages...where we have been tackling some of the smaller/shorter books of the of the OT that still and yet have a deeply profound message for our spiritual lives today.



#### Illus:

And you know, in preparing for this sermon in particular, I was reminded of a story I heard from antiquity involving our great American statesman Benjamin Franklin. While serving in the French court Franklin heard some French aristocrats mocking the Bible and stating that is was unworthy of reading. They said the Bible lacked style, substance, and so forth.

And even though Franklin himself wasn't a believer, he had a certain fondness for the scriptures having grown up as a youth in the colonies, and so he was well aware of the excellence of biblical literature. And so he decided to play a little trick on the French.



Franklin wrote out a short book of the Bible by hand. Except he substituted the biblical names for French ones, and he also replaced biblical cities with French cities.

Then he read this re-written manuscript to the aristocratic elite assembled in France. And at the conclusion of Franklin's reading they all boasted about the elegance and simplicity of style of this touching story.

They even inquired, "But where did you find this gem of literature, Monsieur Franklin?" He replied to their discomfort. "It comes from the same Bible you so disdain, it is the <u>Book of Ruth</u>."

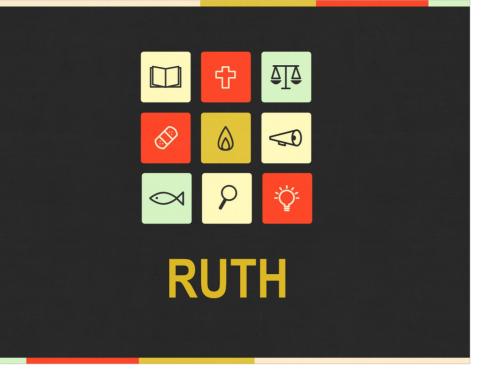


- I love that story, because it so clearly illustrates for us how the timeless truths of the Gospel translate and penetrate through even the most calloused of hearts. These French aristocrats were compelled by the eternal themes of LOVE, LOSS and a subsequent REDEMPTION, because these themes are hard-wired into our conciousness whether we like it or not.
- And you know, the OT biblical narrative is chock full of stories that point forward to a future redemption, an ultimate redeemer. And our text for this morning "The Book of Ruth" is principle among them. Because in Ruth we have one of the best depictions of WHAT TRUE REDEMPTION LOOKS LIKE.



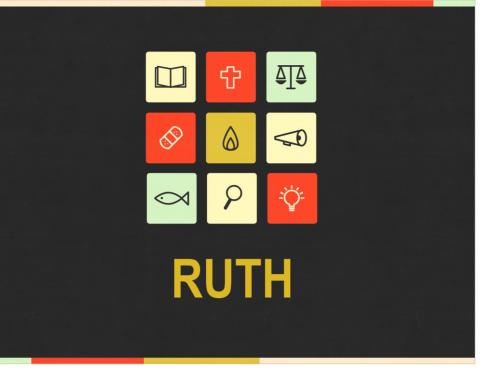
Now, when we think of REDEMPTION what first comes to mind?

- Often we think of *reclaiming* something that has been lost....perhaps we think of *reviving* something that has been dead.....*overcoming* some sort of obstacle.
- Well Church, REDEMPTION is woven into the very frabric of scripture, and in fact it could be said that the entire Canon of scripture is a tale of REDEMPTION.
- And as we approach the Book of Ruth...I'd like to first lay some ground work for the context of Ruth. And then, even though I will not have time to share everything contained within the 4 chapters of Ruth...I do want to focus the bulk of our time on *The Three Redeemers* found within the Book of Ruth. Because within this story there are three redemption stories playing out simultainiously. **[Pause]** <sup>5</sup>



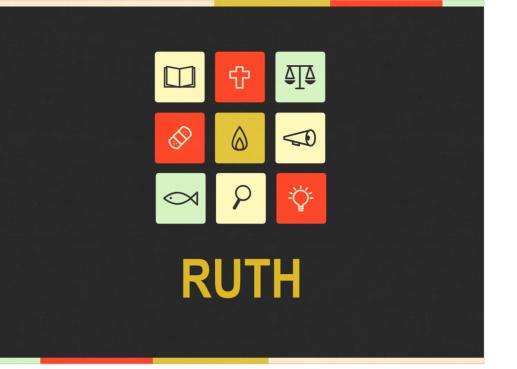
Ok so, the tale of Ruth takes place way back in the time of the Judges....preceeding King David's reign...which is why Ruth lies in the OT right between Judges and I Samuel.

