

“Redemption of the Past, Present, and Future”
Ruth 4 (Part 2)
October 18, 2020
Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service
Pastor Nicoletti

We have our sixth and final sermon on the Book of Ruth this morning, as we look once more at chapter four.

Let’s review once more what we’ve covered so far.

In Ruth chapter one, Naomi left the Promised Land with her husband Elimelech and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion, traveling to Moab during a famine. In Moab, Naomi’s husband and two sons all died, leaving Naomi with her two daughters-in-law: Orpah and Ruth. When Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem, Ruth insisted on coming with her, pledging herself to Naomi and to the Lord – to Yahweh, the God of Israel.

In chapter two, in order to feed herself and Naomi, Ruth goes out to glean – to harvest from the edges and remains of the fields of landowners in Bethlehem. In God’s providence Ruth comes to the field of Boaz, who treats her with great kindness and grace.

Boaz, we then learn, is a close enough relative to Elimelech to serve as a possible kinsman-redeemer of Elimelech’s household. If Ruth chose to marry the next-in-line kinsman-redeemer of Elimelech, then her husband would not only be her husband, but her husband could redeem Naomi’s land and household. Ruth’s first son would then be considered a part of the household of Ruth’s first husband, and would be an heir of Naomi and continuation of Naomi’s household. This was a practice available to widows to provide for their needs in the ancient world, and to provide an inheritance line for the dead.

In chapter three Ruth approaches Boaz and asks him to enter this kind of kinsman-redeemer marriage with her. Boaz enthusiastically agrees, but there is a twist. We learn that Boaz is not actually the next in line to serve as Ruth and Naomi’s kinsman-redeemer. He is second in line. And for Boaz to take up the role, the man who is first in line must first decline the role.

Last week we considered the first part of chapter four and the way that the closer kinsman-redeemer declines to redeem Ruth, motivated by self-interest, while Boaz then agrees to redeem Ruth, motivated by self-sacrificial love. By the time we get to verse nine, the legal transaction is settled. Boaz will marry Ruth and serve as a Kinsman-Redeemer to both Ruth and the household of Naomi.

You have printed for you in the bulletin all of chapter four. But we will begin reading this morning in verse nine – after the legal transaction with the closer potential kinsman-redeemer is completed, and as Boaz officially becomes the kinsman-redeemer.

With all that in mind, we turn to Ruth chapter four, starting in verse nine.

Please do listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this morning.

^{4:9} Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. ¹⁰ Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought [“acquired” is probably a better translation [See NASB, NIV, Block, 202, 211]] to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.” ¹¹ Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD [may Yahweh] make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, ¹² and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that Yahweh will give you by this young woman.”

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and Yahweh gave her conception, and she bore a son. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be Yahweh, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! 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.” ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. 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.

¹⁸ Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, ²¹ Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, ²² Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let's pray ...

Lord, our eyes long for your salvation
and for the fulfillment of your righteous promises.
Deal with us, your servants, according to your steadfast love,
and teach us your statutes.
We are your servants, and so we ask you to give us understanding,
that we may know your testimonies.
As we attend to your word now,
help us to love it more than gold, even much fine gold.
Make us to hold to your precepts as right,
and to hate every false way.
Grant this, we ask, in Jesus's name. Amen
[Based on Psalm 119:123-125, 127-128]

INTRODUCTION

Here at the end of the Book of Ruth, everything seems to come together. Every problem introduced at the beginning has now found a solution. Every loss has been redeemed, every emptiness has been filled. Ruth is a book of hope and at its heart it is a book of redemption. And we see the fulfillment of that here in the last half of chapter four.

In fact, here in this passage we see three dimensions of redemption: we see redemption of the past, redemption of the present, and redemption of the future. And that will be our focus this morning.

REDEMPTION OF THE PAST PART 1: RUTH

The first thing we see is redemption of the past. And we see this in two different ways. The first is the redemption of Ruth.

