

Series: *Redeeming Love: The Book of Ruth*
Message Title: **God's Redeeming Love Moves Us
From Heartbreak to Hope**
Date: Sunday, December 10, 2017
Scripture: Ruth 2
Speaker: David H. McKinley
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

One of the best and yet, most burdensome words in the English language is the word, *anticipation*.

Anticipation:

1. the act of anticipating or the state of being anticipated
2. realization in advance; foretaste
3. expectation or hope
4. previous notion; slight previous impression
5. intuition, foreknowledge, or prescience

Source: dictionary.com

You can anticipate a vacation, birth, closing on a house, graduation, etc.

Anticipation is what makes a movie or a story great. There is something you know needs to happen, you want it to happen, but you have to wait to see it happen.

Anticipation is what makes Christmas wonderful and frustrating for kids!

As we return to pick-up the story of Ruth, we (as readers) are filled with anticipation, even as we see an unfolding anticipation in the life of Ruth. This little book begins and ends in Bethlehem. Its storyline is the prequel to Christmas.

Quick Review: Our heroine, Ruth, and mother-in-law, Naomi, have returned to Bethlehem to begin a new life. Famine had driven Naomi, Elimelech, Malon and Chilion out, but now, Naomi has come back at harvest time. Ruth returned seeking God:

“But Ruth said, ‘Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God’ (Ruth 1:16 ESV).

There was a special provision made for those who were destitute and in need:

“When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not

go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands” (Deuteronomy 24:19 ESV).

God wanted those who had, to give to those who did not have. So Ruth focused on survival, but God’s work in all of this was providential. A new character enters the scene. In Ruth 2, we meet Boaz (in him is strength):

“Now Naomi had a relative of her husband’s, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz” (Ruth 2:1 ESV).

This opening scene in Ruth 2 surpasses the works of Nicholas Sparks! (*The Notebook*, *A Walk to Remember*, *Message in a Bottle*, *Safe Haven* and *See Me*, plus 11 movie adaptations and two TV series). Sparks knows the importance of character presentation and development.

Surely this scene stirs anticipation. Ruth, a Moabite widow, comes to Bethlehem because of her commitment to her mother-in-law to begin again. Here, Ruth goes out

to begin working and someone (someone of significance) takes notice.



Scene 1: The Happening

“And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, ‘Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor.’ And she said to her, ‘Go, my daughter.’ So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech. And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, ‘The Lord be with you!’ And they answered, ‘The Lord bless you.’ Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, ‘Whose young woman is this?’ And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, ‘She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. 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’” (Ruth 2:2-7 ESV).

Ruth went out to glean in the fields now bursting with harvest (because of the Law that allowed her to do so). She looked forward and got to work. While doing what was necessary, something amazing happened... "she happened." God's providential appointments seem like "happenings," but so often they become defining moments in our lives. Boaz "happens" to be there at that very moment also! The timing was perfect because it was God's timing.

Boaz takes notice, "Who is that?!" God is working in our lives in ways we are often unaware.

Scene 2: The Meeting

"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. 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.' Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, 'Why have

I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?' But Boaz answered her, 'All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. 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 to take refuge!' Then she said, 'I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants'" (Ruth 2:8-13 ESV).

You have got to love this moment! Their eyes meet. The breeze gently blows across the grain. Her hair moves. He approaches. Then sparks fly! I know... over dramatic, but you get the picture.

Boaz was a man of honor even in the dark days of Judges to protect against sexual harassment.

“Our society has purposefully raised two generations on ‘moral relativism’ and the news media is asking, ‘Where are the morals in our country?’ ... The sexual harassment responses have rightfully proven (once again) that humans have a conscience and there are moral absolutes.” —Clay Smith, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Matthews, NC

Boaz was not like the others who lacked integrity. Not all men have integrity. There is much to learn here, guys: character, commitment, compassion, how to honor a woman, etc.

Scene 3: The Enlightening

“And her mother-in-law said to her, ‘Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you.’ So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, ‘The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz.’ And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, ‘May he be blessed by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!’ Naomi also said to her, ‘The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers’” (Ruth 2:19-20 ESV).

Paraphrased: "Do you know who this is? I can't believe you met this man! Boaz is one of our close relatives—one of our redeemers." Mentioned 11 times.

There were ancient customs and laws concerning childless widows in Levirate Marriage, and Ruth was young to be a widow.

"If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel" (Deuteronomy 25:5-6 ESV).

