

A Vision of Redeemed Manhood and Womanhood (Ruth 1-4)

Pray for church of month. An old prayer asks for your Spirit to help us see Christ more clearly, love Him more dearly, follow Him more nearly, amen.

I've heard a pastor share how impactful it was in his church as he preached through the book of Ruth. As he finished the series, a mother who had been suffering terribly in her life told him how much her life and thinking had been transformed by that series, as if God had written this book for her (which He had, along with others, too :) She embroidered the words of the song God Moves to express how the truth of Ruth's story had impacted her. I believe that pastor still hangs that tapestry as a testimony to His redeeming grace for hard times. May God writes these truths on the fabric of our hearts

As we finish our time in the book of Ruth, I think it's good to look back at the book as a whole in its message for women, men, young people, and the story God's writing in our lives. Ruth gives visual aids for how redemption impacts a person's life, what it means to be masculine, feminine. This book helps us see visibly male and female believers interact in redemptive ways. I started 2020 teaching on a vision for body life, then stirring encouraging in relationships 2 weeks ago. Today we continue with a vision for redeemed manhood and womanhood in the book of Ruth as a whole. I said last week:

- Our gender-confused world needs this (transgender revolutionaries)
- Our conservative Christian world of patriarchy abuses this vision
- Other churches with feminized politicized views of male leadership
- Family-driven culture needs to see key role of singles, widows, older

GCBC purpose statement: we exist by the grace of God for the glory of God – that's our ultimate purpose – God's vision for man and woman is part of pursuing that. Grace means we're not better than others, but how can glorify God better? Tonight I'll continue this series with how that looks in gracious communication that gives God glory (quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger). These are convicting studies but I pray conforming us more to Christ

Eph 3:21: to God be the glory in the church...therefore walk worthy...

2:1 Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a **worthy** man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. Some translations say he was wealthy, or influential, or 'a man of standing,' or 'a prominent man of noble character.' Probably strength of character is the emphasis, that's his reputation in town. Now look at 3:11 as Boaz speaks to Ruth when she seeks redemption. He says in ch 3 v. 11 '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.'

Same Hebrew phrase used of Boaz. This was her character and reputation, too, and that ties together these 2 characters as models of a worthy man and woman. All scripture exalts God but also has examples for us. Redemption calls us to live worthy. In ch 4, v. 11, as redemption happens for Ruth, the people say to her and Boaz as a wedding blessing: '*May you act worthily ...and be famous in Bethlehem...*' They wanted the worthy actions of this worthy man and woman to live on. This book has *redeem* 23x, so the focus:

- What redeemed womanhood looks like (ladies first:)
- What redeemed manhood looks like (and how the Redeemer helps)

1st, what redeemed womanhood looks like (or we could say *femininity*).

We need to look at this not just in the context of this story or Ruth but as a book that's part of a bigger story of redemption. In Gen 1-2 God made man and woman in His image for His glory, but in Gen 3 sin turned them against each other. The man who was to lead was led into sin by the one who was to help him. God cursed this world and told the woman pain will be part of her life now in motherhood and marriage. Gen 3:16 ESV: '*your desire will be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.*' Competing desires!

Her desire is the word in 4:7 for sin like an untamed desire crouching at the door to take over. Wives may take over a husband's role or be dominated by it, a man may sinfully rule over his wife or passively watch (Adam at tree).

Those tendencies and temptations come from the fall and original sin

But Gen 3 also has a promise that one day the seed of a woman would come to defeat Satan and sin and the effects of the curse. Later scripture calls Him a Redeemer and His wounded heel and hands meant His death on the cross. Gal 3-4 says '*male and female...are all one in Christ Jesus...God sent his son, born of a woman...to redeem...Christ redeemed us from the curse...*'¹

The context there is OT law, but the curse has to do with sin and redemption reverses its effects and reunites in Christ and His law of love. So as we think of womanhood or feminine design by God, the curse has corrupted it but the creation before sin does call a wife to be a suitable helper. She's an equal in creation and in Christ spiritually, but different in design (equal but different)

In culture there's confusion, in Christ there's redemption

Redemption in scripture involves taking back and transformation, including how we think. The book of Romans talks about redemption for 11 chapters then says at the start of ch 12 we're not to be conformed to the pattern of this world but to be transformed by _____ of our minds. That's redeeming how we think, and our world gives us a very different pattern of femininity.

