

Ruth 4:1-12
Active in God's Providence
2018-02-11
Actively trust in God, who works providentially

One of my worst parenting moments has to do with JR Beaver and the Oregon State Parks Junior Ranger program. Every September for the last several years we have gone camping at Silver Falls State Park. When the kids were younger they would participate in several of the Junior Ranger programs, every year ranking up a little higher as a Junior Ranger. Along with becoming a Junior Ranger came the secret Junior Ranger handshake. It was so secret, in fact, that it was only known by Park Rangers and Junior Rangers; not even parents were shown. I joked around with my kids for a few days about the secret handshake, and then, in a moment of monumental parental failure, I tricked my kids into showing me the handshake. It might seem a little thing - it was only a made up handshake around this Junior Ranger program. But there was something much greater at stake - the trust of my children in the care of their father. To say I tricked them is to put it nicely. In fact, I deceived them, I lied to them so they believed something that wasn't true, and then acted on that wrong belief. I apologized to my children and confessed my sin, but the damage was already done. As a father I'm to model the love of God for them, and my greatest aim as a father and parent is to have my children trust God; to know the love of God and trust him for forgiveness of sins and eternal life. *Trust can be a difficult thing.* As parents we instruct our children to do things they may not understand, things that may not make any sense at all to them, but we ask them to act based on their trust of us. This translates directly into our trust of God. *Trust can be hard, especially when the circumstances are difficult and don't seem to be in our favor.* But this is where we can act on the past faithfulness of God, that we've seen him work providentially in the past, accomplishing his will for our good and his glory, so won't he do this in the present and on into the future? Aren't we called to **actively trust in God, who works providentially?**

Scripture Passage: Ruth 4:1-12

In our passage this morning we see Boaz is engaged in carrying out obedience to the word of God, and he works selflessly for the benefit of others. Boaz is **actively trust in God, who works providentially.**

Active trust requires humility (vv.1-6)

- v.1** "Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer..." - Boaz acts immediately on what he said he would do. Remember from last week, that Ruth woke him in the middle of the night. Soundly sleeping at the threshing floor after a hard day's work and a good meal, she uncovers his feet and wakes him at midnight. Ruth does this incredibly daring thing, opening herself up to the possibility of rejection or mockery, she proposes marriage to Boaz. She asks him to redeem her, and in doing this she shows great kindness (*hesed*) toward Naomi, because this would bring blessing and protection for Naomi as well. There's one snag, though. There is a redeemer nearer, more closely related, than Boaz. But Boaz said he would act on this in the morning, and this is exactly what he now does.

 - Boaz goes to the gate of the city. This is a way in and out of the city, but it's also the place where business dealings would be conducted. Boaz arrives and sits down, and the narrator records for us that, "behold!", the nearer redeemer comes by. This is an act of God's providence.
 - God's providence has been on display in this book. **Ruth 2:1-3** she "*happened*" to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz when she went out to glean. That was the providence of God as well. The providence of God is the work of God to maintain his creation (including us), work through and with his creation, and to direct his creation to accomplish his will. We are always under the providence of God, but we're not always aware of it. J.I. Packer writes of God's providence that "his hand may be hidden, but his rule is absolute." That's what we're seeing here in the book of Ruth. And we that have trusted in Christ for salvation know **Romans 8:28** "...that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."
 - Boaz calls to the man and invites him to sit down. But how does he call the man? What's different about this character introduction than other character introductions in this book? **Ruth 1:1-2** gives us detail about Naomi and Elimelech. **Ruth 2:3** gives us detail about Boaz. But here, in **4:1ff**, we're not even given a name. I would certainly think that Boaz knew the name of the man, being related and living in the same town, but the writer of the story doesn't identify him. He's the nameless man. In fact, even the way Boaz calls to him emphasizes him as the unidentified man. He calls out, "*friend*." The Hebrew is *peloni almoni*, and could be translated as Mr. So-and-so. In two other places in the OT (**1 Sam. 21:2; 2 Kings 6:8**) the Hebrew phrase is used to refer to a place, and the English translation is "*such and such a place*."
- v.2** Boaz then also calls for ten elders of the city to sit down so they could serve as witnesses of the business dealing about to take place.

3. **vv.3-4** Boaz turns to the redeemer, Mr. So-and-so, and brings him up to speed. Naomi is back from Moab and she is in a desperate situation and needs to sell her land. Mr. So-and-so is the nearest relative, and so he has right of first refusal. This deal seems too good to pass up, so Mr. So-and-so says he will redeem it.
 1. Before we proceed this morning, though, we need to pause to understand some things about land and ownership in Israel. We come to **Ruth 4** and they're talking about land, but in **Ruth 3** it was about people. Where did this real estate deal come in?
 2. **Leviticus 25:23** "*The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me.*" When the people of Israel went in to possess the land, they divided it up by tribe, clan, and family, and this was their inheritance. The land was given to that family, and was to always stay in that family. If they became poor and had to sell it, it wasn't permanently sold. The land and the family were connected. The land and the family name were inseparable. **Leviticus 25:23-25** goes on to explain that a relative, a redeemer, would redeem the land - they would buy it from the person it was sold to and give it back to the original family. If this wasn't able to be done, then on the year of Jubilee all the land would be restored.
 3. For Mr. So-and-so this seemed like a deal too good to pass up. Buy the land from Naomi. She's a widow and has no sons, so at her death he would take over her land permanently, since he was the nearest relative.
4. **v.5** But then, after Mr. So-and-so agrees to redeem the land, Boaz adds this extra bit of information about Ruth. The land and the family are connected, and there is more than just Naomi. There is also Ruth, and Boaz tells this nearer redeemer that he has responsibilities toward her, if he should truly desire to be the redeemer.
 1. Last week I had mentioned **Deut. 25:5-10**, and said that in certain cases a kinsman redeemer was obligated to marry his brother's widow to raise up an heir, something called levirate marriage. This seems to be what Boaz is referring to, although it doesn't seem like it was required according to **Deut. 25**. But Boaz and Mr. So-and-so seem to understand it this way, so perhaps it was something culturally practiced even though not Scripturally required.
 2. But do you understand the wrench Boaz just introduced to Mr. So-and-so? If his plan was to buy the land and wait for Naomi to die so he could possess the land, that plan was just upset with the introduction of Naomi. Now he would buy the land, care for Naomi and Ruth, marry Ruth, and raise up a child to perpetuate the family name of Elimelech.
5. **v.6** "*I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance.*" - His words are very telling, full of "I" and "my". **The nameless Mr. So-and-so is unwilling to perpetuate the name of a relative, concerned only about his own inheritance. In selfishly trying to preserve his own name, he ends up being the one unnamed. In trying to build his own legacy, he fades from the story as suddenly as he entered.**
6. **We have a lesson in humility contained here. Actively trusting in God requires humility = not concerned with recognition, fame, or fortune, but having an honest evaluation of yourself, and having a mindset that is focused on the best interests of others. Mr. So-and-so was only looking to his own interests, trusting in his own reasoning and ability, instead of trusting in God. The personal price was too high. Boaz was looking to the best interests of Naomi and Ruth. **Philippians 2:5-8** "*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*"**

