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A Son Has Been Born to Naomi

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Ruth 4

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Text

4 Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend; sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. ² And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. ³ Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. ⁴ So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you." And he said, "I will redeem it." ⁵ Then Boaz said, "The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance." ⁶ Then the redeemer said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

⁷ Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. ⁸ So when the redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself," he drew off his sandal. ⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. ¹⁰ Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day." ¹¹ Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, ¹² and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman."

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! ¹⁵ He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. ¹⁷ And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

¹⁸ Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, ²¹ Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, ²² Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

Introduction

Ruth chapter 1 was bitter. That's the one word that stands out from that chapter. The book of Ruth is not mainly about Ruth, but Naomi. And Naomi is the girl version of Job. Her life was bitter; it was not all "sugar and spice and everything nice." Neither

will yours be. Naomi felt empty. So will you many times. It was 10 years in a foreign land trying to survive and then watching her husband die and then both of her sons. 10 years(!) marked by unimaginable loss and sadness.

But, though Naomi couldn't see it, God was still working. He always is, even in the darkest of times. He sustained Naomi's faith, even though it probably felt at times like it was barely holding on by a thread. He sustained her physical life. He visited her home town of Bethlehem, ending the famine... and he let Naomi hear the news of it. And he gave her Ruth! What a gem of a daughter-in-law – a true convert and a true companion who came back to Bethlehem with her. Can anyone here testify to God keeping them through the bitterest of times? Maybe even giving you at least one faithful friend who has stuck with you? Chapter 1 ended with Naomi and Ruth arriving in Bethlehem right as the barley crop was starting to be harvested. Impeccable timing!

Chapter 2 contained more sweet providences after 10 years of pure bitterness. Ruth went out to glean in the fields. What does that mean? This would be like someone today who goes through the alleys to pick up metal people threw out that could be scrapped for money. And Ruth just *happens* to find herself in the field of a man named Boaz who is a noble man, and a near relative who might be able to help Ruth and Naomi. But nothing just *happens*. Some people call it the Universe or say the stars aligned. We know it is the God of the Bible who is mysteriously behind every movement of every molecule in the universe. Have you noticed any sweet providences in your life this week?

In the middle of ch. 2 Boaz states that Ruth had come to take refuge under the wings of the LORD. It's a graphic way to speak of faith – coming in close under the strong, tender, sheltering embrace of the LORD, resting in him, letting him take care of you, trusting that he is able. Do you know what that's like, to stop trying to stand on your own and defend yourself and just nestle up next to God and know that he's got you? To hide yourself in Christ's righteousness? That is ultimately what we all need to do. As Augustine famously prayed to God, “[Y]ou made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”¹

But last week in the middle of ch. 3 we saw that Ruth looked to Boaz to spread *his* wings over her; that is, to marry her. So, are God's wings not enough? Last week we reflected on the fact that sometimes the way God spreads his wings over us is through other people bringing us under their wings. God gives his people tangible pictures of his provision. Those tangible pictures can be providences. They can also be people – a spouse, a parent, a friend. We can ask for and seek out those pictures. And we should praise God for those pictures when he gives them. But we must never mistake the picture for the real thing.

Be careful in what you focus on. The picture is just a pointer. No fellow church member can be with you 24/7. No mentor can always have you under her wing all the time. Not even a spouse can be everything to you. And they die. So receive the gracious gift of the periodic signposts, but always keep looking beyond the signposts to the One signified.

So we left off ch. 3 with Boaz committed to being a physical reminder of God's redemption in Ruth's life. But it turns out that there was a closer kinsman who had the right of first refusal. Boaz would talk to him the next day. Let's see what happens. How's this all going to turn out?

But first, let's pray... [Oh LORD, you are high above all nations, and your glory is above the heavens! Who is like you, our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth? And yet who raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap?...]]

Narrative

Chapter 4 begins – “Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there.” The gate of a city in those times was the center for civic life, “the normal place for public business,”² kind of like City Hall today. It was a common space, a bustling place. Everybody had to pass through it to go in and out to the fields to work. So Boaz took a seat there and waited.

But he didn't have to wait long. “And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken [of at the end of ch. 3, the closer relative], came by.” It's another instance of providence in this short-story. There's a tone of surprise in his voice that it just happened so quickly.

