

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
November 26, 2017

Marriage of Ruth

Ruth 4:13-17

4:13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son.

4:14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel!

4:15 He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."

4:16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse.

4:17 And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

1. God's Story

We have learned from the Book of Ruth in these last few weeks. Naomi led Ruth to the faith, Ruth decided to leave the gods of Moabite and her country, came to the true God, and moved to Bethlehem with Naomi. Ruth met Boaz who was the relative of Naomi's husband and received his kindness. Naomi realized the guidance of God behind these happenings, and asked Boaz to buy the land of Elimelech, her late husband, through Ruth. However, buying the land meant the person had to marry Ruth to keep the name of

Elimelech. Moreover, there was a closer relative to Elimelech than Boaz, and he had a priority to buy the land. However, Boaz overcame these difficulties and got married to Ruth. The Book of Ruth concludes with the birth of a boy between Ruth and Boaz. Naomi was rewarded, and Ruth's pure and obedient faith bore fruit.

The Book of Ruth begins with a famine, refuge life in a foreign country, and three women losing their husbands; however, it concludes with marriage and giving birth, which is a happy ending. The Book of Ruth is a heart-warming story with romance and thrilling. It is a well-spoken story, but it was not written for entertainment. This is the "story of faith". It tells us Ruth's faith which turned from the idols to the true God; Naomi's faith which realized the God's providence through the encounter of Ruth and Boaz; and Boaz's faith which noticed Ruth's faith and treated her kindly. We can learn so many things from their faith.

But the Book of Ruth is "God's Story". Not only the Book of Ruth but also all the Scripture is "God's Story". By "God's Story" I mean that God is the main character of the story. In the Scripture, there are so many events and occurrences, and you can see so many characters. However, the main character is always God in any books and chapters of the Scripture. The Scripture tells us that God has been developing His plan of salvation for human beings step by step in the history. In the Book of Ruth, how God's salvation was depicted? Let's look at it.

2. God's Redemption

God's salvation is described as "redemption," and the Savior is called "redeemer." "Redemption" means to "purchase something back" you

used to have. In ancient time, people were on sale as slaves likewise properties. So people sometimes “redeemed” their slaves, too.

We can find the account that God’s salvation was called by the word “redemption” in Exodus for the first time in the Bible. Israel was the slave of Egypt, and they had no power to escape; Egypt was too great and strong to free their slaves. Yet by His almighty power God plagued Egypt and made them relieve Israel from the status of slave. That means God “redeemed” Israel to be discharged.

“Redemption” means to “buy back,” so it should cost the payment. What is it then? It was the “Lamb of Passover.” For now we won’t talk much about “Passover,” but we know that people of Israel sacrificed their lamb and applied the blood around the door at the eve night of Exodus. The price for redeeming Israel was paid by the blood of the lamb.

Exodus story implied the cross of Jesus Christ. Likewise Israel was the slave of Egypt, everyone was the slave of sin and death. The one and only Son of God, Jesus Christ, was called “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29) and sacrificed Himself to give us the blood of redemption. For this sacrifice people was redeemed and “discharged” from sin and death, and will go in the just and life. In order to tell the apostles that He was the lamb of the Passover, Jesus took the Supper at the eve night of crucifixion. As you read in Matthew 26:26-27, “Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Exodus of Israel was the prototype of the redemption of Jesus Christ on the cross, but in the book of Ruth, also has the “prototype” of the redemption. Boaz “redeemed” Ruth with the land of Elimelech.

When Boaz married to Ruth and had a baby, women in Bethlehem sang like this in verse 14; "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel!" Look at the word of “redeemer.” Boaz was one of the relatives of Naomi, but people called him “redeemer.” In Ruth 4:1, 3, 6, and 8, the closer relative than Boaz was also called “redeemer.” This man could not accept to marry Ruth, and gave Boaz the right to redeem. Then Boaz became “the redeemer” and “purchase back” Ruth as his wife.

Marriage couldn't be without love. Boaz recognized Ruth' faith and humanity, and was very kind to her; more so than the obligation of relatives, Boaz redeemed her from his favor and love for Ruth. As same as Boaz, Jesus Christ redeemed us because He loves us. Love to redeem even sinners, and the love greater and deeper than we think.

Additionally, Boaz became the son-in-law of Naomi. Naomi would have lived with Boaz and Ruth, and Boaz would have taken care of Naomi more than two sons Naomi lost. Boaz stayed there even after the obligation of relatives. Naomi was back from Moab and people in Bethlehem were no longer close enough to rely on. She would have been very lonesome. How stronger she would have felt she encountered Boaz and he even redeem Ruth with Elimelech's land? Now, the redeemer is her famil member. This is the greatest happiness for Naomi.

In the same way, Jesus Christ is with us, the people He purchased

back, even after redemption. Jesus is now in heaven because He achieved His mission, but He never abandoned us. Jesus sent us another helper, Holy Spirit, and stay with us. Moreover, it's the great thing for us that Jesus is up in heaven. We are sinful and incomplete, so we aren't for God's kingdom in origin. However, we have the redeemer, the close relative in heaven, so Jesus gives us the access to heaven. We might be guided to the righteous life after all, and have hope and assurance to be in the glory of heaven finally.

2. God's Redemption

Accordingly, Boaz became a prototype of Jesus Christ as a relative of Naomi and a redeemer of Ruth. Simultaneously, Boaz became an ancestor to Jesus Christ. The family tree of Boaz, including his ancestors and descendants, is described after Ruth 4:18. Obed was born to Boaz and Ruth, Obed's son was Jesse, Jesse's son was David, and Jesus was born as a descendant of David. The family tree encompassing from David to Jesus is written in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a town of David, from the family of David. The article about Obed who was born to Boaz and Ruth in the town of Bethlehem, became a prelude to the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, who was born in the town of Bethlehem.

By the way, what is interesting about the family tree in the Gospel of Matthew is that there are names of five women, and two of them are not Israeli but Gentiles. Matthew 1:5-6 says "and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse," Rahab, the mother of Boaz, and Ruth, the wife of Boaz, were both gentiles. Rahab was a woman in the town of

Jericho who feared God and hide the spies from Israel. Because of that, she was saved from death with extinction of Jericho. Then, she was married to Salmon and became one of Israeli. It was Boaz who was born to Salmon and Rahab. Boaz's mother was a gentile and Boaz also married to a gentile woman, Ruth. And Jesus Christ was born as a descendant of Boaz and Ruth.

What does this mean? It means that Jesus Christ is not the Savior only to Jews but also to all people in the world, Including gentiles. And If Jesus Christ is the savior to all, then Jesus Christ should be "my savior". The story about Boaz and Ruth is not unrelated to us. Jesus Christ was born for us as our Savior. Therefore, we are required to welcome the Savior in our heart.

However, a lot of people are busy shopping, eating, decorating the house and rooms, and going to the parties and concerts. They think that is the "Christmas". Christ has been kicked out from Christmas. God has prepared for sending the Savior to this world for a several thousand years, having picked Boaz and Ruth as the ancestor, showed them as a prototype of Savior, and finally sent Jesus Christ, but a lot of us have forgotten about the Savior. Before Advent, let's quietly remember Jesus Christ once again. God had used Naomi, Ruth, Boaz, and other believers for the birth of Savior. He also use us for that Christ will be born spiritually in people's heart. Let us live in God's given faith and witness for our Savior in this season.

(Prayer)

Dear God the Father, you sent your Son to this world as Savior to all of us. Every story in the Bible has told us about that. During the

Advent, please make us remember Jesus Christ through your daily words, who is redeemer, relative, and promised Savior and Savior to all. In the name of the Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.