

Sunday Sermon 110721 Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17 Hebrews 9:24-28

"Life Is Born Out of Death"

Napoleon said, "The word 'impossible' is not in my dictionary." Despite his small stature, I think we can all agree that he certainly lived up to those words with his ambition and accomplishments. But in the end, he met the same result as every other man before him.

That phrase is not something man can say, but only God can proclaim. His phrase would be correct, however, if he altered it to say, "The word 'impossible' is not in my dictionary, when I rely and trust in God." Do you agree? God reveals His omnipotence through man. The Bible proves it.

The book of Ruth expresses God's omnipotence and His love to save mankind. It also shows how love and obedience through human faith accomplish God's will. Human love toward God is manifested in obedience. However, God's love for man is revealed through Jesus Christ by eternal salvation.

To understand today's scripture of Ruth, we must first look at the two principles that were given to Israel in the Old Testament. They are the Levirate Marriage and the Go'el system. In modern society, those systems have long disappeared.

Go'el is a word from the Hebrew meaning 'to act as a kinsman or a kinsman'. Kinsman in Hebrew means "redeemer." "Kinsman" can be called "redeemer" or "caregivers" in the sense that they must solve the problems of their brothers or near relatives who are in trouble.

This 'kinsman' mentioned in the Bible fulfilled two obligations. The first duty is that when a brother is poor and loses the land he owned, the kin shall reclaim the land that the brother had lost and return it to him. The second duty is that when a brother becomes a slave because of poverty, the kin pays the brother's ransom and grants him freedom.

God has redeemed the people of Israel from the land of their slavery, Egypt. He also gave them the land of Canaan, which he had promised to Abraham. God himself became the kinsmen of the Israelites, their redeemer.

Furthermore, the Levirate Marriage system contains the core of the Go'el system. The Old Testament levirate marriage law has three purposes. 1) To preserve the name and inheritance of his brother in his family and in the tribe by giving birth to an heir on behalf of the dead brother or relative. 2) It was to prevent an Israeli woman from marrying a foreign man. 3) It was to take care of a widow living alone.

Jesus came to this earth to save humankind, who had been tied up in sin and lost God's blessings. He dedicated his life for a ransom and saved us from the death of sin. Just as Boaz continued to inherit the family heritage of the Elimelech family, Jesus, our Go'el, redeemed us from the power of evil Satan and bought us again the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom.

God's power and love can prevent any human being from suffering, poverty, and slavery. Why, then, did God allow them to suffer the pains of poverty and slavery among his chosen Israelites? It was because God knew that was the only way to truly experience His power and love.

Three people appearing in the text of Ruth today, Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz, never lived a 'wonderful life' as most humans hope. But they lived an absolutely priceless life. They took the time of their lives in front of them as an opportunity to realize God's will. They set the boundaries in which they acted according to the commandments and disciplines God ordained.

Naomi directs the actions of Ruth, her daughter-in-law, through the concept of Go'el, following God's promise to Israel. How awkward, uncomfortable, and frightening are her instructions to her daughter-in-law, Ruth? But Ruth knows Naomi's love and the faithfulness of God, whom she trusts. So, she obeyed her mother's instructions.

As we dive into today's reading from the book of Ruth, it's important to note that the passage skips 25 verses in the middle—specifically from Ruth 3:6 through 4:12. This means we miss key details about how Ruth, following her mother-in-law's guidance, ends up marrying Boaz. To fully grasp this connection, we need to look closely at these omitted verses and see how they lead to this turning point in Ruth's story.

Let's see what Boaz does. He saw Ruth in his field for the first time. He knew her lowly status and the unfortunate circumstances of her being without a husband and child.

But Boaz respects and cares for her as a "man in God." As a result, God has made Boaz, who honestly respects others in his faith, genuinely respected by others.

The book of Hebrew text mentions issues that humans do not want but should think about deeply. "Everyone must die once, and after that be judged by God." "Death" and "judgment" are the events we all fear to face. However, the Bible offers a way to turn these two words into joyful events.

