

## **December 22, 2019 – Ruth 4 – Who Loves You**

*(Put pashmina over head)*

I don't need to introduce myself again, do I? Oi Vavoy! You know that I am Naomi.

Such an account of hope, joy, shalom, and, yes, love I have to tell you! There is so much to share.

When last we met, Boaz, Ruth, and I were heading to the town gate at Bethlehem, right at the start of the business day. Ruth and I watched Boaz from not too far away. This is what we heard and saw.

Boaz sat down just as the other guardian-redeemer came along. Without hesitation, Boaz greeted him, "Come over here, my friend, and sit." The man went over and sat down beside Boaz.

Then Boaz invited 10 elders of the town to sit with them, which they did.

After this, he said to the guardian-redeemer of my late husband, "Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line."

Oi Vavoy. Ruth and I were shocked to hear our relative's reply, "I will redeem it."

But then Boaz explained the requirements of acquiring the land. "On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property."

Our "close" relative looked at Ruth with disdain, as did other people gathered near the city gate. Then Ruth and I realized Boaz's strategy paid off. For the guardian-redeemer, like Judah once did with Tamar, refused to fulfill his duty. The man replied, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem yourself. I cannot do it." At this the guardian-redeemer, according to custom in property transactions, took off his sandal and gave it to Boaz.

Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have brought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, and his sons, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses."

Then the elders and all the people at the gate agreed, "We are witnesses."

The people then pronounced a blessing on the family. “May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. Through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.”

Now there is much to do to prepare for the wedding. Such hope, such joy, such shalom, such love. I must go. There is much to do. Shalom, friends!

### **Matthew 1:5-7 & 17** (*Take pashmina off of head.*)

This was only a start to this joyful account of love between Boaz and Ruth. Let’s hear more of their love story.

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to son. The women said to Naomi, “Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-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 to you than seven sons, has given him birth!”

Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The love of her daughter-in-law, Boaz, and new grandson that came through God brought healing to Naomi, enabling her to love again.

The women living in Bethlehem said, “Naomi has a son!” And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David.

The final verses in the book of Ruth ends with a genealogy of the family line of Perez, the son of Judah and Tamar. The same genealogy appears in Matthew 1, revealing the family line of Jesus, except there are additions to the descriptions of Boaz. Look now.

Like in Ruth 4:21, Matthew 1:5 introduces Salmon the father of Boaz, but adds, “whose mother was Rahab.” Rahab, the mother of Boaz, was the prostitute who lived in the city wall of Jericho and who provided safety to the Israelite spies, one of whom was Caleb, the generous father of Aksah, about whom we heard on the first Sunday of Advent. Like Rahab, Boaz provided safety to and redeemed Naomi and Ruth. And like Caleb gave provision to his daughter Aksah, Boaz did the same for Naomi and Ruth.

Also like in Ruth 4:21, Matthew 1:5 introduces Boaz the father of Obed, but adds, “whose mother was Ruth.” Over these weeks of Advent we have heard the details of the love that grew between Boaz and Ruth, bringing forth their child, Obed.

And their love grew even more through time. Their lineage next continues into Matthew 1:6: Obed the father of Jesse, [6](#)and Jesse the father of King David.

Their love is made further complete at the birth of the infant born in the town of David, the town of Bethlehem, where the love of Ruth and Boaz began. Matthew 1:16 finishes the lineage: **16**and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

The account of Jesus' birth at the start of Luke 2 also coincides with the book of Ruth. Here's how. Remember how the love story of Ruth and Boaz came to be, because of a terrible famine in Bethlehem that caused Naomi's family to relocate for food to Moab. When Naomi brought Ruth from Moab to Bethlehem, Ruth met Boaz in the same fields where the shepherds of Luke 2 watched the flocks. Remember, too, on the first week of Advent how we learned that a later famine in Bethlehem caused many of the people of the town to relocate to Nazareth. This helps to explain why when Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem that there was no guest room available to them! Knowing this, now hear afresh the account from Luke 2:

**1**In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. **2**(This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) **3**And everyone went to their own town to register.

**4**So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. **5**He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. **6**While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, **7**and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Though the love of Boaz and Ruth, the love of Joseph and Mary, and especially the love of God for the world is made complete with Jesus, the Son of the God, this love still continues through us, his followers. May the love of Jesus continue through us at Christmas and all through the year. May we show the love of Jesus to the world, so that the love that bloomed in Bethlehem between Ruth & Boaz and Mary & Joseph will also bloom in Pataskala and everywhere. The love of Christ has the power to bring healing to the world, as it did for Naomi. Praise be to God for the hope, peace, joy, and love of Jesus. May the hope, peace, joy, and love of Jesus, live on through us, who follow Jesus as his disciples. Amen.