- The Book of Ruth begins by telling us of a severe famine in the land of Judah....this famine caused a man by the name of Elimelech, along with his wife (Naomi) and their two sons, (Mahlon and Chilion) to move from Bethlehem to Moab. They moved from Israel to a foreign country.
- They stayed there for 10 years and within that time their family grows. Mahlon and Chilion marry Moabite women. Mahlon marries a woman named Ruth (the subject of this Book) and Chilion marries a woman named Orpah.



But tragedy befalls this family as Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion all die in Moab leaving their wives in a desperate state, and in need of REDEMPTION.

- Now, to lose a close family member at anytime is a tragedy beyond measure.....but for these 3 women to lose their husbands all around the same time was incredibly dire.
- You must remember that at this time all societal progression went through your husband, or your sons, back then it was an unbelievably male dominated society. These three deaths left Naomi, Ruth and Orpha with NO HOME, NO FAMILY, and NO LAND.



And so Naomi resolves to go back home to Bethlehem...she is returning back to her own home to seek refuge...because she has lost everything.

- Her daughters-in-law want to come with her....but she begs them not to.....Naomi recognizes that if they come with her, they as Moabites will find it difficult to remarry, there is a greater potential for them to be mistreated, Naomi sees that their lives will be far worse in Bethlehem, and so she exhorts them to stay in Moab.
- Now, Orpah listens.....but let's look at chapter 1 verse 15 at Ruth's response....because in this we see Ruth had other plans in mind.



#### Ruth 1:15-18 (ESV)

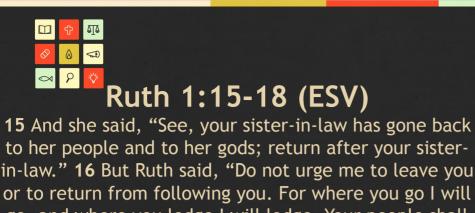
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#### Read:

Wow! Wouldn't you love someone to speak those words to you? Perhaps some of you spoke these words on your wedding day.

Here Ruth pledges to never give up on Naomi....NO MATTER WHAT. And she even asks God to judge her if she breaks this covenant.

And so here we have two women in a terrible situation, a situation that they are powerless to overcome by themselves. There is nothing they can do to get their home back, there is nothing in and of themselves that they can do to get their land back, but here we see that Ruth does the only thing she can.....she offers Naomi the gift of friendship, she offers to be her family till death parts them.



or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. **17** Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you." **18** And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

#### Church, this is POWERFULLY REDEMPTIVE.

- If Redemption is defined as the act of saving someone or being saved by someone.....what Ruth offers Naomi here is the first light of dawn...its the first glimmer of hope in an otherwise hopeless situation.
- And you see, God uses Ruth's uncommon first act of RADICAL FRIENDSHIP/LOVE to bring about a TRUE REDEMPTION later in this story. (2X)
- But I want to pause for a moment....because **we need to go** *inward with this* (*what we are reading here*). Here we see God use a committment of friendship to ignite a spark that would bring about REDEMPTION. And Church I want to challenge you that God can and will use your life and my life in similar ways if we allow Him.



#### [Pause]

You know, I've seen evidence of this truth in the life of my mother. My mother's testimony is one in which a neighborhood friend witnessed to her throughout much of her life, but my mother was unwilling to hear the good news.

But her friend Harriett didn't stop pursuing her, she didn't stop trying to reach her with the Gospel.

