
Ruth 4 (*Genesis 38:6-19*)

Opening Prayer *Psalm 91:1-4*

How can we best serve God and our fellow Christians? The two are intimately related, and they are types of service motivated by kindness (loyal love). What does such service actually look like? Today, Boaz will give us a wonderful look at serving God and His People with genuine kindness. While we, on the other hand, may be engaging in service, even calling some of it evangelism or benevolence, is our motivation behind such service a “loyal love” for God and our fellow Christians? Are we really servicing our brothers and sister in Christ according to the New Commandment (**John 13:34-35**)? Are we really servicing to fulfill the Great Disciple-Making Commission (**Matthew 28:18-20**)? Or, are we really just doing what we want to do for our own comfortable self-interest and calling it Christian service? Here is one way of evaluating what motivates our service; whether it’s biblical kindness or comfortable self-interest. Let us each ask ourselves this question: “What does your Christian service cost you?” Service, if its motivation is true kindness, costs us something. When it comes down to lavishly serving God and His People out of loyal love, it essentially involves sacrifice and self-denial; because, that is what the love of Jesus in the Christian heart looks like. However, rather than being led by the Spirit, we give in to the flesh, so, when it comes down to truly serving God, according to His will, and truly serving the needs of His growing Kingdom, we often excuse ourselves with poor health, lack of money, little time, family obligations, or emotional discomfort. We are afraid of what it will cost us to express our loyal love lavishly toward God and others for His glory and our true joy; because, we focus on our own petty projects and false securities. We want to preserve our status quo. We resist risks for God’s glory; because, we fail to understand the truth that there are no risks when we sincerely desire to serve God and His People, but it must be service according to His will for the growth of His Kingdom, not service according to my will and my personal self-fulfillment. **Luke 9:23-24**. Indeed, our service to God and our service to one another are intimately connected, and kindness, or “loyal love”, must be the motivation for such service.

Naomi's familial fullness has an intimate connection to Ruth's rest, and this can only come about through Boaz's role as redeemer. Naomi trusts that Boaz will not rest himself until he obtains rest for Ruth. Through Ruth's kindness (loyal love) to Naomi, Naomi finally sees God's unfailing kindness towards her. Subsequently, Naomi has hope that Boaz's kindness will be fulfilled through redemption. In this lies Naomi's greatest familial fullness, which also fulfills God's promise of a King through the royal family line of Judah, but there is a cost associated with Boaz's kindness. Regardless of the cost, Boaz willingly paid it, and, in so doing, Boaz shows us what **Lavish Loyal Love** looks like for God's People. Boaz, as a picture of Jesus, demonstrates for us **The Cost of Kindness**.

1. The Reason for Redemption (Verses 1-10) **At the Gate**

a. To rescue people in need not to purchase property for personal gain.

i. This means of rescue, redemption, ransom comes willingly at a personal cost. Boaz acted out of loyal love not out of a personal gain for property. Boaz's kindness toward Ruth and Naomi is seen in his willingness to purchase land that would be passed down to Naomi's first-born grandson to preserve the name of Mahlon. This land Boaz was buying would redeem Ruth and Naomi from their poverty, but it could never be an inheritance for children born to him.

1. Would you consider such a financial transaction to help a noble fellow Christian?

b. Unfortunately, most of us are like the other guardian-redeemer who is unwilling to risk endangering his own estate to save two widows on the verge of poverty; widows among his own covenant community of God's People.

i. Does this honor God? Is this a display of the loyal love Jesus commands of us (John 13:34-35)?

ii. This fellow here is willing to serve God's people; to act as a redeemer, if it suits his own interests, but, if it requires sacrifice, cost, or difficulty on his part, then he would rather not.

1. Service is not service out of loyal love if it does not involve a willingness to deny self and make a sacrifice. That is the love of Christ, by His Spirit, in us. He

enables us to serve out of loyal love for God and others; especially our brothers and sisters in Christ (*Galatians 6:9-10*). Any other kind of service is, at best, convenient; at worst, self-serving, maybe even at the expense of God's People.

2. The Blessing for Marriage (Verses 11-17) ***In the Home***

a. To build up the family of Israel like Rachel and Leah; like Judah and Tamar who bore Perez. To build up God's Family; His House.

i. Ruth = apparently barren until the Lord blessed her with conception and birth (Verse 13). Ruth was married to Naomi's son, Mahlon, for 10 years during which time she did not bear any children.

1. Verses 11-14 are key to this story; because, they reveal that this is all the Lord's doing for His glory, for the fulfillment of promises and for the good of His People. It is the Lord Who blesses, and because He is the one Who blesses, we are free to bless others freely with the blessings He has given us. We can serve Him and others risk free; because, we trust in Him and His loyal love toward us.

ii. Boaz = may have not had the prejudices some of the Israelites held against the Moabites; because, his mother was Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute from Jericho who helped Israelite spies.

1. Additionally, it is from the line of Boaz that God's promised king would come; through the family line of Judah. Until marrying Ruth, we presume that Boaz was an older bachelor without children. God, out of His own loyal love, providentially provided Ruth, a woman of noble character, to fulfill His kingly promise through Boaz.

a. Without marginalized women such as Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth, we would not have David or the Great David's Greater Son, Jesus whose kingdom has no end and who saves Jews and Gentiles; even Gentiles like these marginalized women.

3. The Purpose for Genealogy (Verses 18-22) ***Down the Royal Road***

- a. To fulfill God's promise of a King through the royal family line of Judah.
 - i. But this genealogy doesn't end here.

1. **Matthew 1:5-16**

Naomi and Ruth are Redeemed by Boaz to fulfill God's promised plan of a king who will save Israelites and Moabites alike. Ruth finds rest and Naomi finds fullness through the costly redemption of Boaz that he willingly paid because of his loyal love. Again, we see how Boaz foreshadows Jesus, especially as a redeemer willing to pay the costly price for the redemption of marginalized people. The cost to Boaz was financial. Boaz paid the price for land as an inheritance passed down by others. The cost to Jesus was His divine dignity as God. Jesus paid the price of His life by dying a shameful death on the cross for our imperishable heavenly inheritance that will never fade. "Therefore [Jesus] is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems [us] from the transgressions committed under the first covenant" (*Hebrews 9:15*). This is the Gospel, and it has implications for our lives as disciples of King Jesus.

"Costly sacrificial love for our neighbors, even the unworthy ones, can be greatly used and blessed by God" (Lee Gatiss). Yet, we rarely inconvenience ourselves for our very own brothers and sisters in Christ gathered here today. How much do we model Boaz's loyal love? Perhaps, we are more like the first closer kinsman who refused to redeem the land. Maybe we are more like Onan or Judah in Genesis 38; because, we do not want to endure the cost of supporting the Church and serving the cause of our Lord Jesus.

Our loyal love (kindness) toward one another not only reflects God's loyal love toward us fully revealed in Jesus as our Redeemer King. Our loyal love is the way God fulfills His plans for our good. Our loyal love toward one another is an important way that God cares for us as His People, and our loyal love toward God is the way He grows His Forever Family by the power of His Spirit as we reach out to others different and unlike us with the Good News of Redemption by the Blood of Jesus.

AMEN.