

Ruth 4

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Preacher: David MacPherson

[0 : 0 0] seated. Have you ever asked yourself the question, is it worth it? Is it worth it? All the trouble of life, all the responsibility, this whole business of following Jesus, doing what's right, or even caring about what's right. Is it worth it? And I wonder, especially in this holiday season where most of the world is gearing up for a break, we in the church seem to be gearing up for more chaos. It just happens to go that way often. It maybe causes you to ask that question, is it worth it? And maybe you're on the inside of that question, you know, I've been doing all this stuff and killing myself for this, or maybe you're on the outside looking at everybody else wondering what's the matter with them, right? Why are they doing that? Because you know you wouldn't kill yourself for that, whatever it is. Is it worth it? Because it looks a lot like the ones who are really succeeding, the ones who are really getting what they want in life, are the ones who are going after what they want and getting it for themselves, right? Why do the wicked prosper? Why is it those who sow nothing but evil seem to reap nothing but good? And maybe wicked is too strong a word. Really, they're nobody else than just those who are looking out for themselves, right? What's wicked about that?

Or maybe that's the heart of wickedness. But either way, look what they get. Status, significance, security, all the things I want. So if everybody else is getting their best life now, why am I not being about the business of getting mine? Waiting for my best life later? Why? Is it worth it? Is it worth it just mucking about with the interests of others? And what would Jesus do? And what does it mean to follow him? What does that look like? Is it worth it? And today I want to answer that question. I think our text wants to answer that question. And not just the question, but the fear behind it. And to tell you that it is. It is worth it. And if you're still going after those things yourself, I want to invite you today to give them up and let them go and find Jesus. Because chase after those things. And you might catch them for a moment. Security, status, safety, significance. But you'll never be able to hold on to them. I want to tell you that when it comes to your ultimate destiny, my ultimate destiny, we play the savior of our world for a moment. But in the end, we can't save ourselves. We can't secure ourselves or win for ourselves some ultimate sense of significance.

But we have a God who is deeply and intimately concerned with who we are and our well-being. A God who sent his son to purposefully and deliberately seek and ultimately achieve our salvation precisely by not looking at his own interests. But looking to the interests of others and others like us who didn't deserve it and couldn't do it for ourselves. I want to invite you to find Jesus. And I want you to walk out of here today ready and willing and seeking opportunity to likewise consider others more important than yourselves as an act of recognition of what he has done for you. Because he's considered you and you can entrust yourself into his hands. And you have to. You have to entrust yourself into his hands if you want any of that of what you're looking for most in life. You have to. Because God's not going to play second fiddle. He's not going to let you get it without him. That's not how the world works.

He's wired it that way. And you could spend the rest of your life if you have entrusted yourself into his hands. You can spend the rest of your life focusing on the well-being of others because you have done just that. And you're taken care of. And therefore life can be about something bigger.

[5 : 0 0] You miss this. And you'll spend the rest of your life wandering restless because you failed to find your rest in him. And ultimately you will end up in an eternal loneliness that all you've done in life has pointed to. You want to make yourself the most important thing about your life?

You will end up with yourself in the end and nothing else. So that's where we're going tonight. As we look at God's unfailing love and concern and faithfulness for his people as the heart of this story. And not just this story of the book of Ruth, but the story. The heart of God's story. And the ground for our turning back to him. But to start, I want to take just a moment to draw out the difference between these two paths. Between those who spend their lives looking out for

themselves and what they think is most important. And those who expend their lives for the sake of others.

Because they've encountered a story bigger than themselves. A story that they can fit into and find everything they've always been looking for. Look at how the final chapter of the book of Ruth opens. If you've been following the story till now, hopefully you've felt the weight of the tragedy that both Naomi and Ruth faced. Widowed in a foreign land. Naomi wasn't exaggerating when she returned home and told the women there that, in her own words, I went away full and the Lord has brought me back empty.

[6 : 43] Yet hope has dawned on these two destitute women in the person of Boaz. And when we left off last time, we read of him sending back Ruth from that night.

She fearlessly went out and proposed to him and broke all social norms. Boaz sent her back with enough barley once again to satisfy both her and Naomi.

And he said to her, he sent her on her way with these words, You must not go back empty to your mother-in-law. And there's a connection between how Naomi showed up back in Bethlehem.

The Lord has brought me back empty. And this scene here where Boaz sends her back, where he picks up his part in the story. Because the God who had guided Ruth into the field of Boaz was the God who held Naomi's tragedies in his hands.