And then years later my mother lost her brother,

(he was as Policeman who was shot in the line of duty)...and in the grief of that moment my mother's friend Harriett was there yet again...she loved my mother well through the tragedy, she shared the good news of Jesus within the midst of that dark time...and this time my mother was ready to hear about what Jesus had done for her....the REDEMPTION FOUND IN HIS 11



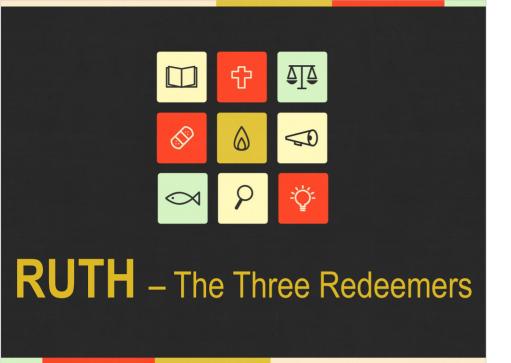
Church without Harriett's persistence to **REACH OUT**.....without her seeing it as her duty to be a **VEHICLE OF REDEMPTION** in the lives of the people God had placed on her path, I MIGHT NOT BE SPEAKING WITH YOU THIS MORNING......because I was first reached with the Gospel by my MOTHER.

- And it all started with a neighborhood friend (Harriet) that pursued my mother for more than 20 years with the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.
- And so the question becomes.....Who has God placed on your path/my path? Who is lonely or struggling that you might encourage? Who might you begin to develop the bonds of friendship with? Who might you share the GOOD NEWS of what Jesus has done in your life? Who will you come alongside the way we see Ruth come alongside Naomi in this passage?



Our 26<sup>th</sup> President Theodore Roosevelt popularized the saying **People Do Not Care About How Much You Know Until They Know How Much You Care**. This is VERY true.

- And this should be a defining characteristic of Christians.....this should set us apart from the crowd....our uncommon love that is a picture of the awesome God we serve.
- And a part of the reason why the Book of Ruth has Gospel overtones (that point forward to Jesus, and his love made manifest on the cross) is because of the uncommon love for Naomi Ruth demonstrates here. It is a REDEMPTIVE TYPE OF LOVE.
- And Church as we unleash that Uncommon Love on our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers to those whom God has placed on our path.....it will plant REDEMPTIVE SEEDS that will one day be ripe for the harvest. *[Pause]*

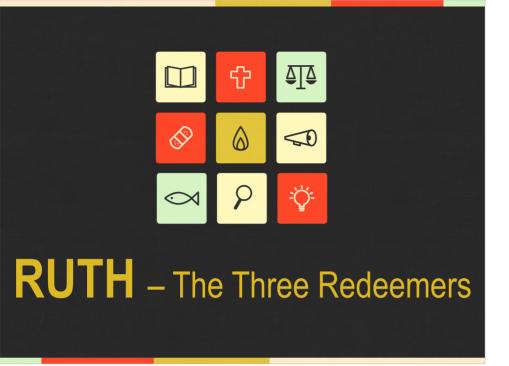


And so, back in our text..*(in response to all they have lost)...*Naomi and Ruth travel back to Bethlehem.

Now, they arrive in Bethlehem at the beginning of the harvest season. And again, they were poor, their allotted inheritance in Israel was gone, and they had no one to support them.

But there was one slim glimmer of hope.

- It was required by God's law (in Leviticus) that the poor be allowed to follow the reapers through the fields and glean, or to pick up what the reapers left behind.
- Now, Ruth and Naomi are indeed very poor at this time and so Ruth goes to glean in the field of a man named Boaz, who they later find out is a wealthy relative of Naomi's.



And the two begin to dream in hopes that this man Boaz might become their own KINSMAN REDEEMER.

A Kinsman-Redeemer was a relative who could *redeem* an inheritance (Leviticus 25:25). In certain circumstances, where there was no heir, a near relative could act as a kinsman-redeemer by marrying the relative's widow to redeem the inheritance and thus provide for the widow.