And it is easy to miss this. At this point in the story, we are big fans of Ruth. We have seen her faith, we have seen her sacrificial love, we have seen her loyalty. So has Boaz and so have the people of Bethlehem, as Boaz points out in chapter three [3:11]. So when we come to the blessing the people give in verse eleven, as they proclaim “May Yahweh make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel” or when we hear the women of the town proclaim in verse fifteen that Ruth is worth more to Naomi than seven sons, we can miss how shocking these statements are. Because Ruth is a Moabitess.

And we have talked about this, but we haven’t really addressed what it meant for Ruth’s legal standing in Israel.

In Deuteronomy 23:3, in the Law of Moses, we read: “No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of Yahweh. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of Yahweh forever.”

Now, what did this prohibition mean, why was it put into place, and what was its duration?

First, in terms of what a Moabite was excluded from, there is some debate. Some argue that the prohibition is meant to exclude them from the covenant [Keil & Delitzsch, I.III:413]. Others argue that the assembly they are being excluded from is the civic assembly – the government and the ruling of Israel. [Alter, 992] Either way, a Moabite *and* a descendant of a Moabite were excluded from full membership in the assembly of Israel.

Why was this? Well, it was because of Moab’s history with Israel. In Numbers 22-24, the people of Moab hired a prophet to curse Israel. Then, when that didn’t work, the women of Moab came to the men of Israel and enticed them to sexual immorality and to idolatry. [Numbers 25] Moab was intentionally and proactively set on tempting the Israelites to turn from Yahweh and from Yahweh’s commands to them. The law of exclusion in Deuteronomy 23:3 was not rooted in racism or in tribalism, but in a desire to protect the people of God from the spiritual threat the people of Moab presented to them. That’s why the prohibition was in place.

How long did the prohibition last? Verse three at first says ten generations, and then it says “forever”, which tells us that the “ten generations” was likely not literal, but symbolic of forever. [Keil & Delitzsch, I.III:413-414; Barker, 363]

The people of Moab were excluded from key aspects of the life of Israel, forever, because of the spiritual threat they posed to the people of God.

And if that is the case, two things should strike us: First, how can the people of Bethlehem proclaim their desire that Ruth would be as key to the building up Israel as Rachel and Leah, the matriarchs of Israel, had been? And second, how can a descendant of Ruth become the king of Israel as we learn in this chapter that her great-grandson David will be?

After all, Ruth is from Moab herself. How can she be considered a pillar of the assembly of God’s people and a mother of Israel’s future king?

And the answer is: Because her past has been redeemed. God has redeemed her past.

Ruth has come to trust in the Lord. She has pledged her loyalty to the Lord. She has bound herself to the people of the Lord. And God, in his grace has redeemed her from her past.

Because of her conversion, Ruth is no longer considered a Moabitess. [Lusk, xxii]

Generations of spiritual darkness are wiped away in a moment, by God’s redeeming grace. And not only that, but Ruth is not relegated to some sort of second-class status among the people of God. She doesn’t need to stay on the fringes for a few years or a few generations. But she is exalted by the people of God.

One commentator describes the blessing of Ruth and her elevation to the level of Rachel and Leah like this – he writes: “This extraordinary statement demonstrated unequivocally that Ruth had been fully integrated into the community and the history of Israel. Their blessing signaled the completion of her transformation; they wished that she who arrived as a Moabite outsider would take her place among the matriarchs of their nation.” [Block, 225]

This is how God works. This is how he redeems those who turn to him. The first thing he does is that he swiftly redeems their past and incorporates them into his people.

That means that as you look at your past, as you consider where you have come from, as you consider what you have done – God is able to redeem your past and cleanse you of all of that.

After all, Ruth not only had a dark spiritual heritage, but we must assume that at least growing up she lived a dark spiritual life. She would have worshipped the gods of the Moabites. She would have lived according to the ethics and lifestyle of the Moabites. Ruth was no covenant child. But she turned to the God of Israel and he cleansed her of her past and brought her into the covenant. He redeemed her past and made her to be counted among the matriarchs of Israel. He called even her to be the great grandmother of David, the king of Israel and the anointed of the Lord.