And just as it was God who would not finally leave her empty, Boaz, who had become God's man, God's hands and feet, would not rest until the matter of their emptiness was resolved.

[7 : 59] And wedding bells are ringing in the air. But there's another man in the line for Ruth's hand. And that's what we've got to figure out. So in chapter 4, verse 1, Boaz goes up to the gate of the city and sits down there.

And the gate was really the place where legal issues and civil discrepancies were worked out, were sorted and settled. Sort of like our courtroom today.

They didn't have a courtroom. They just went to the gate. I don't know why. Maybe if it was raining, that wasn't the best. But that's where they went. And he arrived. Look at the text. It says he arrived just as the guardian redeemer came along.

And I hope that doesn't surprise you. I hope that doesn't surprise you at this point in the story. The original says, and behold, the guardian redeemer passed by there.

Behold. And you're supposed to say, yeah, right, behold. Whoa. As if at this point in the story, it could have gone any other way. Right? God has been all over this story.

[9 : 01] As if it could have gone any other way. As if you should expect anything less. Because in highlighting, once again, the sheer coincidence of the matter.

The author's actually pointing to the utter providence behind it. Don't forget who's in control. Not a moment has passed that God hasn't had in his hands.

So Boaz says to the guardian redeemer, come over here, my friend, and sit down. And Boaz didn't really say to him, friend. Okay? He didn't say, friend, come over here.

He probably used his name, but we're not told that. That's our attempt, friend, that word, that translation, is our attempt to make sense of the original. Where the author is actually trying to avoid this guy's name.

Or maybe he didn't even know it. At this point. Maybe his name had already been forgotten from history. Come over here. Friend, you certain one, you got you walking by, come over here.

[10 : 06] You're the one we need to deal with. Sit down. And then Boaz has the ten elders of the city and said to them as well, sit down here. And they did. And then he says to Mr. Such-and-Such, right?

That's pretty much what he's saying. Mr. Such-and-Such, come over. Now, Mr. Such-and-Such, let me tell you. Naomi has come back from Moab and is selling a piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech.

And by selling it, he means looking for someone to redeem it. So he's saying, he's looking for somebody to buy it back, right?

Naomi needs somebody to buy this land back for her. To acquire it on her behalf. And in so doing, commit to her. To her well-being.

Because for Naomi, she had nothing. She had nothing. No one to take care of her. No land to survive on. So she's looking for someone to redeem the land.

[11:05] Because really, she probably went off with her husband, Elimelech, as a last resort. You have to think about this. Of why they ended up in Moab. It was probably a last resort.

Things in Israel, things with God's people, were really bad. There was nothing going right. Everybody was walking away from God.

And they were reaping the consequences. Because God doesn't like when you walk away from him. He knows he's the best thing for any of us. It's wired into the system.

And so they probably went to Moab as a last resort. And they probably sold that land. So when they show back up, that's why Ruth has nowhere to go except into somebody else's field.

Land was very important. And that's why in the book of Joshua, you have all these rules when they're conquering the land. You have all these rules about what you're supposed to do with the land.

[12:05] Or if somebody falls on hard times, that, yeah, they can sell it for a time. But eventually it has to revert back to the ownership it had to begin with. Because the land was sort of like having a son to carry on the family name.

Without your land, without the son to carry on the family name, life was meaningless. Life was meaningless. If you didn't have somebody, life lost its meaning.

When Naomi and Elimelech first moved, right, they were putting aside the possibility of a future. They were putting it aside.

They moved outside from the presence of God, no longer in God's place. So they're looking for someone, Naomi's looking for someone to redeem the land and commit to her.

So he says to Mr. Such and Such, Boaz says, 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.

[13:14] If you will redeem it, do it. But if you will not, tell me so I will know. For no one has a right to do it except you, and I am next in line. And Boaz, look at him, perpetually concerned for the interests of others.

Perpetually concerned. But look at Mr. Such and Such. His response is immediate.

An opportunity to push the bounds of his kingdom just a little bit further. To acquire that next bit of property that's going to give him just that much more reign over his little kingdom.

It's done. Immediate. That's all he's living for, right? Not even a pause. He says, I will redeem it. And at his words, your heart's supposed to sink a little bit.

After all this of Ruth's just happening into the field of Boaz, and he's just happening to be the perfect guy, and Mr. Such and Such just happening to show up just on cue.

[14:24] But now he's going to ruin everything. But remember. Remember who's in control. And also, remember what this guy's living for.

Just one more inch of my little kingdom. Remember. Remember, because Boaz knows that. And listen to how Boaz responds.

