

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**The Story: Chapter 9**  
**Everybody Loves a Love Story!**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer – November 6, 2011**

Everybody loves a love story!  
(Video)

There are lots of kinds of love stories, not all of them are the schmaltzy romantic type. Some love stories are heroic and patriotic. It is Veteran's Day weekend next week. There is a love story of sorts. Sometimes it is the sacrificial love of a parent for a child or a child for their parent.

(Pulpit presentation – gift to the church and to Pastor Dave from his father, Norris Scherrer)

**Ruth 1:1-5 (p. 123, The Story)**

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelek his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

Elimelek means 'God is my King'  
Naomi means pleasant or lovely  
Mahlon means puny  
Kilion means sickly

How many of you are having trouble keeping track of all these names? I have a bit of a problem but not to worry we are going to kill off three of them really soon. Every good love story has to start with a tragedy that gets you feeling sympathetic for the main players. That is what is about to happen.

Quickly though we have to unpack this important part of the story where it says there is a famine and they move to Moab, a sworn enemy of the nation of Israel. These Moabites worship a particularly cruel God, Chemosh, fed by child sacrifices. When these children marry Moabite women it is an offence to Jehovah.

Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

Naomi hears that the famine is over in Israel so she heads home and tells her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab where they could be taken care of by their relatives.

**Ruth 1:16-17**

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."

**The love of a daughter for her mother**

Ruth is giving up so much to be with Naomi. Her relatives would have taken care of her. But when Ruth makes her wonderful speech to her mother-in-law she must love her very much, because Naomi has nothing to offer her but poverty. Widows without a male son had no legal right in those days. We will get back to that.

But off they go, penniless and almost hopeless. They get to Bethlehem and to try to get something to eat Ruth offers to glean wheat from a field in Bethlehem, a very risky thing to do. This pretty foreign girl is last on the totem pole to work a field. But Boaz, the man who owns the field likes what he sees. Ruth is pretty, she is brave and she is faithful. Her reputation of faithfulness to her mother-in-law has impressed the locals. So he tells his workers to make life easy for her and give her a little extra wheat **and to leave her alone**. Let's see how Ruth responds:

**Ruth 2:10-14 (p. 123-124, *the Story*)**

At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?"

Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

"May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servants."

At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar." When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over."

You can see it happening here. Candlelight dinner, long star struck looks across the table. Crescendo in the music. He accidentally touches her hand. She blushes. This is the story we were waiting for.

***The love of a man and a woman***

Now every good love story always has a good twist. It turns out that Boaz is not your ordinary guy who knows a good thing when he sees it. He is a "kinsman redeemer".

***'Kinsman-Redeemer'***

You remember that in these eastern cultures to have no children was a terrible disgrace. So in Israelite kinsman redeemer custom, when an Israelite husband died, his brother or nearest relative was to marry the widow and continue the brother's name (Deuteronomy 25:5–10). Not only that they were to give the sister-in-law male children that will be the brother's name, that way they can keep their land. Naomi is referring to this custom in verse 11 when she says she has no sons to marry Ruth. She thinks it is hopeless for Ruth and Orpah to remain committed to the family name. Apparently, Naomi doesn't remember that there is another relative named Boaz who might perform the duty of a brother.

I want to pull back from this story for a moment to our story. There's a lesson here. When we have decided that God is against us, we usually focus on hopelessness and in the middle of the night it can feel overwhelming. We become so bitter we can't see the rays of light peeping out around the clouds. It was God who broke the famine and opened the way home (1:6). It was God who preserved a kinsman to continue Naomi's line (2:20). And it was God who constrains Ruth to stay with Naomi. At first Naomi is so embittered by God's hard providence that she can't see his mercy at work in her life. She wants to change her name from "Pleasant" to "Loser".

Remember these words of Ruth that we read a few moments ago:

"Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."

The more you ponder these words the more amazing they become. Ruth's commitment to her destitute mother-in-law is simply astonishing. It means, as far as she knows, a life of widowhood and childlessness and poverty, because Naomi has no redeemer to give, and if she married a non-relative, her commitment to Naomi's family would be lost. Third, it means going to an unknown land with a new people and new customs and new language. Fourth, it was a commitment even more radical than marriage: "Where you die I will die and there be buried" (v. 17). In other words, she will never return home, not even if Naomi dies.

But the most amazing commitment of all is this: "Your God will be my God" (v. 16). In the ten years they live together Ruth has seen in her mother-in-law Naomi a God who is worth worshiping and forsaking her religious heritage; she makes the God of Israel her God. Perhaps she had made that commitment years before, when her husband told her of the great love of God for Israel and his power at the Red Sea and his glorious purpose of peace and righteousness. Somehow or other Ruth had come to trust in Naomi's God in spite of Naomi's bitter experiences.

Here we have a picture of God's ideal woman. The audience can't help to love Ruth. She is amazing. She has a faith in God that sees beyond present bitter setbacks. This faith gives her freedom from the so called securities and comforts of the world. She has a spiritual courage to venture into the unknown and the strange. I like this girl a lot!

### ***The girls start planning***

#### ***Ruth 3:1-5 (p 124-125).***

One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for. Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."

"I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered.

This whole scene sounds more risqué than it is. What this little cultural exchange is that I don't think Ruth even gets the point perhaps, but she does obey. In lying down at his feet Jewish tradition has Ruth essentially saying to Boaz, "I will lie down at your feet if you will redeem me." And Boaz says, "I am so in love you are mine." Here is where we all go "Ahhhhh!

### ***The terrible last minute tragedy (p. 125-126, the Story)***

There is another relative who could be the Kinsman-Redeemer and he is a closer relative than Boaz. Boaz is in love but he has a duty first to the law and custom. Boaz goes to the man and says, "You have first dibs."

#### ***Ruth 4:3-4***

Then he said to the guardian-redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek. 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. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line."

"I will redeem it," he said.

It looks like all is lost, nothing can save them. Boaz has lost his chance to marry the girl of his dreams and Ruth has to go live with the old ugly guy. Despair, the love story is over. Except . . .

### ***Ruth 4:5-6***

Then Boaz said, "On the day 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 with his property." At this, the guardian-redeemer said, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it."

Right about here picture the old ugly guy's wife looking at him saying, "There is no way you're bringing the good looking chick into my house and giving her babies." So like every good love story they all live happily ever after and . . .

***Everything works out in the end***

***The Lower Story:***

Nice little story about a family that has a tough start but lucks out in the end.

***The Upper Story:***

God is at work in all things for His cosmic purposes for generations to come!  
Even when it doesn't seem like it: Believe it!

***We each have a love story of sorts – my 4Cs story***

(Info on the 4Cs website: [www.christcommunitycovenantchurch.org](http://www.christcommunitycovenantchurch.org))

***Romans 8:28***

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

***The love of a grandmother for her grandson***

***Ruth 4:16-17***

"Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David."

***This is all about a King***

Because one day, a great grandmother by the name of Ruth will perhaps in her old age get to hold little David, who one day will grow up to be the ancient relative of an obscure little boy named Joshua ben Joseph, Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior and King of the world.

***Prayer for communion***

***Prayer for offering***

***Benediction***

You see we all have a story to tell, a story of God being worked out in our lives. There is a legacy for you to live. Who knows maybe someday, Norris Scherrer's great granddaughter Adria will be attending 4Cs in 2095 and she will bring her 5 year old great grand daughter into church with her and Adria will say, "Do you see that pulpit? That was given to our church almost 100 years ago by your great, great, great, great grandfather so that you could hear the word of God from it." And maybe that little girl will give her life to Christ that very day when she hears that story. What is your legacy? God is writing a story with your life.