“So Boaz said, ‘Turn aside, friend; sit down here.’ And he turned aside and sat down. And [Boaz assembled] ten men of the elders of the city.” These would be the recognized leaders, like how our church has four elders overseeing it and like how Chicago has 50 aldermen (alder = elder). These elders would have hung around the gate, so it was not hard to find 10 of them. “[A]nd he said, ‘Sit down here.’ So they sat down.” Court is in order. The Council is in session. There's a quorum and now official business can be carried out.

Verse 3 – “Then [Boaz] said to the redeemer, ‘Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech.’” The verb “selling” has been hard for modern scholars to interpret. It doesn't seem that widows owned their deceased husband's land (see Nu. 27:9-11). Furthermore, it makes more sense that the ancestral land had already been sold by Elimelech prior to their move to Moab as a last resort. So what is probably going on here is that Naomi has asked for someone to invoke the right of redemption according to Leviticus 25 and buy back the land on behalf of Elimelech. But it's not entirely clear all the legalities being referred to here.

I went to the Cook County Recorder of Deeds website and searched for my PIN. I found a document with words in it that read – “TOGETHER WITH all the improvements now or hereafter erected on the property, and all easements, appurtenances and fixtures now or hereafter a part of the property.... BORROWER COVENANTS that Borrower is lawfully seised of the estate hereby conveyed and has the right to mortgage, grant and convey the Property and that the Property is unencumbered, except for encumbrances of record...” Now, I have a hard time knowing what all that is talking about. And what we get here in Ruth 4 is some sections of the transcript of legal proceedings... from a different culture and from over 3,000 years ago. So it makes sense and it's okay if you don't follow all the legal maneuvering, but you can still get the general plot.

Verse 4 – Boaz says, “So I thought I would tell you of it and say, ‘Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.’ If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one

besides you to redeem it, and I come after you.” Boaz is following the rules and protocol. He doesn’t think that he is somehow above the law, but he does things above board. A worthy man indeed.

The other guy says immediately – “I will redeem it.” We’re not sure exactly what his incentive was. Was it pure honor – to be seen as a great benefactor like how corporations will donate to a not-for-profit as a form of advertisement? Was there some financial benefit that would accrue to him somehow, like first dibs at farming the land for Naomi and splitting the profits? Or perhaps there was the hope that when Naomi died without any heirs he would be able to include it in his real estate portfolio? It’s unclear.

But before the deal is sealed, Boaz adds something – “[You need to know that t]he day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.” It’s a package deal. He can’t just redeem the land; he also has to perform the role of a levirate and produce an heir that would be in Elimelech and Mahlon’s line.

“[Oh! Well, if that’s the case, then I’m out!] I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.” Realizing that he’d have to provide for Ruth too and take her on as a wife and that he’d have to produce an heir to keep the land in Elimelech and Mahlon’s name was too much for this guy. He is portrayed as being self-protective and self-serving instead of generous and looking out for others. Could your life be described the same way? Never really going out of your way, inconveniencing yourself for others? It’s easy and natural to live this way, isn’t it?

But that wasn’t that. There were more boxes that needed to be checked, more that needed to be done to ratify this agreement. We read – “Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel.” It’s strange to us. But it’s almost like the narrator, writing down this story for a later audience, is acknowledging that even by his day this custom was antiquated and a bit strange. But it’s how it happened back then, so the historical detail is included. Can you recall ever seeing an old movie or TV show where two people would spit in their hands and then shake to signify a pact? Does that ring a bell? That’s weird, but that kind of thing happened not too far in the past right here in our culture. Different cultures come up with different symbols for solemnizing covenants. How about “pinky promise?”

“So when the redeemer said to Boaz, ‘Buy it for yourself,’ he drew off his sandal. Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, ‘You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife [remember: *bought* has a nuanced meaning; Ruth is not being treated like mere property in this story], to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.’ Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, ‘We are witnesses.’” The effect of this public ceremony was that this guy could not come back later and say that Boaz didn’t deserve to be the kinsman-redeemer, he skipped him. No, it was done in the presence of witnesses. It was certified. Like, how we get things signed and sealed by a notary. Or similar to how this Friday Kevin and Saraphina are going to stand up publicly in front of many witnesses and make vows

to become husband and wife and then I and two other witnesses will sign the marriage license and return it to the DuPage County Clerk. They can't just decide to get married by themselves this afternoon in Kevin's living room.