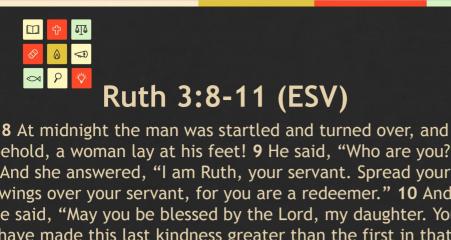
Now, the relative was not obligated to act as kinsmanredeemer. And if no relative chose to help, the widow would most likely live out her days in poverty.



And so in light of this HOPE...the HOPE of a Kinsman Redeemer.....Naomi suggests to her daughter-in-law a plan of action: She says toward the beginning of chapter 3....verse 3.

3 Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.
4 But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do." 5 And she replied, "All that you say I will do."

Ruth follows suit and does what Naomi tells her....

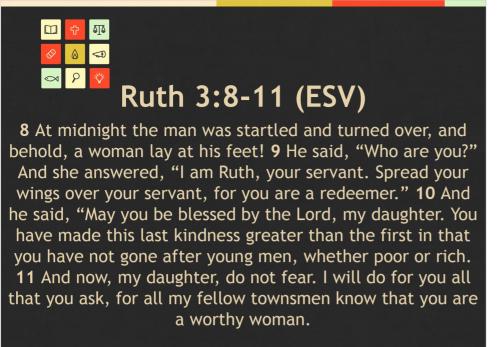


behold, a woman lay at his feet! 9 He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer." 10 And he said, "May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman.

And notice with me the response of Boaz starting in verse 8 of chapter 3.

#### Read:

- And here we see Boaz become the 2<sup>nd</sup> redeemer figure in this book.
- Boaz is awoken by a woman who he barely knows, who is sleeping at his uncovered feet, as a sign that she is in need or redemption.
- And he agrees immediately! *Why?*



We need to understand that Boaz has little to gain here.

- He would have to pay for/buy back land that would still not technically be his.
- He would have to support both Ruth and Naomi and any children financially....on top of whatever obligations he currently held.
- And also Ruth was a Moabitess, she was a foriegner, an outsider. Moabites were looked down upon by virtually everyone in Israel.

And so again...why? Why does Boaz agree to be the Kinsman Redeemer?



#### Ruth 3:8-11 (ESV)

8 At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! 9 He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer." 10 And he said, "May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman.

Let's look again at verse 11. Boaz's' reasoning is clear, he states. *"For all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman."* 

What does he mean by this? He means that the townsmen, literally, *"the people of the gate" likely referring to the Elders in Bethlehem* consider Ruth to be a person of utmost reputation/noble character.



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Church, the same language that Boaz uses to commend Ruth here..... "a woman of noble character" is the same language we see in Proverbs 31 referring to the virtuous woman....the model for godly womanhood.

You see, Ruth and Naomi's mutual virtue was demonstrated in the fact that they paid attention to the Law of God in relation to redemption. They remembered what was prescribed back in Leviticus and therefore they sought out their kinsman redeemer.

Boaz recognizes this....and he accepts the request of redemption.



And what we ourselves can glean from this exchange between Boaz and Ruth on the threshing room floor is that *we can receive redemption* as *we follow God's path of redemption*.

You see Ruth's virtue wasn't in and of herself....rather, it was directly tied to her following the Lord. She wasn't seen as a woman of Noble Character...a Virtuous Woman, because of her cunning or inginuity.....NO she was a fallen individual just like everyone else....but what sets Ruth apart is her FAITHFUL/ENDURING LOVE FOR NAOMI AND HER DILIGENCE TO SEEK REDEMPTION IN GOD'S WAY.

And here we see her honored for her dual faithfulness. But we must ask again.....how does this apply to our lives here, now, today? Because much like Ruth and Naomi we are all seeking a bit of redemption.....am I right?



But unfortunately most of the time we do not seek redemption God's way.....we'd rather go it alone.....our natural proclivities would lead us to the same perspective as Frank Sinatra who most famously sang. "I did it my way!"

And so the question becomes, how do we break ourselves out of this "I did it my way" perspective....to live virtuously as we see Ruth doing here...seeking redemption God's way?

Well *First* I think this comes by understanding the depth of our need for REDEMPTION.