Evangelical feminism denies that God gives men and women different roles in the home and church. A Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood formed in response in 1980s, good men and women gathered to defend the biblical teaching of ‘loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives...[their words, and their stated goal] to reform rather than reflect our ailing culture’

Their helpful Danvers Statement: ‘Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse. In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands’ authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands’ leadership (Eph 5, Col 3, Titus 2, 1 Pet 3). In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (1 Tim 2:11-15).’²

The world, the flesh, and the devil attack that. As a redeemed man, my flesh resists that, selfishness is easier. At home I can be loud at sin or lazy. In the church, insensitive leading has hurt sisters I’ve asked forgiveness of. I need the Redeemer’s vision to be Thou my vision. In your families or this church family, guys don’t lead or lord it over, gals want to do it all or not use gifts. Redeemed sisters, we need your ministry, and trust me you don’t want mine

In Ruth 4 they say this redeemed woman is better than seven men to Naomi. The reality is ladies are better in many ways and guys can learn from Ruth. So let’s look again at Ruth 3:11, end of v. 11 calls her ‘...*a worthy woman.*’ There’s 1 other place that exact phrase is used. Anyone? Study Bible note? Pr 31:10 KJV ‘Who can find a virtuous woman?’ (NIV ‘noble character’).

Boaz found that excellent wife worth more than rubies (or 7 sons).

Pr 31 says her husband ‘*praises her, saying, many daughters have done nobly [or ‘excellently,’ same word], but you excel them all*’ (31:29 NASB). Pr 31 ends with the people of the gates praising that kind of woman and that language also is in Ruth 3:11 (townsmen is lit. ‘*all the gate of my people...*’ and when we get to Ruth 4 they’re literally praising this redeemed woman!)

So what Boaz says about her bookends what Pr 31 says about an ideal wife. That vision of a godly woman in Pr 31 starts and ends with what Ruth was called. The Hebrew Bible puts OT books in different order, Proverbs-Ruth. Hebrew prof. Varner says³ ‘Ruth follows Proverbs 31...It appears that the rabbis did this placement intentionally because of this common expression.’

Pr 31 is written by the mother of a King named *Lemuel* ('devoted to God') and some think that's another name for Solomon (like *Jedediah*='beloved of God'). MSB⁴ says Jewish tradition thought the mother writing to her son in Pr 31 was Bathsheba telling Solomon about David's great-grandma Ruth (the study Bible lists character traits Ruth shares with Proverbs 31 woman):

1. Devoted to her family all her life (Ruth 1:15–18 / Pr 31:12, 27)

Ruth 1: she tells her only family left where you go I go, etc.

A Pr 31 wife also devotes '*all the days of her life...*' (v. 12)

and '*She looks well to the ways of her household...*' (v. 27)

The Prov 31 woman also is devoted to her family, children.

Application:

2. Diligent in her work (Prov. 31:13, 15, 27 / Ruth 2:2, 7, 17, 23)

Pr 31 says she '*works with willing hands ... and does not eat the bread of idleness ...*' In Ruth 2:2, she doesn't sit idly in the house, she asks Naomi if she can work with her hands to try to provide food, literally bread. She was willing and able to work. 2:7 *She said 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.'* So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest." ...¹⁷ So she gleaned in the field until evening. [v. 23 says she worked with the women till the end of the harvests]

Pr 31 talks about strength, Ruth is clearly strong (2:17, 3:15)

Pr 31:15 NIV '*She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions ...*' That's literally what Ruth does in ch 3 while it's dark and brings big portions back

Application:

3. Dedicated to godly speech (Prov. 31:26 / Ruth 2:10, 13)

Word picture in Pr 31:26: '*... kindness is on her tongue*'

That's the same Hebrew word *khesed* Naomi used for Ruth in ch 1, how kind Ruth had been to her in the way she spoke.

In Ruth 3:10 as she asks Boaz to redeem her and the family, '*...he said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first ...*'

In Ruth 2 study she speaks humbly, respectfully, grace-filled

Application:

4. Delivered blessings to her family (Prov 31:28-29 / Ruth 4:14-17)

We won't spend time here as we looked at the blessing last week, but what a blessing she delivered to this family! Pr 31 says our application is to rise up and call her blessed. Praise the worthy women in your life, kids to moms, man to wife

5. Dependent on God above all (Prov 31:25b, 30 / Ruth 2:12)

Charm is deceptive, beauty fades, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. The Pr 31 woman smiles at the future, trusting a sovereign God. Ruth feared the Lord, 'your God is my God' she said to get refuge in Israel's God. This Moabite lived out the Israelite's law. She depended on God and God alone to save her, under His wing (*Application: have you?*)

Ladies don't read Pr 31 and be discouraged if you've never used a distaff or spindle for wool or flax to make purple clothes for snow. Or if you never go buy a field, you've never planted a vineyard, or you let your lamp go out at night. Think of lady wisdom in Proverbs, not a list to do (the only command in Pr 31 is for men and children to commend her). Don't think superwoman, think of an ordinary woman like Ruth living out Pr 31 principles, not details – by redeeming grace you all can be devoted to your family, diligent in your work, dedicated to godly speech, delivering blessings, dependent on God.