By the way, did you notice how the other guy was never named throughout this whole interchange? Actually, in the Hebrew in v. 1 where our English text reads, "Turn aside, friend," it's probably indicating something like – "Come here, Mr. So-and-So." He doesn't even get a name in the story. And then he disappears "with the infamy of anonymity,"³ as it has been put. But we all know Boaz and Ruth and Naomi. Their names are not forgotten but go down among the famous figures of OT history.

The townsfolk at the gate not only attest to the legal transaction, but they also pronounce a blessing on Boaz and Ruth. "May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel." Blessings are powerful. God answers prayers. Keep praying! Rachel and Leah were the wives of Jacob from whom the whole nation of Israel descended. It's not a sanitized story. It involves polygamy and surrogacy and all kinds of sin. But God was gracious and worked redemptively and made Rachel and Leah fruitful.

The townsfolk also said, "May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman." The story of Judah and Tamar that resulted in Perez is also a messy tale. But there's a kids' song by a band called Slugs & Bugs that says, "God makes messy things beautiful // When you put 'em in his hands // God makes messy things beautiful // Like only he can // After the showers // Look for the flowers // And you'll find out it's truthful // God makes messy things beautiful."

"So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception." That's an intriguing phrase – "and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son." God is sovereign. He is mysteriously behind every movement of every molecule in the universe. Have you ever marveled that of the 6-7 million eggs your mother was born with that one unique egg was released that met with that one unique sperm out of the 100 to 200 million that were trying to get there, which made you with the exact genetic configuration that you have, and you implanted in the womb, and grew and survived childbirth and you're here today? It's all very mind-blowing to think about. Nobody is an accident. The LORD is orchestrating everything. The bitter and the sweet. And for his children he is working out a sweet plan in the end.

There were 10 years of suffering, infertility, death. But then things began to change. The text almost gives the impression that Boaz and Ruth married that day and she conceived that night, but it probably took some time. And then there was 9 months of gestation. However, the story is wrapping up with a happy ending. Ruth is married, has conceived, and has born a son.

And Naomi... remember that Naomi is really the main character of this story. It begins with her and her bitter plight. And ends with her and her sweet reversal. Remember the women of Bethlehem who asked at the end of ch. 1 – "Is this Naomi?" And she said, "Do not call me Naomi [Pleasant]; call me Mara [Bitter], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty" (1:19-21). Those women now form a closing chorus singing the last song of this show. Verse 14 – "Then the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed be the LORD [God

deserves all the praise], who has not left you this day without a redeemer [there's that beautiful word again], and may his name be renowned in Israel [it's unclear whether this is referring to the boy's or the LORD's name]! He shall be to you a restorer of life [replenishing the emptiness] and a nourisher of your old age [what a lovely phrase], for your daughter-in-law who loves you [ain't that the truth?!], who is more to you than seven sons [what a statement of the intensity of the bond between Naomi and Ruth], has given birth to him [him... the baby boy is the redeemer; it's not Boaz, but the boy, that is here filling the role of a *goel* – a physical reminder of the LORD's redemption].”

“Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse[, his nanny].” Can you picture it? Can you see the smile on Naomi's wrinkled face? Can you picture her bouncing the baby on her knee with glee? What a scene of redemption, of restoration, of joy. It doesn't erase all the loss. It doesn't bring her husband back. It doesn't answer all the questions of *Why*. But through all the losses in her life, Naomi held on to faith. And God brought about a good ending and showed her (and us) things about him that could not have been known if all he did was make her life easy.

When I picture Naomi, I picture my Grandma Carter, who lost her husband when she was pregnant with my dad, and had to raise four boys on her own and run a farm and went through a lot of hardship in life. But I see this picture of her that is on my parents' refrigerator still, where she is sitting on her rocking chair with my brother's two twin babies on her lap and his older toddler child nearby and she is just beaming with joy.

I got to have breakfast this week with a former IBC member who was visiting. He's my age. I spoke at his wife's funeral after they moved away. They never had children. Later he ended up marrying a widow who had lost her husband to a tragic accident. She had never had children either. Together they wanted to have kids and struggled for a while. But then they had a baby boy, and then another one, and I just found out that now they are expecting surprise twins! They've been through a lot, but their faith is intact and stronger for it all and they have seen God's work of redemption in their lives.

Verse 17 – “And the women of the neighborhood...” I love that phrase. Do you know the joy of belonging to a neighborhood? “[T]he women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, ‘A son has been born to Naomi.’ [Not Ruth, Naomi; that's curious; this is a story mainly about Naomi.] They named him Obed.” “Obed” means “servant.” “This son is [Naomi's] redeemer, the one who has come to serve her by restoring her life and offering her security in her old age.”⁴ The story could end there, the camera could fade and it would be a wonderful tale.