What aspects of your past keep you from coming wholeheartedly to the Lord? What aspects of your past make you think that you must be a second-class Christian? What aspects of your past lead you to keep the church or keep other Christians at arm's length?

The God we are to worship as Christians – the God we are to worship here at Faith Presbyterian Church is the God who takes Moabites and makes them into matriarchs of his royal line. If you say he cannot draw you in close to himself and to his people, then you deny who he has revealed himself to be.

In Ruth we see how the Lord swiftly redeems our past to incorporate us into his people.

REDEMPTION OF THE PAST PART 2: JUDAH & BOAZ

But that's not all. Because Ruth's past is actually not the only past that needs redeeming. Boaz's does too.

And if we see in Ruth how the Lord swiftly redeems our past to incorporate us into his people, then we see in Boaz how the Lord patiently redeems our past to equip us for his callings.

This is highlighted in the ways that this passage links Boaz to Judah and Tamar.

We see this first in verse twelve, when the people at the gate say to Boaz: "May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that Yahweh will give you by this young woman."

We see it again in an additional link, in verses eighteen through twenty-two, to Perez, who was born to Judah and Tamar.

All of this points us back to the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38.

There we read how Judah's eldest son, Er, married Tamar. But Er was evil before the sight of God, and so God put him to death. Then Onan, Judah's second son was called on to be a kinsman-redeemer for Tamar – to marry her and bear a child through her that would be considered Er's. And while Onan agreed to the marriage, he intentionally prevented a pregnancy from resulting, refusing to continue his brother's name and to care for Tamar's future needs, all out of his own selfishness. When God saw this, he put Onan to death. At this point Judah had one son left, who was not yet of a marrying age, and Judah sent Tamar away, telling her that he would call for her when his third son was old enough to marry her.

But Judah had no intention of calling her back. For, like far too many parents, he did not see the sin of his own children, but he blamed Tamar for his sons' deaths, though she was innocent.

When it was clear to Tamar that Judah would not care for her and call his last son to marry her, Tamar deceived Judah. She disguised herself as a prostitute to trick Judah into sleeping with her himself. She conceived twins. When Judah heard from others that Tamar was pregnant, he called on Tamar to be put to death for her immorality. But she had held onto proof, in the form of his signet, cord, and staff, that Judah was the father. When confronted with this evidence, Judah saw

what he had done, repented, and declared not only to Tamar, but to all the people: “She [Tamar] is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah.” [Genesis 38:26]

Whatever we might say about Tamar’s actions and deceptions, both Moses (who wrote Genesis) and Judah himself agree that Judah is the central sinner here. He abandoned Tamar by failing to call on his family to fulfill role of a *levir* and serve as a kinsman-redeemer to her. The result was that the two sons born, Zerah and Perez, were born of a sinful union: a union that was not only out of wedlock, but between Tamar and her father-in-law, which was forbidden in Leviticus 18:17. [Block, 227 n.139]

Now ... all of that was generations before the lifetime of Boaz. Why does that matter now? [Lusk, xix-xxiii for some of what follows, though I do not follow Lusk on some of the historical details.]

Well ... remember that law about Moabites being excluded from the assembly of Israel that we read in Deuteronomy 23:3, which was relevant to Ruth? It turns out that that the verse right before that one has some relevance for Boaz – since Boaz was a descendant of the union between Judah and Tamar.

In Deuteronomy 23:2 we read: “No one born of a forbidden union may enter the assembly of Yahweh. Even to the tenth generation, none of his descendants may enter the assembly of Yahweh.”

Now obviously the tribe of Judah was not cut-off from Israel. But there is at least a tension here concerning the tribe of Judah.

Deuteronomy 23 tells us that those descended from a forbidden union are excluded from the assembly of Israel – which at least would seem to mean that they are excluded from some civic roles in Israel. And yet, in Genesis 49:10 we are told that it will be a descendant of Judah who will rule as king in Israel. How can both of those things be true?

This tension seems to be further highlighted by the genealogy given here at the end of Ruth. Because the genealogy lists ten generations – the same number mentioned in Deuteronomy 23.