The gift of reconciliation has been given to the whole human race that had been cut off from God for sin. It is because the sacred and blameless Jesus was sacrificed for the sins of the past, present, and future of all mankind at once.

By faith in Jesus, we will be able to overcome death and judgment through the merits of his blood and be assured of eternal life and joy. God so wanted to send His Savior Jesus into the world. So, for the fulfillment of that plan, He used the family of Elimelech.

Are you not happy when you think about this spiritual truth? The truth is that the voluntary self-sacrifice of Jesus' life gave us eternal life. So, we should serve God and the world. And God rewards even the small sacrifices for our service with the joy and thanks of earth and heaven.

Shopping is a daily routine for modern people. There are many kinds of products in each store, and stacked products like mountains. But there are things we cannot buy in any stores. It is a product called 'love'. Then, why is there no place to sell love?

If someone could commercialize love, what a historic hit that would be. What if it was possible to put love in a bottle, in a can, or in a plastic container? But alas, no one can buy us love.

An 18th century French poet de Florian wrote in his poem "Pleasure of Love":

"The pleasure of love lasts only a moment; the grief of love lasts a lifetime. I gave up everything for ungrateful Sylvia, she is leaving me for another lover.

Sylvia told me repeatedly, 'I will love you as long as this water will run gently towards this brook which borders the meadow.'
The water still runs, but she has changed. The pleasure of love lasts only a moment, the grief of love lasts a lifetime."

Even though we cannot buy love directly, the Bible says, "Love comes from God." So, if we believe in God, we will receive it for free, and that love will be mine. And we live in that love and for that love.

Meanwhile, the Rev. Oscar Clute, who was born in 1837 and lived until 1902, wrote a poem for hymn during his lifetime as this:

1 O love of God most full, O love of God most free,
Come warm my heart, come fill my soul, Come lead me unto Thee.

2 Warm as the glowing sun, so shines Thy love on me,
It wraps me 'round with kindly care; it draws me unto Thee.

3 The wildest sea is calm; the tempest brings no fear.
The darkest night is full of light because Thy love is near.

4 O love of God most full, O love of God most free,
It warms my heart, it fills my soul, and with might it strengthens me.

Naomi bore her son Obed, whose blood was not mixed at all. However, Obed became a spiritual son to the family of Elimelech to Naomi. That Obed is the grandfather of King David. The book of Ruth begins with Elimelech's unfortunate family story and ends with introducing David. The reason for this is to introduce Jesus, who comes into the world according to David's descent.

The tribe of Judah in Israel and its family of David are royal descendants. Ruth, however, shows that the legitimacy of the Davidic lineage did not lead to a pure connection. Nevertheless, the Almighty God, in his plan, sends the savior for mankind to the earth by restoring the error of human lineage in transcendental ways.

God was able to send Jesus to this earth in a transcendent way without being connected with the human world. But Jesus came to this earth through the blood of defiled and weak men. Because He wants to save everyone, regardless of the identity, sex, and nationality of everyone in the world.

The hand of God's salvation and blessing for you cannot be stopped or destroyed in any circumstance or condition. God restored Elimelech's family. He created heaven and earth out of chaos, raised Jesus from the dead, and made us children of eternal life in the perdition of sin. That is how our Heavenly Father cares for us.

Humanity's greatest power lies in the ability to bring forth life from life. But God's power is far greater—bringing forth life from death, even from nothing. This divine power is the foundation of the faith given to us.

He wants to keep you and restore you in any circumstance today and to walk with you for all time. Therefore, we must trust and rely on Him. This is an expression of our love for the God who loves us. Amen.

Reflections and Applications for Today's Sermon:

1) Before answering this question, I encourage you to read the entire book of Ruth. Why is it called "The Book of Ruth" instead of "The Book of Naomi"? Answer this question in your own words.

2) Hebrews 9:27 says, "Everyone must die once, and after that be judged by God." That judgment will either bring you victory or defeat. How are you preparing for that victory?

3) Compare Naomi's feelings when she returned to Bethlehem with those when she held Obed in her arms. When have you experienced the same joy as Naomi did when she received Obed? What do you believe God is preparing for you now?