

“Filled to Overflowing!” – December 25, 2025 – CCRC, Kitchener

Scripture Reading: Ruth 4:13 - 22

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴ The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! ¹⁵ He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.”

¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. ¹⁷ The women living there said, “Naomi has a son!” And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

The Genealogy of David

¹⁸ This, then, is the family line of Perez:

Perez was the father of Hezron,

¹⁹ Hezron the father of Ram,

Ram the father of Amminadab,

²⁰ Amminadab the father of Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon, ^[d]

²¹ Salmon the father of Boaz,

Boaz the father of Obed,

²² Obed the father of Jesse,

and Jesse the father of David.

Or as Matthew records in Chapter 1:5:

⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,

Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,

Obed the father of Jesse,

⁶ and Jesse the father of King David.

Further From Matthew 1 - David was the father of Solomon

And many generations later,

Matthan the father of Jacob,

¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-10

The Birth of Jesus

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while ^aQuirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today we have come to the end of the Advent season as traditionally observed by the Christian church, and today we celebrate the birth of the Messiah, the Redeemer, Jesus Christ our Lord! Today we celebrate the fullness we have in Christ, the redemption we have in Him! And what a wonderful reality to celebrate! In spite of our sin, in spite of our weakness, while we were yet sinners, God sent His Son, Jesus to redeem us! Today we are celebrating something that stands at the root and the heart of the Christian faith – Immanuel – God with us! Jesus emptied himself, humbled himself, gave up the glory of heaven and came to be like us in every way, in order that we might have life and have it abundantly, fully, even now. This is ours by grace, sheer grace. All of us ought to be continually awed by that reality – it ought to be the very motivation for our lives as believers, as we await his coming again.

But let's back up for a moment since not all of us have been here each week or been following this particular series of services which led to the reading from Ruth 4 this morning. Throughout the past number of weeks, we have been studying the book of Ruth from the Old Testament – a book that tells a wonderful story beginning with famine and ending with feasting. I hope that it has been a meaningful series for you. I know that for Pastor Laura and myself it has been a joy to be involved in this project, a project that will end this coming Sunday.

Even prior to opening Ruth, on the very first Sunday in Advent, we reflected on the emptiness, darkness and despair of our world, something that many of us are all too aware of. It was a dark start, indeed. But that is always a good place to begin Advent. It allows us to understand most clearly the importance of what we are celebrating today.

On the second Sunday, we opened the book of Ruth and noted that the story begins in Bethlehem, which means “house of bread” at a time when there was no bread in the house of bread and there was no peace in the land – it was at the time of the judges when everyone did what was right in their own eyes. The story is about a family headed up by Elimelech who made a choice to travel to Moab in order to find food for his wife Naomi, meaning “pleasant”, and their two sons Mahlon and Kilion. Moab was not exactly a very edifying place to go since it was a place born out of an incestuous relationship and now bowing before false gods. It may have had food, but it was a place of emptiness.

In that empty place, Elimelech died, as did his two sons. In spite of the fact that both sons had been married for 10 years or so, neither of them left Naomi with any grandchildren. The story is very dark and very empty – three very poor women were left to fend for themselves. Naomi and her family had gone to Moab to avoid death, but that is precisely what they experienced.

Having heard that there was food again in Bethlehem, Naomi decided to go home. Orpah and Ruth went with her. At a certain point on the trip back to the “house of bread”, Naomi told her daughters-in-law to go home because she could provide them with anything for the future. She did not see a future at that point. Orpah went back to Moab and back to her former life, whereas Ruth told Naomi that she was going with her mother-in-law to Israel no matter what. Back in Bethlehem the women of the town greeted Naomi by name, but Naomi tells them not to call her “pleasant” but to call her “Mara” instead. Through all of her experiences over the last years she said that she had become “bitter”. She had left Bethlehem full, but had come back empty.

Then we noted, at the end of chapter 1, that Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. There did seem to be some hope and some good news. Back in Bethlehem the women found themselves in a desperate situation and therefore Ruth went to the local food bank – a field – in order to find some left over barley which could be used for food. Through the providence of God, she ended up in the field of a man by the name of Boaz, who was not only a relative of Elimelech, but he loved the Lord, was rich, and very single.

Moving to chapter 2 we read that Boaz noticed Ruth and a love story began. He turned out to be quite the gentleman. He becomes Ruth’s protector, defender and provider and most importantly redeemer. He does all of this out of love, by grace. He was not obligated to give Ruth any sort of special treatment, but Boaz, a type of Christ, turned things upside-down. Ruth was quite taken by Boaz, as was Naomi, and as we enter chapter 3, we noted that Ruth got all dolled up in order to try to “catch” Boaz. Naomi saw a good fit here, so Naomi encouraged Ruth to go to Boaz and propose to Boaz that he propose to her. Boaz was surprised that she would want to be with someone the likes of him, but nonetheless, it would appear that he wanted her too.

All throughout the story we have been witnesses to things falling into place and we have been witnesses to the lives of the two women getting fuller and fuller as they, as Pastor Laura noted last Sunday, acted on their faith.