What does redeemed manhood like? Look at Boaz the kinsman-redeemer. Stuart Scott, *Biblical Manhood: Masculinity, Leadership, Decision-Making*: A real man pursues a 'redeemed perspective and character, enhanced by qualities consistent with the distinguishing male roles of leading, loving, protecting, and providing – all for the glory of God.' (p. 21). That's Boaz. Redemption is at work in and through him in the story. Ruth 2:2 introduces him as a 'worthy/noble man,' equivalent phrase to his suitable helper Ruth. The book wants us to look to this man in Ruth 2, v. 4: *And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you!"*

#1. God-centered in his work

Notice how he talks as he comes to work: *Yahweh be with you!* He seems to have had an impact on his workers as they say back *Yahweh, bless you* (the word LORD in all caps is the proper name Yahweh). He wasn't a Sabbath-only believer, like Sunday-only Christians today. Monday to Friday he was thinking and speaking of God. He comes to work praying and saying God's blessing on others. There wasn't a sacred-secular compartment in his mind.

In v. 5 you see at work he's aware of and has care for those he works with. He notices a new person, a stranger, and wants to make her feel welcome. And he goes out of his way to show her around and make her feel safe, too.
⁸ *Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. ⁹ Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn."* ¹⁰ *Then she fell*

...

Side note to single guys: don't expect girls to fall at your feet like Ruth did! But a man like that will make an impact! Redeemed manhood or a real man protects and provides for the glory of God. As he centers on God he speaks like God, and thinks like God, who protects and provides the needs of others

#2. God-centered in his words

In v. 4 the Lord is on his lips. First thing out of his mouth literally: *Yahweh*.
¹² *The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come...* It was said of Bunyan, poke and him and Bible bleeds out, with Boaz if you poke him even in the middle of the night, the God of the Bible comes out!
 3:8 *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 ... [then in v. 13, middle of the verse] as the LORD lives, I will redeem you."*

If you wake me up and midnight, from a deep sleep, "Yahweh bless you" isn't probably going to come out of my mouth! I'm not very sanctified when I wake up. I'd probably kick you if you try to pull off my blankets! And you don't want to be close to my bare feet, you can trust me on that one! But for Boaz, blessing and prayer without ceasing were natural. May God grow us.

#3. God-centered in his walk

We've already seen in ch 2 Boaz reflects his redeeming God in his desire to protect, and to respect parents, how he notices the unnoticed, wants to help the struggler and take care of the needy. And we also see in ch 3 his honor of the mother, and his commitment to do things by the Book, not feelings. In ch 4 we see him willing to pay a personal price and sacrifice for the sake of loyalty and love. Ephesians say to men who have been redeemed, we're to love our wife like that, giving up self, and be redeeming influence on her.

That's what redeemed manhood and womanhood looks like, but we need to look to Christ our Redeemer for help to be like Christ. He loved the church and gave Himself up for her, and nourishes and cherishes her, that's the love that compels us as husbands. And it's also Christ who's the model for wives in His submission (1 Pet). Boaz and Ruth are examples, but Jesus empowers

The way to be an excellent woman is to focus on the excellencies of Jesus. The way to be a worthy man is to look to the worthy Lamb slain who reigns. Jesus is the true and better Kinsman-Redeemer, greater than Boaz and Ruth. History is His story. Each OT story points to Him and His redemption plan.

It's been said: 'Jesus is the true and better Adam, who passed the test in the garden and whose obedience is imputed to us (1 Corinthians 15).

Jesus is the true and better Abel, who, though innocently slain, has blood that cries out for our acquittal, not our condemnation (Hebrews 12:24).

... [or] Abraham, who answered the call of God

to leave the comfortable [to] go out ... to create a new people of God...

[or] Isaac, who was not just offered up by his father on the mount but was truly sacrificed for us all... "Now we know that you love us, because you did not withhold your son, your only son whom you love, from us."...

[or] Jacob... wrestled with God and took the blow of justice we deserved... we, like Jacob, receive only the wounds of grace to wake us up and discipline us.

[or] Joseph, who at the right hand of the King forgives those who betrayed and sold him and uses his new power to save them.

[or] Moses, who stands in the gap between the people and the Lord and who mediates a new covenant (Hebrews 3).

[or] Job — the truly innocent sufferer — who then intercedes for and saves his stupid friends (Job 42).

[or] David, whose victory becomes his people's victory, though they never lifted a stone to accomplish it themselves.

[or] Esther, who didn't just risk losing an earthly palace but lost the ultimate heavenly one, who didn't just risk his life but gave his life — to save his people.⁵

¹ Galatians 3:28, 4:4-5, 3:13.

² <https://cbmw.org/about/danvers-statement/>

³ <http://exegeticaltools.com/2018/12/03/ruth-proverbs-31-woman/>

⁴ *MacArthur Study Bible* note on Ruth 3:11.

⁵ <https://www.gospelrelevance.com/2017/11/27/the-bible-is-about-jesus/>