Transition: Active trust requires humility, and active trust reveals God's glory.

Active trust reveals God's glory - redemption/salvation (vv.7-12)

1. **vv.7-8** The transaction is confirmed according to their custom. Then Boaz turns to the elders of the city.
2. **vv.9-10** He calls them to be witnesses of his actions and also his intentions. He doesn't only talk about the land deal, but he calls them as witnesses to what he intends to do, to marry Ruth and perpetuate the family name of Elimelech. Mr. So-and-so was concerned only with land, but Boaz is most interested in the people of the land.
3. **v.11-12** The witnesses, now the elders and everyone at the gate, speak this blessing over Boaz.
 1. They ask God to give Ruth, the Moabite woman, a standing with Rachel and Leah, the matriarchs of Israel. What a turn of events, that this woman from Moab, who selflessly committed herself to the care of her mother-in-law, would be named among Rachel and Leah!
 2. They pray that Boaz would continue to be a worthy man, and a man of renown (a great name).
 3. They also pray for the multiplication of Boaz's house, that it would be like the house of Perez, a house that was blessed and that was a blessing to others. Boaz himself was descended from Perez.

1. Ruth and Tamar, the mother of Perez, are compared, which seems a little odd if you're familiar with **Genesis 38**. I don't believe the comparison is intended to be one of their character nor the manner of conception, but rather that God sovereignly, providentially worked through the most difficult of circumstances to accomplish his good will.

4. The people and the elders ask God to bless Boaz and Ruth, and in so doing are testifying to the glory of God by remembering and reciting the past providence of God.

5. The blessing belongs to the one who took the sacrificial approach. Boaz, a man of worthy character and good standing, ministered to the lowest and most vulnerable, and becomes the hero of the story. Boaz, in looking to the interests of Naomi and Ruth, and obedience to God, took the sacrificial approach, was willing to leave a legacy for someone else, and ended up with a name repeated in Scripture, most significantly in the genealogy of our Savior, Jesus. And here we see most clearly that active trust reveals God's glory.

1. **Philippians 2:5–8** *“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”*

Conclusion: When you act in humility, trusting in God who works providentially, you reveal the glory of God. You show to the watching world that we have a God greater than circumstances, who is seated high above all creation, but who works in creation for the good of his creation and the glory of his great name. When the Holy Spirit leads you to help a stranded motorist, it's your divine opportunity to reveal to them the care of God for the destitute and the helpless. When husbands love their wives in accordance with Scripture, selflessly and sacrificially, it testifies to their wife, their children, their neighborhood and community, the love of God in Christ. When you take on the project or task at work that nobody else wants to do, you show that you trust God and work ultimately for him, not for fame or recognition or to be praised by men. When you use your gifts and talents to serve one another in the church, it reveals God's tender care for his sheep and his loving design of the church. **1 Peter 4:10–11** *“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

Family



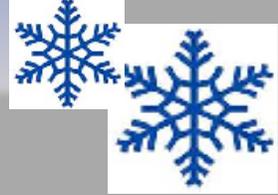
Table Talk

February 11, 2018



GOD'S TRUTH

Actively trust in God, who works providentially!



Family Discussion ?s

1. Many of us plan our days, our weeks, even our years ahead, hoping to see good goals accomplished and necessary tasks completed. This is not a bad thing, as we are to be good stewards with what God has given us- handling time well and wisely. God reveals His good will for our hearts and minds, our families, and our witness in this world in His Word, which we often strive to meet through the empowering of His Holy Spirit. But, what must we always keep in mind and heart as we approach OUR plans?
2. Think of the plans that you have: today, tomorrow, this year, in 5 years... For whose glory are those plans made? For whose best interest are they desired? We are human, and caring for ourselves comes quite easily, but through the working of the Holy Spirit in us, our desires become God's desires, our selfish desires are willingly sacrificed, and our actions glorify God and richly bless others. We MUST trust God in His work- His providence- to live in this way. This is faith!

Key Verse

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."
Romans 8:28 (ESV)

TABLE READING

Lead your kids further into God's Word...

1. Isaiah 55:8-11; Proverbs 16:9; Proverbs 19:21; Proverbs 21:30; Psalm 37:5-6, 23-24

2. Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 2:5-8; Romans 8:23-30

Scripture Memory: Exodus 34:6-7



"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." - Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (ESV)