Good. On the day that 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 man with his property.

You can have the land. But there's a catch. You can take the land. But to do it, you've got to live for someone else.

So securing your kingdom, Mr. Such and Such, can't be top priority anymore. Because expand your kingdom, you might. But from that day on, you will live in it under another's name.

[15:27] But Mr. Such and Such can't live with that. Can't do that. Can't do that. And listen to what he says.

Then I cannot redeem it. Because I might endanger my own estate. He says, I can't jeopardize myself for some dead man's name.

Because what about me? What about my name? What about my inheritance? Who will concern themselves with me while I'm concerning myself with him?

Do you hear it? Do you hear it? Do you see it? Do you see what's driving his life? This is where we start.

This is what occupies us from the womb. What about me? I was talking to someone else the other day.

[16:26] And they don't have kids yet. And I was telling them about the little that I've learned. Right? In our few years. Few years of being parents. The little bit that I've learned.

And if I was going to sum up. And I was summing up to them what parenting is. I said, you know what parenting is? Parenting, I think. As far as I can tell at this stage. Is teaching your kids that the world doesn't revolve around them.

From the womb. That's what parenting is. If Emin and Aletheia leave the house not knowing anything else.

They could leave not knowing how to read. But if they know that the world doesn't revolve around them. I count it as success. From the womb.

It doesn't revolve around us. It revolves around God. This is the problem of our world. Everyone in it thinks that they're at the center.

[17 : 31] And unfortunately the solution isn't simply. Let's all try harder to be better people. And try to get out of the center. Because in being better people.

We take that and we wrap it around ourselves again. And so that again we're at the center. The solution is to find a better center.

Find what's supposed to be at the center. Not. Try harder. Because that's all about us too. That's our problem.

And that's this guy's problem. So he says to Boaz. You. You redeem it. I cannot do it. And the author explains that in earlier times in Israel. For the redemption or the transfer of property to become final.

One party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. Sort of like saying. Here are my shoes. The shoes that I should have walked in. Walk in them yourself. Do what I should have done.

[18 : 33] Mr. Such and such. Mr. Such and such. Could have been anybody. And really could have been everybody. Looking out for himself and unable to see anything else besides.

But look at Boaz. Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people. Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion, and Machlon.

And connected with the land as the woman that I'm most concerned about. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Machlon's widow, as my wife.

And I have done this in order to maintain, in order to maintain the name of another. The name of the dead with his property. I've disregarded my own name for the sake of his.

So that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses. And just a side note.

[19 : 37] I don't know where you are and if you're a spouse today. Or if you're at the time in life when you're looking forward to that day of being a spouse. Or having a spouse. But I want to say this.

If you need a picture of what to look for in a spouse. Or a picture to judge whether you're being the spouse you're supposed to be. This is a great picture.

This is a great picture. You should go off in life and try to find the person who is living the least for themselves. That'll make a good spouse.

That'll make somebody you can live for the rest of your life. And if you're a spouse, you should be thinking, Is that how I live? And if not, you should start asking questions.

Where's the center of my life? What's gone wrong? And how do I find a better center? You see, Mr. Such and Such couldn't cope with putting another's name Before his own.

[20 : 49] But Boaz wouldn't think of having it any other way. And in the end, the interesting thing is That Mr. Such and Such, who was so worried about his own name, Is the one guy who doesn't have a name.

He's the one guy who's been forgotten. And it's Boaz, whose place in history has been preserved Precisely because he did not chase after his own end.

You go after the things of this world And you get nothing. You go after God And somehow Everything that's important Gets thrown in.

That's the The only one way You're ever going to be like There's only one way You're ever going to be like Boaz.

There's only one way. Okay? And this is important. You might be able to pull it off Looking like Boaz For a while Apart from this. But in the end, there's only one way That you can travel from here to death's door Forgetting about yourself And straining for something greater.

[22 : 13] Living for something bigger. And that's if you've seen Amidst the heartaches of life The rays of hope That are found in this story Being the story of God.

Not you. That is the only way You can be like Boaz. And find something bigger to live for Is if you see that it's all about God And not about you.

And that's what I want you to remember Where this all started And even for Boaz And the kind of life that he was living That his selflessness Was the overflow of a life Lived before a God who cares Even when you can't see it.