Now, as the scholar Ron Bergey (whom some of you know) points out, it was common and expected for genealogies like this one to skip some generations while providing a basic outline of the descent. This was often done when the author wanted to highlight a symbolic number more than he wanted to include every possible name. [Bergey, 483] And that is likely the case here with this genealogy [Keil & Delitzsch, II.I:493; Block, 254 n.14]

Which means that the author was drawing attention to the concept of ten generations. I think there may be a few reasons for this. But I suspect that one of them was to call us back again to Deuteronomy 23:2 with its reference to ten generations.

In the Book of Genesis, the line of Judah is called on to rule in Israel. But at the same time, through his sinfulness, through the sinfulness of his sons, through his failure to care for a powerless widow, through his own sexual immorality, Judah has proven that he is not fit to rule in Israel. What can be done to reconcile these two truths?

Once again, the answer is the God who redeems his people's past. Though Judah has proven unfit, in the Book of Ruth we learn that God has been at work in the centuries that followed in at least a strand of the line of Judah. Over the generations he has been preparing for himself one who, unlike Judah, would be fit to rule. And in Boaz we see the polar opposite of Judah in Genesis 38. Where Judah is concerned with himself, Boaz is concerned with others. Where Judah lacks self-control and integrity, Boaz is characterized by those virtues. Where Judah discards a widow in need because he fears it may bring trouble on his house, Boaz embraces two widows in need, regardless of what it will cost him. Where Judah refuses to provide a kinsman-redeemer, Boaz volunteers to be one himself.

In ways unseen and unnoticed, God has been at work, patiently redeeming Judah's past, in order to equip them for their calling. It has taken generations, but by Boaz we are almost ready. Boaz will father Obed. Obed will father Jesse. And Jesse will father David – who will be both the son of Judah and the king of Israel.

When it came to his inclusion in the people of God, Judah, like Ruth, was redeemed swiftly. Judah repented, he was forgiven, he was never cast out of the people of God. But when it came to being equipped and sanctified for his calling, God was at work more slowly, more patiently. It was over generations, over centuries, that God worked to cultivate a Boaz and then a David out of the line of Judah and Tamar. But that is what he did.

And that is often what he does in us as well.

We are often impatient or despairing in our Christian walk. We can be impatient: expecting or demanding that once we turn from sin, once we repent of bad habits, once we step out of spiritual darkness, we expect to be fully sanctified and fully equipped to do great spiritual wonders and walk easily in spiritual victories.

And then we are often despairing because while we feel like we *should* be able to do those things, we still fall short, and so we are tempted to give up.

But God, while always calling us to follow in his ways, is also more patient than we are. He will heal us. He will sanctify us. He will equip us. But often he chooses the slow road for that. Often he calls us to patient endurance as part of that. Often he wants us to persevere in pursuing holiness. Often *that* is how God grows virtue and holiness in his people.

That's not a call to laxity in our spiritual walk – it's actually a call to greater effort. It's a call to expect that the journey will be long. It's a call to expect that God will lead us on the long road of sanctification. He may choose to take years to complete a certain work of transformation in you. He may choose to take generations to complete a certain work of transformation in your family. In between Perez and Boaz are a number of men and women – generations – whom we know almost nothing about. But God was at work in them. He was shaping a line in Judah. He was preparing the way for a Boaz and then for a David.

God works similar ways in us. Our call is to follow him with perseverance, and to trust that just as the Lord swiftly redeems our past to incorporate us into his people, so he also patiently redeems our past to equip us for his callings.

And so the first thing we see here, in both Ruth and Boaz, is that the Lord redeems the past of his people.

REDEMPTION OF THE PRESENT: NAOMI

The second thing we see is that God also redeems the present.

And this we see in Naomi.

Take a look again at verses thirteen through seventeen:

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and Yahweh gave her conception, and she bore a son. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be Yahweh, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! 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.” ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. ¹⁷ And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed.

What do we see here?

