

Ruth Part 4: “Loyal Love Changes Everything”

Ruth 4:1-22

By Pastor Ben Froese

I remember being fascinated by dominos as a kid. One little push of a domino can have such a drastic effect!

Throughout the book of Ruth, we’ve seen that our lives connect to something much bigger – and once again we see this in Ruth chapter 4.

Today’s message is structured around three questions:

- I. Why won’t the guardian-redeemer buy the land?
- II. What makes Boaz different? And
- III. What is the result of Boaz’s loyal love?

I. Why won’t the guardian-redeemer buy the land?

In Ruth 3, we saw that Boaz was willing to marry Ruth, but there was someone else ‘first in line’ to do so.

Boaz presents this guardian-redeemer with this opportunity to buy a piece of land in Ruth 4:2-4, but when he says that Ruth comes as part of the package, the guardian-redeemer changes his mind.

“If the [guardian-redeemer] must marry Ruth, the son that may be born to her would then be the heir of the property of [Elimelek’s] family. In this case the money that is used to redeem the land is not an investment but simply reduces his family assets. Instead of serving to eventually enlarge his holdings of land, his money would be going to a charitable cause.” (*John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, & Mark W. Chavalas*)

It’s the choice of self-advancement over loyal love. It’s the choice of doing a cost-benefit analysis and making the decision with the least cost and the most benefit to oneself.

Since the garden of Eden, we all have this inclination toward selfish gain over and above loyal love to another.

II. What makes Boaz different?

Boaz goes ahead with the land-redemption and takes Ruth as his wife.

“Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon’s widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not

disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!”
(Ruth 4:9b-10)

Perhaps Boaz truly does desire to have Ruth as his wife, but his action here is one of loyal love on multiple levels:

It’s loyal love to Ruth, who is a foreigner and a widow. Certainly, a marginalized person in that setting. And Boaz is willing to embrace her on the inside of his family.

It’s loyal love to Naomi, a widow and a woman who had lost her two boys. A woman who had no hope for her future. And now, through Boaz’s choice to marry Ruth, there is new hope for her.

It’s loyal love, at least in some sense, to those in Naomi’s family who had passed away as well. Elimelek’s and Mahlon’s line might now continue, which was a huge deal in a culture where one’s hope was bound up in their line continuing and in passing on an inheritance.

Boaz is also doing far more than fulfilling a duty or keeping an Israelite law.

“Only by a significant stretch in custom would [Boaz] be considered to have any levirate obligations to Ruth.” (*John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, & Mark W. Chavalas*)

“[Boaz’s acts] defy convention and cross-cultural boundaries and go beyond the requirements of Torah to ensure the preservation of a family, and by extension the flourishing of a nation.” (*Eunny P. Lee*)

Boaz shows us that loyal love goes beyond Law. His example invites us to consider our love as well. Do we choose to love because ‘we’re supposed to’? Or does the way we love others come from a heart that’s been transformed by God’s grace?

III. What is the result of Boaz’s loyal love?

“May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel” (Ruth 4:11)

Rachel and Leah are the women from whom the Twelve Tribes of Israel come. A nation is built from these two women.

And this points ahead to what will come of Boaz and Ruth and their relationship. Yes, they have a child (4:13). That child is said to be a guardian-redeemer of Naomi, as this child restores Naomi’s hope (4:14).

More than that, through this child will come King David, and as the lineage continues, through this child will come Jesus the Messiah.

Boaz’s loyal love to Ruth teaches us that our seemingly small acts of loyal love can truly change history.

Loyal love has the power to change everything.

Boaz's loyal love also points ahead to another – to Jesus himself – who perfectly embodies loyal love. He shows loyal love to the point of the cross, where he gave up his life for you and me to make us His.

Boaz's loyal love brings the outsider Ruth into the family. Jesus' loyal love brings those of us who were once foreigners and exiles into the God's family (cf. Ephesians 2:11-22).

Life Group Discussion and Reflection Questions

Open Up

1. Imagine going forward 100 years in a time machine. How would you hope the world then would be different than it is now? Do you think your life today might play a part in shaping that future world?

Dig In

2. Read through the text, **Ruth 4:1-22**. What are some things that first stand out to you or raise questions for you?
3. The guardian-redeemer chooses not to buy the land because, he says, "I might endanger my own estate" (4:6). It seems that he is more concerned about his own wealth and status than sacrificing for the sake of another. What are some examples of how we see this in our world today?
4. What most stands out to you about Boaz? (You can look at chapter 4 or reflect back on the book as a whole). What might it look like for us to model our lives after his example?
5. We see that so much more comes out of Boaz's choice to marry Ruth than "they lived happily ever after." What are some examples you can think of where small acts of kindness make the biggest impact? What specific acts of kindness or loyal love is God calling you to?
6. In **verse 15**, Ruth – the Moabite woman – is said to be "better... than seven sons." In that cultural context, this is essentially saying that she is better than the best possible thing one could imagine have. How does this encourage us to value the marginalized in our world today?

Prayer

Share prayer requests. Pray that God would help us all to see how the smallest actions and choices we make can have the biggest impact. That we would see that loyal love has the power to change everything.