

Roy's Sermon for July 3, 2022

Ruth 4:1-10 "It Comes At A Cost"

Last time in v15-18 of Ruth3, we saw all the symbolism and cultural significance of Boaz's actions toward Ruth and Naomi, in his pouring of those "six measures of barley" into Ruth's shawl. That she would "not go home to Naomi emptyhanded." And that it was not about food because the pantry was already full, but about a statement of his commitment, God willing, to provide generously for both Ruth and Naomi's futures!

And he would do this in three ways. Security and protection for Naomi in her old age. A home of rest for Ruth in marriage. And last of all that provision of grain, or seed, (was again God willing) his commitment to provide Naomi with an heir through the body of his soon to be wife, Ruth! These were the things if you remember, which Naomi declared that God had emptied her of while living in Moab!

We also saw that though Boaz be near of kins as kinsman-redeemer to Naomi, legally at least, he wasn't to Ruth. Because she was a non-Jew, an outsider, a Moabite no less. And yet even so, he would go beyond the requirements of the law. Yes he would do that which he was not legally bound to do. And as I explained, clearly, this is what our Lord has done for us! He didn't suffer and die for His own sins, no. He fulfilled the requirements of God's law for us. He took that punishment in our place. "By his wounds we are healed."

And in v16, the actual question, "Who are you my daughter? The explanation: "Who are you Ruth, that God has so blessed me through?" Naomi could not stop but continue to be amazed and blessed, at how amazing and faithful this young woman was to her! Yes the Lord had given her new eyes as though she was seeing Ruth for the very first time. And I said, that we can take so much for granted in our relationships with family, friends, even our spouses. And most of all our relationship with God through Jesus!

And finally Naomi's words, "the man will not rest until the matter is settled today."

So we come to chapter 4:1-10 'It Comes At A Cost!'

"Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there." Now remember, we've seen before that the town gate or city gate was that place of importance where legal transactions were made, wise counsel was sought and also where disputes were settled. And it does appear that even at first light, that's where Boaz had gone to take his place among that esteemed group. He'd sworn by God to do all that was in his power, to bring Ruth and Naomi under his roof. Remember, he would buy Naomi's land, take Ruth as his wife, (and God willing) provide a son for Ruth's late husband Marlon, Naomi's eldest son! So as we learn more of these two people, yet another admirable quality of Boaz is revealed. He was a man of his word!

Brothers and sisters, surely one of the clearest indications of the decline of our society today, is the fact that people don't even care about keeping their word! As we all know that it used to be that a man's word was his bond. An agreement was sealed with a handshake, but it's not so today. There are numerous minefields with endless legal requirements, in just about every area of our modern lives. And the only outcome of these things which supposedly have been produced for ordinary people such as ourselves, is utter confusion! How much more simple our lives could be if we all lived by that basic biblical principle, "let your yes be yes and your no be no."

Well this is who Boaz was. And this is who we as Christians should also be. It should be one of those things dear friends, which distinguishes us from the rest of the world. Living to the glory of God, with that old fashion honour and integrity! Well Boaz did. And now he waits. The Almighty knew his heart's desire. And he had committed the situation to God and come what may, whether it be sadness or joy, he was prepared to acquiesce in the plan and will of God!

Brothers and sisters, as I have mentioned before, that I do find this so very hard to do because I find it so very hard to let go of the reins. But we must. Because we have no right to Jesus` crown or his throne! Well the man in question arrives and the old man of God acts! When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, "Come over here my friend and sit down."

And the next thing we learned about Boaz is that he wasn't a procrastinator. He didn't dither about. When he saw that God had given him Providence he pounced! He wouldn't turn God's provision away no, he acted. There was no beating around the bush! And as I said some time ago, interestingly, we never learn of this man's name. "My friend" Boaz calls him, come over here and sit down and make yourself comfortable. But before he says even one word concerning the matter at hand, he calls ten of the elders of the town over saying gentlemen sit here. Can you see the wisdom in this? He didn't want one word to be spoken until all propriety had been taken care of. This was too important to play games. This was going to affect too many people's lives. Little did he know, that it would be the lives of all of mankind! Yes this had to be made as clear as things could be. So everyone was going to hear every single word which was going to be spoken. Being "beyond reproach" the Bible calls it!