Well, first, we should note that the blessing in verses fourteen through seventeen is not directed at Ruth or Boaz, but at Naomi. And the blessing here is a reversal of the speech that Naomi gave at the end of chapter one [1:20-21]. Every problem Naomi had when she arrived in Bethlehem has now been reversed. Then she was empty. Now she is blessed. God has restored Naomi in the present. [Lusk, 79] With the birth of Obed she now has an heir and someone to care for her in her old age. [Block, 235]

And as that happens the women proclaim the value of Obed and Ruth to Naomi in her present circumstances.

Regarding Obed, as one writer puts it: “Just by being born, Obed becomes a [redeemer], a servant of Naomi.” [Miller, 150]

As Boaz has been the means through which God cared for Ruth’s needs, Obed is now the means by which God will care for Naomi’s needs. [Block, 236]

And the author highlights this, using the same vocabulary to describe Obed in chapter four as was used to describe Mahlon and Chilion in chapter one [v.5]. We are meant to see how in Obed, Naomi’s loss has been reversed. [Leithart, “Structures”]

But Naomi’s situation is not only redeemed through Obed. The women of the town also point out that it is redeemed through Ruth. They emphasize that in verse fifteen. [Lusk, 83] Ruth, they say, is worth more than seven sons – an astounding statement in an ancient culture that often valued sons much more than daughters. [Miller, 152]

And though this situation is happy for Ruth in so many ways, even in the midst of the joy there is still sacrifice in Ruth's love for Naomi. As one writer points out: "by marrying an older man" in order to redeem Naomi, Ruth "almost assures herself that she will again be a widow." [Miller, 155]

But she does it anyway – out of love for Naomi, and to redeem Naomi's present.

In Naomi's redemption, Ruth is the central picture of *hesed* – of faithful and sacrificial love. It's not primarily Boaz, as important as he is. It is a woman of Moab who displays the faithful and sacrificial love of God to Naomi. And so the women praise Ruth. [Miller, 152]

Through her, God redeems Naomi's present.

In Luke 18:29-30, Jesus says to his disciples: "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."

Now, in those verses Jesus is not speaking directly to Naomi's situation – he's talking about voluntary sacrifices for the kingdom, whereas Naomi's losses were involuntary and arguably a result of her own unfaithfulness. Nonetheless, I think there is some overlap as Naomi turns to and trusts the Lord. Because both Jesus's words and Naomi's situation tell us something about how God redeems the present.

Jesus's words here can throw us off a bit. We expect his promise of a future and eternal reward for our sacrifices in this life. But he also promises that "there is no one" who makes those sacrifices in this life who will not also "receive many times more in this time" – in this life.

What does that mean?

It means that God also redeems our present.

His redemption of the present is not a full undoing of what was lost, or an identical replacement. We continue to live in a world broken and twisted by sin and death. Naomi gets Ruth and Obed, but she does not get Elimelech, Mahlon, or Chilion back in this life.

And yet, the redemption of the present is still real.

It is a function of the reality that God works not only in the past or in the future but in the present.

We face losses in this life. Some are voluntary and for the gospel. Others are involuntary – maybe even for our sin. But God promises that he is at work in the present if we turn to him and cling to him. Through his Spirit, through his Word, through our present relationship with him, through the blessings and relationships and love and community that is to be found in and through his people, God is at work redeeming the present.

Naomi experiences this in concrete ways through Ruth, Boaz, and Obed. We too should experience this when we are suffering. And we too should be agents of it when others are suffering.

This is again the call to bear one another's burdens [Galatians 6:2], and to build one another up in Christ [1 Thessalonians 5:11].

When you are suffering, you are to turn to your brothers and sisters in Christ for this – trusting that God does redeem the present. And while the ministers and elders and deacons *may* at times be God's agents of this, we are not the only or even the primary ways God does this. God doesn't build Naomi up or bear her burdens through the priests, the elders, or the Levites. He does it through Boaz and Ruth – two ordinary believers. Which means that as a congregation, in addition to whatever role the ministers and officers may play, as the Body of Christ you are to turn to one another, both to receive and to be the means of this redemption of the present.