But the camera zooms out further and we're given another detail. This story is being compiled from a further vantage point. We read – “He [that is, Obed] was the father of Jesse, the father of David.” Whoa! That's an even bigger perspective. How cool. This seemingly inconsequential family from Bethlehem that almost ended, turned out to produce the greatest king Israel ever had – David. So the story is not just told from the long arc perspective of Naomi's life, but even stretches beyond it.

And what's more, the book has a genealogy tacked on to the end of it to give the grand historical perspective. Now, you've got to understand that genealogies in the Bible are not bare records of factual data. They are stylized. They can skip generations. They can follow patrilineage or matrilineage. They can be biological or legal. It all depends on the author's intention in crafting the genealogy. Here 10 names are selected, probably

mirroring the 10 years of bitterness at the beginning of the book. The 7th name, a number of significance, is Boaz. The first name is Perez, tying in to the blessing in v. 12 but also playing on the similarities/dissimilarities with the Judah/Tamar story of Genesis 38. And the last name is emphatic. David – who is arguably the most significant figure of the OT. God has been weaving an epic tale that spans generations.

“Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.” Look at how ordinary faithfulness amidst suffering, during some of the darkest times spiritually, fit into a larger story.

Doctrine

So that’s the book of Ruth. It’s a good story, right? So what’s the point? What’s the truth that chapter four is trying to get us to see? In short, I think it’s just this:

sometimes it takes some time to see what God is doing.

Leon Morris summarizes the whole book this way – “Throughout the book in all its art[ful] simplicity there runs the note that God is supreme. He watches over people like Naomi and Ruth and Boaz and directs their paths. God never forgets his saving purposes.... God’s hand is over all history. God works out his purpose, generation after generation. Limited as we are to one lifetime, each of us sees so little of what happens. [But t]he process of history is not haphazard. There is a purpose in it all.”⁵

This book is in the Bible to remind us that though the believer’s life contains many bitternesses, we have a BIG God with BIG plans that we can trust. He is working things out for good ends. But that’s not always immediately evident. The ending of ch. 4 reminds us that **sometimes it takes some time to see what God is doing.**

Naomi had 10 years of sorrow in Moab, 6 weeks of waiting for Boaz to make a move on Ruth, 9 months of anticipation for a baby, but by the end of her life there was some consolation. The Almighty brought about some good eventually in her lifetime.

But Naomi didn’t even get to see the full extent of God’s plans. She didn’t get to see the even bigger picture of what God was doing to bring a king from Bethlehem, a descendant of Obed – King David! We have no clue who our great-grandchildren may turn out to be.

And then, of course, we read this story not just from the perspective of the narrator, probably writing in the golden age of King David circa 1,000 B.C. We see things that not even the person writing this book could have imagined. We see how David wasn’t the end of the line. We know the genealogy that begins the gospel of Matthew that includes Judah and Tamar and Perez, that includes Rahab, that includes Ruth and Boaz, that includes Obed and Jesse and David, that includes the messy story of Bathsheba, and that keeps going through exile and deportation and restoration until it finally ends at Jesus Christ. He is the end of the line, the culmination of history, the Redeemer of the world.

That big picture hits the highlights but includes periods, sometimes of 400 years, where it was hard to trace God’s hand. **Sometimes it takes some time to see what God is doing,** but he’s doing something, something grand.

Application

So what does this mean for you? First off, it holds out no hope for you if you're not a Christian, if you haven't, like Ruth, thrown your lot in with the Lord, humbled yourself and sought refuge under his wings. The Bible is not about giving some generic bromides like – "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." "Everything happens for a reason." "It will all work out in the end." No! The promises of a grand purpose are for those who have put their trust in him – who believe and are baptized and belong to his covenant people, the church. If you're living for yourself and expecting that if there's a God then his job is to just comply with your plans and then get confused and upset by suffering, then I can't tell you everything is going to be alright. I can tell you that God is trying to get your attention and upend all your idols so that you will repent of your sin and throw yourself on Jesus for mercy.