You know, not many things destroy God`s people`s testimony to non-believers, more than when believers take one another to court and tear strips off each other and their reputations. Relying upon a Pagan justice system, to sort out disputes between believers. It`s just terrible. And tragically, it does happen all the time. It's as though people's faith falls by the wayside when money and property are involved.

1 Corinthians 6:5-11 "I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another and this in front of unbelievers. The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wrong? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourself cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers. Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

Can you see what Paul is saying? Not that we should be fools in business or fools when we've been wronged, even by believers. But that we should use all wisdom and all efforts to deal with one another with the utmost of integrity. And why? Yes because we are called by Jesus to love one another, and by loving one another the world will know that we are His disciples. But perhaps as even as important as this, is our testimony of God, to that perishing world around us! Romans 2:24 "as it is written; God's name is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you."

Brothers and sisters, is there anything worse than knowing that our actions have brought contempt down upon the Name of that God whom we would proclaim to the perishing world around us? Well

the old man of God would not allow himself to be open to any such things. He is going to dot every I and cross every T in these proceedings. "Come sit here," and they did so.

Verses 3-4d "Then he said to the kinsman-redeemer, Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. 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." So he lays the whole situation out before this nameless man by bringing the matter to his attention as it is recorded before us.

But there are a few things we need to understand about the purchasing of a piece of land. Firstly, as I explained some weeks ago, as long as there was a male heir in the father's line, the land would continue to remain the property ultimately of that tribe. And perpetually so down through the generations. And if that be the case, even if that land be sold, in the year of jubilee, (which was every 50 years) the land would be returned to that tribe. So in effect, the land was not purchased so much, more so that it was leased. And depending on when the land was purchased in relation to the year of jubilee, the length and also the value of that lease, would be determined. But no male heir did indeed mean that the land could then be purchased outright!

So Boaz has laid it all out before this unknown man in the presence of the 10 elders and other witnesses. And what this man can see at first glance is a great business opportunity. He gets to increase his real estate portfolio with just an initial payout of the value, (perhaps likely to be determined by himself) of Naomi's land. So to him, this is simply a financial transaction with no strings attached. Yes the man would increase his real estate holdings, it all seemed good! So what is his response in front of everyone? Verse 4e. "I will redeem it he said." And I guess all the witnesses would have thought good, he is going to do it.

But then Boaz brings out his trump card. V5 "Then Boaz said on the day you buy the land from Naomi (and there are the words that Ruth has had to carry like an albatross around her neck)and from Ruth them Moabitess. You acquire the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead man with his property." Or in other words, with the land comes the dead man's wife. It's a package deal. So on the day you purchase the land you agree to marry his wife, and do all that you can to provide an heir for the dead man through her! And on the day that occurs, God willing, said piece of land will be in the process of being restored to its rightful owner!

Beloved can you see? That such situations were not meant to be seen as investment opportunities, but as Providences by God to provide for and to bless those most vulnerable ones in society. Widows and orphans. Those poor and needy. Because we need to remember that this was not just any nation, this was the chosen people of God. And they were not as yet ruled by kings.

No this was not a monarchy this was a Theocracy. God was there King! He ruled over them and had given them laws and decrees which were meant to be beneficial to the whole nation under one head. Even God Himself! And as such, since He had brought the whole nation up out of Egypt with His Merciful and Benevolent Hand, they too should seek to show mercy and benevolence to those in need!

So not every opportunity is about self-promotion and personal profit. As I mentioned last time, the question in relationships and among God's church should not be: What's in it for me? Rather, how can I contribute to this person's life, or the life of God's people? His church!

Well having made that bold declaration the nameless man, which the Bible commentator explains that the words "my friend" do actually translate as "Mr so and so," or in other words they were far

from complementary and perhaps were even a comment upon this man's character. Yes after making that bold declaration in v4, "he I will redeem it," when he could see it only dollar signs before his eyes, now that he knows the full implications of the commitment which is being posed before him, not an opportunity for profit but of philanthropy, he does a very hasty retreat! V6 "At this the kingsman-redeemer said, Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate."

So now our nameless man "Mr so and so," has shown his true colours. Provision for the poor and needy, (we might even define it as ministry or service for God)? came at too high a price. Can you see? That it was going to impact too highly upon his lifestyle and even his own children's inheritance. What if Ruth had not only one but many children? Who was going to have to provide for their future? It wasn't going to be him that's for sure. He was no man's fool. He wasn't going to open himself for that, no he was no one's mug. No the cost was too great!