The explicit purpose of this commandment was to have the surviving brother produce an heir to perpetuate the name of his dead brother, so that it would not "be blotted out of Israel."

"The literal meaning of the biblical text implies that the firstborn child of a levirate

marriage would be named after the dead brother in order to carry on his memory. However, this is true only in the spiritual sense, for there was no requirement to name the newborn son after the dead brother. The duty of levirate marriage was obligatory only on one who was alive at the time of the death of his childless brother; it did not apply to one born after his brother's death. Furthermore, both brothers must have the same father. If either of these conditions was not fulfilled, the childless widow was immediately free to marry anyone she chose." —Ronald L. Eisenberg (physician and lawyer)

The relative who was in line to act upon this provision was called a "Kinsman-Redeemer." He would buy freedom and a future for a woman who was left without land or legacy.

We cannot read this word, meet this term or overlook the significance of "Redeemer." God is seen in Scripture as "redeeming" His people.

"The LORD redeems the life of His servants; none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned" (Psalm 34:22 ESV).

When we come to the New Testament, we discover we meet the One who came and was born to redeem—Christ, our Redeemer.

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David” (Luke 1:68-69 ESV).

“And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30 ESV).

... “who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14 ESV).

Back to the story.

You can only imagine what was happening in Naomi’s heart as she realized what was unfolding. And Ruth, what was happening with her? This was not just a stagnant pond; she was being swept into the river of possibilities.

“And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, ‘It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted.’ So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law” (Ruth 2:22-23 ESV).

As we step into Ruth 3, Naomi begins to advise Ruth as to what she should do and how she should respond in this matter. We will come back and investigate this more thoroughly next week, but having done all this, let’s move to Scene 4.

Scene 4: The Waiting

“She replied, ‘Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today’” (Ruth 3:18 ESV).

“Wait, my daughter” to see. Anticipation! We’ll see what will happen.

It’s hard to wait, isn’t it? Yet this is where many of you are today. This does not just apply to

Ruth in our story, but you may be in a season of waiting for God to answer, deliver, etc.

Ruth was obviously led by God to follow Naomi, but then the reality of the situation set in: poor, destitute, vulnerable. Sometimes when God calls us to obey Him, there is, of course, the initial “high mountain” of a moment of decisions and obedience. But then comes the trudging it out—the waiting. Where is God in the waiting? How should we conduct ourselves?

Ruth was faithful and steady in waiting. She didn’t compromise her character or become entitled and bitter. And God was faithful to direct Ruth’s life even in the most difficult of situations.

I’ve spent quite a bit of time in God’s “waiting rooms” in the course of my life. You may assume I would have the answers to all the tough questions, etc. —provide the short cuts. But it is never so!

Waiting is a common theme in the life of all who walk with God.

“How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?” (Psalm 13:1-2 ESV).

Maybe you have heard the story about the man laying in a grassy field with beautiful puffy white clouds rolling by and he pondered their shapes. Soon, he began to think about God. “God? Are you really there?” To his astonishment a voice came from the clouds.

“Yes, I am? What can I do for you?”

Seizing the opportunity, the man asked, “God, what are a million years like to You?” Knowing this finite being could not understand the concept of infinity, God responded in a manner in which the man could relate. “A million years to Me, is like a minute.”

“Oh!” Being finite and human, the man followed up with another question, “Well, then, what’s a million dollars like to you?”

“A million dollars to me is like a penny.”

“Wow!” Getting an idea, the man asked again, “You’re so generous, can I have one of Your pennies?” God replied, “Sure thing, in just a minute!”

The Scripture urges and encourages us in times of waiting with the Lord:

“Indeed, none who wait for You shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous” (Psalm 25:3 ESV).

“The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him” (Lamentations 3:25 ESV).

“For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God” (Psalm 62:5-7 ESV).

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does

not faint or grow weary; His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might He increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:28-31 ESV).

Wait on the Lord. Wait in hope. Anticipate grace and goodness in the worst of your life's fears.

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12 ESV).

So we leave Ruth waiting (anticipating).

Some of us will leave here today waiting, but we are waiting on the Lord who on that Christmas morn, stepped in, proving His faithfulness and fulfilling His promise to all who wait on Him.

“Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore He exalts Himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him” (Isaiah 30:18 ESV).

Like Ruth, we have nothing to bring. But like Boaz, God has everything to give and does in His goodness and love.