**Second** we need to understand how far we fall from God's Holy standard...and that no matter what we do in and of ourselves...we will not be REDEEMED NO MATTER WHAT <u>WE</u> DO.

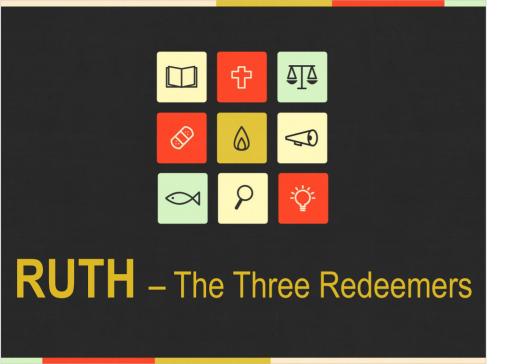


And *Third* we must understand that the REDEMPTION must come from outside of ourselves...... [*Pause*]

Illus:

You know one of my favorite stories about redemption comes from Phillip Griffin, in his book <u>The God who Redeems</u>....he writes

"I saw a sign once that I loved—it was a lost dog sign. There was a big cash reward for whoever found the lost dog, and a description of the dog. Here is what it said: "He's only got three legs, he's blind in the left eye, he's missing a right ear, his tail has been broken off, he was neutered accidentally by a fence—ouch!—he's almost deaf, **and he answers by the name 'Lucky.'"** Phillip writes.....That dog isn't lucky! He's been through a whole lot of mess. But he's lucky because he's got an owner who loves him and wants him back. That's what redemption is all about!"



Church family, that is what redemption is all about.

We were all this little dog lucky at one point.....maybe life is beating us up and we currently feel like this dog "Lucky".....no matter the case, we each know what it is like to need redemption in the form of our Master who came looking for us.....not because of our innate beauty or smarts or anything at all.....but because of his great LOVE.

Church, imagine with me for a moment that a King sends word to his son The Prince.....and the King says, "I want you to go to a foreign land, there are people there who are dying, I want you to give your life in exchange for theirs, so that they can inherit what is rightfully yours."



I imagine that most Princes would not take the King up on that kind of offer.

But the Power of this Gospel Story is that KING JESUS DID take up that offer.

And because he did we have REDEMPTION, the forgiveness of sins. [Pause]

I stated at the beginning of our time that there are three redeemers in this story. First, Ruth stays with Naomi and opens the door of redemption. Second, Boaz redeems Ruth and widens the door of redemption. And as we look at chapter 4 starting in verse 13 we are going to see the Third Redeemer....our Redeemer.



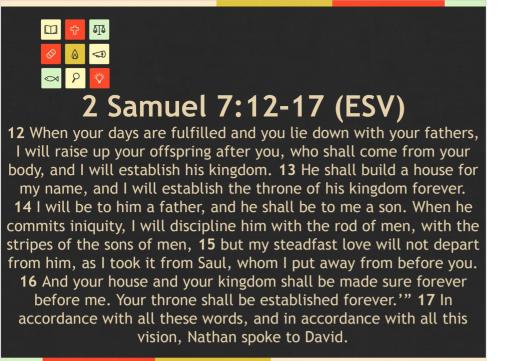
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#### Read:

There is so much in this passage that we could easily spend a couple of months just here.....but I want you to see YOUR REDEEMER IN THIS PASSAGE.

Because it is in these few verses that the Book of Ruth goes from being a story about God's redemption of Ruth and Naomi......to a broader story about God's redemption of EVERYONE WHO HAS EVER LIVED.

Because you see Ruth and Boaz's Son Obed.....he would become the Grandfather of King David. King David who God promised in 2 Sam 7 that the Messiah – The Redeemer of all would come from.



Turn with me in your Bibles over a couple of Books to 2 Samuel 7.....starting in verse 12 as we read the words of the Lord spoken to Ruth's Great Grandson David.

### Read:

This is the Davidic Covenant.....God making a promise with David that he will Build an Eternal Kingdom through his line....ETERNAL REDEMPTION through his very offspring.

The fulfillment of this promise came 2000 years ago in a manger in Bethlehem.....where Jesus was born.