In 2 Samuel 24, we read of the account of King David, who in his pride and vanity ordered a count of all of the soldiers in his army. But God had not ordered it! The king just wanted to know in effect, how great and powerful he had become. Well "after 9 1/2 months Joab returns to report that there are 800,000 in Israel and 500,000 in Judah who could handle a sword." Then in v10 we learn, that David, being conscience stricken, (as a plague has broken out from God and 70,000 people die over the next three days) until finally God sends Gad the prophet to the king with instructions!

And we read in 2Samuel24:18-25 "On that day God went to David and said to him, go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. So David went up, as the Lord had commanded through God, when Araunah looked and saw the king and his men coming toward him, he went out and bowed down before the king with his face to the ground. Araunah said, "Why has my Lord the king come to his servant?" "To buy your threshing floor", David answered, "So I can build an altar to the Lord, that the plague on the people may be stopped". Araunah said to David, "Let my Lord the king take whatever pleases him and offer it up. Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. O king, Araunah gives all this to the king". Araunah also said to him, "May the Lord your God accept you". But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing!"

And the point being, that true love for God, and true service of God beloved, is always going to come at a cost. If we are to walk in the footsteps of Jesus! Yes if He is the example that we are supposed to emulate with He himself saying "a servant is not above his master he can only seek to be like his master." And also as I paraphrase, don't be surprised when they hate you because of Me, they hated Me first. It's not you they hate it's Me they hate. Yes if these things are true and love and service to God cost Him everything for our sakes, then we must not think that our love and service in His Name will come free of charge dear friends. Because it does, and will always come at a cost!

That cost may come in many different shapes and forms. Family, friends, time, property, finances, our job, perhaps even our marriage partners and our homes. Even indeed our very life! And here's the thing brothers and sisters, if our sacrifices or devotions to Christ cost us nothing, then may I suggest that, that is the sum total of our faith and love for Jesus!

Again, 2 Samuel 24 "but the king replied to Araunah. "No I insist on paying for it. I will not sacrifice burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing."

Many years ago when speaking to a brother about believing that God had called me to preach His Word, (and while affirming that he agreed that indeed he believed that God had called me to do so)

Les warned me saying that this was going to come at a great cost. There would be endless hours spent alone away from family. It will more often than not be a thankless task. It will come with great anguish and the tremendous weight and responsibility of remaining to preach only God's Truth and ultimately, being accountable for everything which is said in His Name. And if I would say one thing to you Roy, Don't do it! Yes because it will come at great cost to you and your family. No don't do it he said, unless that is, that God has laid His Hand heavy upon your heart to do so!

Now why do I relate these things? Well it is certainly not to extract some kind of praise or sympathy from you all, no. It is simply to add weight to the statement that all offerings, all sacrifices, all service, indeed all love of God if it's real, comes at a cost! And now I don't say these following things lightly. It might simply be the time and commitment which the ladies sacrifice each week and each month throughout the year providing morning teas and lunches. The sacrifices of doing the office work in regard to the church financial reports the in the treasury etc. Time teaching scripture and children's talks. Setting up and putting away after the services. Greeting and making people welcome. These are but a few examples. Then there's the boldly standing up for our Saviour's Name and the Truth of the Bible when the whole world around us is treating all such things with contempt, and increasingly so. Even taking up arms against us whether they be political, physical, or spiritual ones!

Yes brothers and sisters, to follow Jesus comes at a cost. You can read of it in Luke 14:25-35! David understood it, but Mr so and so didn't get it. Because the price was too high! "You redeem it yourself, I cannot do it." No the impact upon my life is potentially too great, he might have said!

So I guess as I close this morning, in light of the passage, each of us needs to ask ourselves the question: What price am I prepared to pay for my faith? Our forgiveness cost our King everything. He told us if we are to follow Him we "must take up our cross daily." And of course as we all know, when someone took up their cross, they were not coming back! Yes salvation is free. Jesus has paid for our salvation upon that accused cross of suffering and shame. Yet to follow Jesus comes at great cost! What are we prepared to pay? Indeed what are you prepared to pay dear friends? Are you prepared to pay price of following Jesus? That's the question.

Let's pray.