That's where we first met him In the field A prominent landowner Who cared for his own Because God was caring for him And looked after Ruth And took her under his wings Because he was living underneath The wings of God And now he's going out of his way To secure the future of these women And counts it an honor To have the opportunity To forget himself Because he sees That this is part of God's great plan To rescue And care for humanity Not my plan Not your plan Not parliament's plan This is God's plan And it is an honor To be a part of it Because I'm a part of it And I've benefited from it And that's changed my life And that's where it all comes around In the end Right?

That God Who was taking care of Boaz To begin with Takes care of him All the way through Takes care of him All the way through But you might be here tonight And you might be like me That's a wonderful picture To see how God takes care Of the one who's risked it all For the sake of others And trusted in him All along Was doing from the beginning From the very first time We saw him But that's not me That's not me Right?

[24 : 26] At least that's not how I feel I feel like the outsider I feel like this story Isn't mine Boaz looks like the insider He's been in He's done his bit So he can claim that I feel like the outsider What about me?

Where's my place in all this? But look where it all goes God's not just taking care Of the guy Who's been utterly on point The whole time If you've ever felt Like the outsider Look where this all goes It says in verse 11 That then the elders And all the people At the gate said We are witnesses May the Lord Make the woman Who is coming into your home May the Lord make Ruth This widowed foreigner This outsider Who was lowered to the point Of having to scavenge food In the fields May he make her Like Rachel and Leah Like the women God used To build up And birth Our nation 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

Bored to Judah May the Lord Make Ruth the outsider Like the mother Of all insiders May she not be Just one of us But the one We all look to And may God Himself do it And he does Because that's the story A God who acts Who cares And is concerned And guides And directs And provides And protects And works In all things For his good purposes And it's only In the next verse That we read Of Boaz Taking Ruth And lying with her And it says That when he did It was the Lord Who enabled her To conceive And she gave birth To a son And you know That's only the second time In this book That we read Of God acting His fingerprints Are all over the story But it's only The second time It talks of him Acting The first was In the opening verses

Of the story When he brought Bread to his people And then here At the end We read of him Acting again When he's ushering In something more You know His fingerprints Are all over it But in You know They're in the minutest Details of life But catching it In the middle Is often hard For us Right Catching God's Fingerprints In the middle Of life That's the hardest You may look back To a beginning And say I know God Was at work In my life Back then We don't know The future But apparently When we get there You could look forward And you could probably Say Yeah I think I think I can hope In God Working again It's seeing God's Fingerprints In the middle That's the hard part Recognizing God's Working In the middle When you're doubting Or wondering About that though In your own life What about now

What about in These troubles What about in What I'm facing Today It's a story Like this You wander back to Because yeah It says God clearly acted In the beginning Of the story And God clearly Acted in the end But the point is That even in the Minutest details Of life He was acting For his good purposes So if you're ever Thinking That you don't belong Or that this story Isn't for you This is where You've got to look A story like this Because it's a story About God And how he's a God Who took this Wandering widow Who returned to a land That she didn't know When she had lost All significance And had lost Any semblance Of status And had lost All earthly security And he took This foreign woman Who was left

[28 : 46] Only to scavenge For survival In the fields And he elevated her From scavenger To servant And from servant To wife And where she had Been barren For ten years Of a previous marriage She had no kids With this other guy Ten years Of nothing Of no future Now she gives birth To a son Who would bear kings When you doubt Whether God Is at work In your life It's a story Like this Turn back To this Cinderella Story And see God At work And he'll work In the life Of anybody Who can say With Ruth Your God Will be my God Your people Will be my people Where you die I will die And there May I be buried Anybody Doesn't matter Where you're starting

Insider Or outsider There's a special note Though beyond that If you're sitting here Tonight Maybe you don't know Am I an insider I don't know I've been going To church forever I don't know Am I an insider then I came from A pretty poor background But I've been around Am I an outsider What am I I don't know Or maybe you know That I started off But what if I'm A backslider That sort of word Gets thrown out there Quite a bit What if I was in At one point But since Have turned back What about me About me It's not just For the faithful ones Though Outsider Or insider It's not just For the faithful one The pretty stories About the ones Who were always faithful Or the ones Who became faithful In the end It's also for the ones

Whose lives Are a bit messier Right Because it's also A story about Naomi That's the beautiful thing Right Because then there was Naomi Listen to what happens Next in verse 14 It says The women of the city 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 And all of a sudden It's not about Boaz And it's not about Ruth But it's about Naomi It's about the God Who has given her A redeemer And it's through The birth of a child Do you notice that?