Jesus Christ born to be the ULTIMATE REDEEMER.



#### Ephesians 2:12 (ESV)

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

And I hope you see the beautiful parallels between the story of Ruth.....and God's further reaching story of the redemption of mankind....what we call the Gospel.

- Ruth was a foreigner.....Ruth was destitute....Ruth was unable to provide for herself.....Ruth threw herself at the feet of the one who could redeem her.....and by grace Ruth was Redeemed/Restored.
- Humanity similarly was foreign to God....we were destitute, we were in need of redemption......In Ephesians 2:12 Paul highlights this condition..... [change slide]

#### Read:



#### Ephesians 2:13 (ESV)

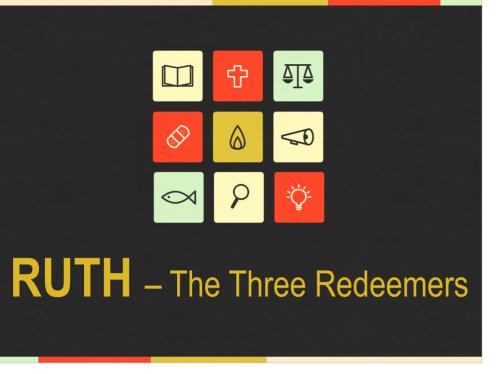
But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

But Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 2:13...

## But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

And Church you see Ruth received grace/redemption by sleeping at Boaz's feet.....and now we who are in need of redemption seek it not in ourselves but rather at the foot of the cross.....where the blood of Jesus flowed in order to make US HIS OWN.

This is the Gospel, for there is NO BETTER NEWS! AMEN!

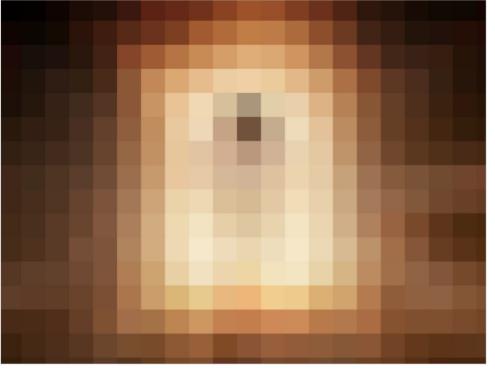


Ok so, to recap.

The events recorded in Ruth were part of God's preparations for the births of David and more importantly...Jesus, the promised Messiah. And all the while Ruth could not have been more clueless as to the ramifications of her faithfulness or lack thereof.

And I mention this because, just as Ruth (at the time) was unaware of God's larger purpose in her life.....we too will not know the full purpose and importance of our lives until we are able to look back from the perspective of eternity.

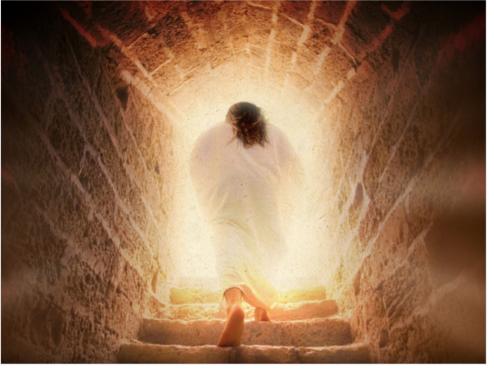
And what I mean by that is YOUR LIFE **[RIGHT NOW TODAY]** IS FULL OF PURPOSE......but often times we live without that perspective. **{Hard Pause}** 



Take a look at this image.....its really hard to make anything out in this image because it's blurred/pixelated.

We can see colors and some shapes, but this image wouldn't hold much meaning for anybody, neither could it effect or change anybody's life. This image is meaningless.

And so if you could only ever see this version of this image, you would think nothing of it.....it would quickly fade out of your mind.