But, while it seemed that everything was a go, there was a catch, because there was someone other than Boaz who was in line to redeem the land. As we heard last week, the law dictated that the most closely related family member had first rights to buy the land of the one who had died. Boaz, understanding the law and being a righteous man, went to the city gate to have a discussion with the man who was legally obligated to buy Elimelech's land. Boaz did not want to go contrary to the law of the Lord, but at the same time it was rather obvious that he wanted Ruth. Well, Boaz went through the process with the closer relative who said that, as dictated by law, he would indeed buy the land. But Boaz was not quite done yet. After saying that he would buy the land, Boaz threw in the small print as it were and informed the man that the land comes with a "bitter" mother-in-law and a foreign woman, named Ruth. That news makes the man back out of the deal and tell Boaz that the land was his, if he wanted it. If he wanted it? Of course, Boaz wanted the land, and Ruth, and even Naomi. Things are brightening up...the world is about to turn!

Which brings us to the good news at the end of chapter 4! Verse 13, "*So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife.*" There was a wedding! What a feast it must have been for Naomi! At one time she had said, "*there is no hope for your ever marrying someone from our clan. When it comes right down to it, life is so bleak there really isn't much of a future if you stay with me.*" And now look! There is love and a feast and a wedding and Boaz and Ruth became one as husband and wife. After covenanting together, they consummated their relationship. The Lord opened Ruth's womb and enabled her to conceive and she gave birth to a son, in Bethlehem, even! (4:13) Ten years of marriage with Mahlon in a foreign, empty land and she had nothing to show for it, but now things were different. It all makes one think of Abraham and Sarah – a barren couple, having a son, in their old age – Issac. It makes one think of Zechariah and Elisabeth, an elderly barren couple, having a son – John the Baptist. The Lord is always faithful to His covenant promises and to his promise to send the Saviour.

Certainly for Ruth, life was so very different at this stage. She went from standing at a graveside on three separate occasions and as a widow, to being fed, loved, a new wife and now a mother! Ruth had come from Moab, a foreigner, but now she was one who found her place in the family tree of Jesus. That is the only other place in the Bible that we run across the name Ruth – in the genealogy of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 1. She was accepted by God, by grace and given a place in the plan of salvation! From emptiness to fulness, from famine to feasting!

Then there was Naomi – grandma Naomi! Notice that when the women came to her now her name shifts back to Naomi. “Bitter” Mara disappears and “pleasant” Naomi is back! They tell her that the love Ruth has for her is better than that of 7 sons (v. 15). Seven is the number of fulness or perfection or completeness. Ruth is better than 7 sons worth! Naomi’s cup runs over with fulness and with blessings from the Lord. These statements are followed by that wonderful final picture of the book of Ruth, namely, Naomi holding her grandson (v. 16). I suspect that only grandparents can truly understand this picture. Naomi has the child in her lap and she cares for him. Awesome! Her life has been redeemed! From emptiness to fulness, from famine to feasting, all through the work and grace of God!

The one born to Ruth was named Obed or “worshipper or servant of God.” Obed becomes the grandfather of King David, whose throne the Lord said would be established forever. What a stark contrast to the beginning of the story! We started with famine and anarchy and emptiness. We end with fulness in the house of bread, in Bethlehem.

But there is more to this story – now the rest... From Boaz and Ruth comes Obed and from Obed comes David and from David eventually comes *“Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.”* (Matthew 1:16) The Book of Ruth ends with the birth of a son, Obed. Now things were full in the house of Naomi and Ruth, but not quite. Obed was not the Saviour. He was not the one we were waiting for. Rather we are waiting for the One whose birth we celebrate today. *“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”* (Luke 2:11). Mary had given birth to her first-born son and Joseph had been told that they had to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. Alleluia! Those walking in darkness have seen a great light, by grace! Those lost in sin have received their kinsman-redeemer, by grace! Those whose lives were empty have their lives filled to overflowing because of him whose birth we celebrate today!

From Bethlehem, the “house of bread” came Him who said, *“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”* (John 6:35) *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, and I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.* (Rev. 21:1-2) *“He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!* (Rev. 21:5) *“He who overcomes will inherit all of this... (Rev. 21:7)* What a gospel! What a future!

Lachlan, come on up. You are going to pour the grain today...

From emptiness and famine, to fullness, to feasting, by sheer grace! Praise the Lord for the precious gift of His Son, Jesus. “Glory to God in the Highest! And together we say and pray:

Leader: From darkness to light! From emptiness to overflowing!

All: Praise the Lord for His gift of salvation! Come, Lord Jesus!

Amen!

Prayer: Oh Lord, what a gospel! What grace! To you be all the praise. From emptiness, from famine, from despair to fullness, feasting, hope! May we truly rejoice today and give you thanks for your great gift of Jesus. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you humbled yourself and became like us in every way, for our salvation. Help us to respond with faith, joy and thanksgiving each and every day you give us. To you be the glory! And all God’s people said a loud, Amen.

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything. This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one-day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. Amen.

Attributed to Archbishop Romero, written by Bishop Kenneth Untener