It's not even Boaz isn't even The redeemer anymore It's through the birth Of a child And maybe you're here today And you're where Naomi was Saying I went away full But the Lord has brought me Back empty And you're bitter And angry And wrapped up again Maybe tighter than before In all your own problems And you've got to see That it's only when you catch A glimpse of God's faithfulness That any of that's going to change And maybe you're not even Going to see it But can you trust That even in the heartache And perhaps especially In the heartache Perhaps through the heartache God is the one Weaving a story That is intended for your good Because that's what it was for Naomi Naomi took the child in her arms

And cared for him And the women living there Said Naomi has born a son Naomi has a son And he named him Obed He was the father of Jesse The father of David Who would be her king Who would reign over her And save her country And reign over her All through the birth Of a child You might not see it now And you might never see it But can you see Enough of God That no matter What you're going through And maybe exactly What you're going through Is meant for your good Is God's means Of bringing you back That's what it is That's what pain is It's God's means Of turning us Away from a story That's all about us Back to a story That's all about him Because he loves To be the hero And he hates being left out

[33 : 44] And he knows That it's our greatest good And perhaps the heartache Right As much as it stings now Is actually pushing you Driving you back to him Which actually becomes Your best life now It certainly becomes Your best life To come It's not too late Even for the Naomi's Among us It's a story about Insiders Outsiders And backsliders It does not matter It does not matter And I find it Very interesting That all the hope Comes from the birth Of a baby And that's a lot Of the stories In these parts Of the Bible Isn't it Slowly pushing hope From one generation To another And there's something To that Because for Boaz And Ruth And Naomi Their hope in God Was wrapped up In the fact that

The story Wasn't done If it was done Maybe we'd want to say That the story Was really all about them Great story Book of Ruth All about Boaz All about Ruth All about Naomi If the story Was done But it wasn't And that's why They were hoping In the coming Of a child Pushing hope From one generation To the next The land mattered Because it gave Meaning to life And having a child To carry on The family name Gave meaning to life Because as important As it was For Naomi And Ruth To be redeemed And filled And following after God Their hope Was in the fact That the story Wasn't over And you might wonder Why after all of this Interesting story All the interesting bits Of the book of Ruth It ends Do you see this At the end of the chapter It ends By putting you to sleep With a family tree Why is that?

Why is that? The family tree is traced back. It's because this isn't just any family tree. The reason was that it was a family tree that looked forward. Right?

That's what family trees do. They look forward. They tie back. And they look forward. And it wraps up a family's history. And all of the pain. And all of the struggle. And gives it meaning. And this is the family tree. This is the family tree. And it picks up on the family that was left off. In Genesis. It picks up actually from Genesis chapter 38. Go read the book of Genesis. And ask yourself why is Genesis chapter 38 in here?

Sort of breaks the story of Joseph. Nobody knows. It's the story of Judah. And he has a baby. By his. His. With. In. Law. Tamar. Tamar. May your. May your house. Be like the house of Perez. Who was born to Tamar. By Judah. That's what the women say. It picks that up. It actually picks up the story. And drives it forward. From Perez. All the way to Boaz. Who's given place of prominence. As the seventh name in the genealogy. From Boaz to Obed. Obed to Jesse. Jesse to the tenth. And final name. The capstone of the genealogy. David. The genealogy was looking forward to the coming of a king. The coming of a king. Who would save. And conquer. And bring rest. And peace. But what about it. At the end of the day. We're still here.

[37 : 32] Thousands of years later. Opening our service with a psalm. Written by that David. Who was looking forward to the birth of another king. Someone who would come. Because he saw. Maybe in his old age. That his reign was not good enough. That as king. As much as he could. Save. And bring rest. And bring peace. His reign was not good enough. And one needed to be born. Who would reign in his place. And as the words in Psalm 110 say. Would be not simply a king. But a priest. And one who would speak for God. As a prophet. It's interesting. That all of history. All of history. Is built on the expectation.

Of the birth of a baby. That genealogy in Genesis stretches back to the beginning. When man first wandered away from God. And God's answer was not that man would someday turn back. God's answer was in the very earliest chapters of our history. In this world. Was that one day. A baby would be born. Who would crush the head of evil. Even though it was through his suffering. The striking of his heel. Is it worth it. Is it worth it. It's worth everything. It's worth everything. Living for something bigger. Finding meaning.

In life. Something that's worth dying for. Is worth everything. But you can only have it if you see that it's not a story about us. Whether we're insiders. Outsiders. Or backsliders. But a story about him. That changes everything. We're gonna sing a song. Boom. Okay. With you. Yeah. That Wayne. Yeah. Just up to I can't let it.

What are you. I can't listen. questão About you. Yeah. And if you like