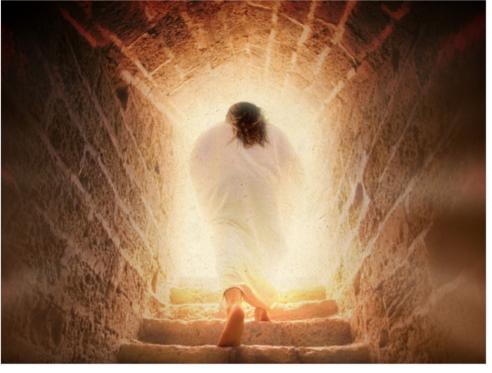


But what about this image? It's the same exact image as the first one without pixilation...seen from its proper perspective.....and we immediately see the significance.

We know that the image of the resurrected Christ HOLDS DEEP MEANING BECAUSE THIS IS THE IMAGE OF LIFE.

In this image and what it represents holds all the purpose anyone could ever ask for.

And my point is that the first/pixelated image was like looking at the Gospel with scales over our eyes. We can see some shapes, and colors, but the image is hidden....and therefore it renders the image meaningless.



But what the Holy Spirit does, what God's Empowering Presence does....is that it allows us to see what God has done through His Son Jesus with crystal clear vision.

Church, there are many on this Earth (individuals whom God has placed on our path) who have scales covering their eyes....limiting them from seeing what God has done, his love for them, and their opportunity to know him.

There are undoubtedly folks in this room this morning.....who need the redemption that is available through Christ Jesus.

And so, we must pray, that the Holy Spirit of the living God will illuminate our hearts and give vision to our eyes that we might see THIS JESUS.....resurrected and coming again.



We must begin to dream as a church......dream that just as God made Ruth's life unbelievably purposeful...how he brought redemption through someone who was once foreign...recognizing that we too are living within this story of REDEMPTION....and the ink isn't dry yet.

We must begin to dream about how God might use our lives and our church to continue the grand story of redemption in Jesus' name. In our church, in our homes, in our schools, in our workplaces, in our communities.

How he might use us in 2017 and beyond to be disciples who make disciples who make even more disciples.



I'd like to close with a story I heard in Pastor Noel Jesse Heikinnen's book that came out earlier this year entitled <u>Unchained</u>...In his book he tells the story of this man. [change slide]

Illus: This man is Shin Dong-Hyuk.....

And in 2005, Shin Dong-hyuk, became the only person to ever escape from a "total-control zone" internment camp in North Korea and live to tell the tale. Because Shin was born in the prison, he knew no other life. In his mind, the entire world was Camp 14, and there were only two types of people in the world: prisoners and guards. You were born as one or the other, and you lived your entire life that way. He later said that he never considered escape because he always assumed that "the society outside the camp would be similar to that inside the camp." Every day, Shin was told what to do and he did it. For twenty-three years, he was always hungry and tired from daily hard labor.



But Shin said everything changed in one day. A new prisoner named Park was brought to Camp 14, and with him came tales of a different world on the other side of the electric fence. He talked about living in cities and traveling to China. But one particular thing Park talked about defined freedom in Shin Dong-hyuk's mind more than anything else: **broiled chicken**. Park told him that outside the electrified fence of his world was another world where you could eat broiled chicken—and you could eat it anytime you wanted.

Shin had never eaten chicken. But he knew what chicken tasted like: **freedom**. This quest for broiled chicken led **Shin and Park** to attempt to escape over the electrified fence. **Park** touched the fence first and immediately died.



An untold number of volts coursed through his body and stopped his heart. His body then, became a bridge over which Shin was able to climb to his freedom.

That day Shin became the only person to ever escape from [a "total-control zone" internment camp in North Korea] and live to tell the tale.

Shin Dong-hyuk is no longer a prisoner. He now lives in South Korea and eats broiled chicken whenever he wants. This chicken, along with his freedom, was purchased by a friend who gave his life for him.



Church, the implications of this story to our lives and the Gospel are apparent and abundant.

Ruth is a story of friendship, love and redemption.....themes that work together and that culminate in a vision of an ultimate redeemer of all.

Therefore might we likewise be lights in our communities.....lights to the people whom God has placed on our path, lights that illiminate the path to freedom our Lord Jesus made possible.