Where do you need to turn to God's people to receive this? Where do you need to serve God's people to be the agent of this?

In Ruth and Boaz we see how God redeems the past. In Naomi we see how God redeems the present.

REDEMPTION OF THE FUTURE: ISRAEL

Finally, in Israel, we see how God redeems the future.

Because the Book of Ruth doesn't end with Ruth. Or Naomi. Or Boaz. Or even Obed. It ends with a genealogy beyond all of them. It ends with David.

It can be common to see the genealogy here in verses eighteen through twenty-two as an appendix tacked on to the story. But some commentators argue that this genealogy is actually the climax of the story. [Lusk, 85]

Now ... why would they say that?

Well first, it connects this story with the larger history of Israel. As one commentator puts it, with the genealogy: "Suddenly, the simple, clever human story of two struggling widows takes on a startling new dimension. It becomes a bright, radiant thread woven into the fabric of Israel's larger national history." [Robert Hubbard Jr, quoted in Miller, 154]

But more important than the fact that it connects with Israel's national history is *the way* it connects with Israel's national history.

In the very first verse of the Book of Ruth we learn that this book takes place at the same time as the Book of Judges. The Book of Ruth begins with the words "In the days when the judges ruled ..."

And so, the Book of Judges and the Book of Ruth are meant to be put side-by-side – they each provide a different window into what was happening among the people of God in the same time period.

The Book of Judges is a dark book. It is a book that shows what happens to a people – what happens even to the people of God – when the sinfulness of their hearts reigns. The Book of Judges shows the ugly side of human nature in general, and of Israel in particular, as people live according to their own desires.

You have, on the one hand, the dark accounts of Judges. And then you have on the other hand, at the same time in history, the redemptive story of the Book of Ruth.

And their relationship becomes more clear as we look at how each book ends. The Book of Judges ends with the words: “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” [Judges 21:25]

But the Book of Ruth ends with the name “David.” “David” is the last word. And that last word of the Book of Ruth provides the answer to the despair contained in the last words of the Book of Judges. [Lusk, 86]

At the time of the Book of Judges, things were dark. Things seemed hopeless. But even then, God was at work in unexpected ways – in hidden and unseen ways – to redeem Israel’s future. God was preparing the way for a king who would come and would bring an end to that dark period of Israel’s history, and who, in many ways, would make Israel new. That was what God was preparing to do through the reign of David, his anointed one. We see here that even in the midst of our darkest seasons God has a plan and God makes a promise to redeem our future. The genealogy at the end of the Book of Ruth is testimony to that truth. Though no one in the Book of Judges could yet see it, God had a plan to redeem his people’s future from sin, darkness, and death.

And if it was true then of what God would do through David, it is even more true now of what God will do through Jesus Christ, David’s greater son.

Our life, in a range of ways, can feel dominated by darkness. Our own sin can be a weight around our necks. The sin of others can wound and oppress. The brokenness of this world and the reign of death can tempt us to despair. These things may seem to dominate our present. But God assures us that they will by no means dominate our future.

God will redeem the future of his people through Jesus Christ his King. For on the last day, Christ will return in triumph, and he will defeat sin and death and all his and our enemies, and he will cast them all away. He will do away with our own sin and the sin of others. And he will inaugurate a future where he and all who have trusted in him will dwell together forever in peace, and love, and joy, in a new heaven and a new earth, for all eternity.

That is what God promises to us. That is what the future looks like for the people of God.

And so, though things may look dark ... though we may be tempted to despair ... the Book of Ruth calls us to turn to God and remember that he is our Redeemer.

He has redeemed our past swiftly, incorporating us into his people. He is redeeming our past patiently, and is sanctifying and equipping us for the kingdom work he calls us to. He is redeeming our present graciously, providing for us day by day through his generous means of grace. And he will redeem our future powerfully, providing us with eternal joy beyond our imagining.

That is his promise to us.

Therefore let us face the challenges of this life, fixing our eyes on Jesus, and following him with faith, hope, and love.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

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