For those of you who have done that, I can tell you that God loves you and only disciplines you for your good as his child. I can tell you that you will see some signs of redemption of your pain in this lifetime. But it won't always be fast. **Sometimes it takes some time to see what God is doing** in your individual story. Be patient. Don't give up. Keep praying. And keep saying with King David – "I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD" (Ps. 27:13-14)!

But I can also tell you that not *everything* will tie up in a nice neat bow in this life. We need an eternal perspective. But there is something beyond this life that God is doing. There is a future for you that spans beyond your time on this earth. "The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble" (Ps. 90:10). But Ruth reminds us that there is something bigger that God is doing in this world. And there is an even farther horizon – heaven. **Sometimes it takes some time to see what God is doing**, even everlasting time. Some things may not make sense until the time when Christ comes again and makes a new heaven and a new earth.

So hold on. Don't panic. Don't be impatient. Trust God. Wait with expectation that he will do you good in this life. Don't let your suffering drive you away from God, but deeper in your faith. And know that in time God's sovereign plan will be seen as beautiful.

I think of that great quote about ministry from Charles Bridges where he says that "success must be viewed, as *extending beyond present appearances*. The seed may lie under the clods till we lie there, *and then spring up*."⁶ Isn't that good? And encouraging, when it feels like the church isn't growing or your evangelism isn't working, or your counseling isn't changing people.

George Müller was a Christian who lived in England in the 1800s and started orphanages in utter reliance on God. He had many stories of remarkable answers to prayer that he saw in his life. But they weren't always immediate. He "prayed for three of his dear friends' salvation for [many] years. Reportedly, two of them came to Christ during his lifetime, but the third did not. [Yet, i]n God's goodness, this third friend was saved at Müller's funeral."⁷ You never know how God is going to do things. He is God and we are not. But we know enough to keep the faith and keep waiting on him.

The Lord's Table

Again, what we know from our vantage point now is more than enough. God has sovereignly orchestrated an elaborate plan of redemption proving beyond a shadow of a

doubt that we humans are sinful and unable to save ourselves. No mere human could do, David wasn't the One. And so God himself entered human history. The LORD gave a young woman of faith conception, miraculously. And she bore a son, born in Bethlehem, of David's line. And he was the perfectly faithful One, who did everything right, to a tee, by the book, demonstrating infinite compassion. And yet who drank the bitterest cup ever imaginable, enduring the worst evil and injustice, dying a brutal death on the Cross but doing it as a substitute bearing our sin and punishment. And he rose again from the dead on the third day, attested to by multiple witnesses. What a sweet turn of events!

We have every reason to trust that this world is under the sovereign hand of God who takes the worst things and turns them for good. And so we can trust him in our lives with whatever we are going through.

The Lord's Table is here to bring us back to this event, the Cross of Christ. It's where we hear his voice saying, "This is my body, given for you. This is my blood, which is poured out for you." "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things" (Rom. 8:31-32).

If you are not a believer who has been baptized and belongs to this church or another gospel-preaching local church, then you should not come forward and receive these elements. But you should use this time to pray and reflect on the truths of God's Word.

If you have been baptized as a profession of faith and are a member of a local church that is watching out for you, then you should come and receive these elements as tangible pictures of his provision, even if your faith is barely hanging on by a thread right now as a way to say, "I don't understand everything, but I understand enough to know that you have worked in history and you will take care of me..."

Benediction

"After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Pe. 5:10-11).

This sermon was addressed originally to the people at Immanuel Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois, by Pastor Nathan Carter on Sunday morning, May 24, 2026. It is not meant to be a polished essay, but was written to be delivered orally. The mission of Immanuel is to be a multiplying community that enjoys and proclaims the Good News of Christ in the great city of Chicago.

End Notes:

¹ Hal M. Helms, trans., *The Confessions of St. Augustine* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 1986), 1.

² Leon Morris, “Ruth: An Introduction and Commentary” in Arthur E. Cundall and Leon Morris, *Judges and Ruth*, TOTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008 [1968]), 288. He has a helpful study on this page of the significance of the gate in the OT.

³ P. Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 191.

⁴ Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, NAC (Brentwood: B&H, 1999), 732.

⁵ Morris, 307. Morris says, “...artless simplicity,” but I emended it to “artful.”

⁶ Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry with An Inquiry into the Causes of its Inefficiency* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009 [1830]), 75.

⁷ Stuart W. Scott, *Wayward Children: Finding Peace, Keeping Hope* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2023), 29, citing Roger Steer, *George Muller: Delighted in God!* (Tain, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2015), 245.