

The Last Word [Ruth 4]

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Big Idea: Bitter doesn't get the last word. Redeemed does.

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// INTRODUCTION

²⁰*"Don't call me Naomi," she responded. "Instead, call me Mara, for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me. ²¹I went away full, but the LORD has brought me home empty. Why call me Naomi when the LORD has caused me to suffer and the Almighty has sent such tragedy upon me?"* [Ruth 1:20-21 NLT]

This is where we started a month ago. A woman named Naomi buried her husband and two sons in a country where she was not from. When she finally returned to her hometown of Bethlehem, with nothing but a daughter-in-law, and people asked how she was, she said, *"Don't even call me by my name anymore. Call me Bitter because that's what I am now."*

She named herself based on her experiences. And for a while, that name Bitter stuck.

Today, we're going to finish her story, and here's what we're going to discover.

Bitter doesn't get the last word. Redeemed does.

That's not only true about Naomi, but ***it's true about you as well.*** It's the idea behind this whole series. No matter your experiences, no matter the labels or names you've given yourself, it's not the last word.

As we pick the story of Ruth back up, remember where we left off. Ruth boldly approached Boaz in a posture of humility. She had no claim to Boaz, but he covered her anyway. He became her kinsman-redeemer.

// THE REVERSAL [Ruth 4:13-17]

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. ¹⁴The 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! ¹⁵He 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."

¹⁶Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. ¹⁷The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. [Ruth 4:13-17 NIV]

Look at that last verse again... *"Naomi has a son!"* Not Ruth, Naomi.

But Ruth's the one who's carried him and went through labor. Yet when the women gather around the baby, they don't say Ruth had a son; they say, *"Naomi has a son."* ***As odd as it may sound, it's the point of this whole sermon.***

Remember where we began... ***In chapter 1, Naomi was the one doing the naming.*** She looks at her life and says, *"Call me Bitter."* She writes the ending to her own story. ***But here in chapter 4, she doesn't get a say.*** In fact, we don't even hear Naomi's voice in this whole chapter. The women in the town name it for her, and it's different than what she chose. They write a new chapter to a story she thought was over.

That's what redemption does. It doesn't just fix your circumstances; it overrules the name you gave yourself when things were at their worst.

As wonderful as a redeemer Boaz was, he was only a shadow. Jesus would become our Kinsman-Redeemer. The One who covered us at the cost of His own life, whose covering is eternal and unbreakable. ***We are not only redeemed, but we are also made new.*** We're renamed.

¹⁷This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! [2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT]

This is a pattern throughout the whole Bible; God gives people new names.

- Abram to Abraham
- Sarai to Sarah
- Jacob to Israel
- Simon to Peter
- Even to the people of God...

⁴Never again will you be called “The Forsaken City” or “The Desolate Land.” Your new name will be “The City of God’s Delight” and “The Bride of God,” for the LORD delights in you and will claim you as his bride. [Isaiah 62:4 NLT]

This is how God works. Bitterness doesn’t get the last word. Redeemed does.

// **THE GENEALOGY** [Ruth 4:18-22]

The book of Ruth ends with a list of names...

¹⁸This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron,

¹⁹Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab,

²⁰Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon,

²¹Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed,

²²Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David. [Ruth 4:18-22 NIV]

That’s it. A pretty boring way to end a love story between Boaz and Ruth. A list of names difficult to pronounce.

To us, genealogy is boring. Especially when we find ourselves reading it in Scripture. But to the original readers of this book, genealogy was a really big deal. It determined WHO you were, who you could marry, what land was yours, and whether you belonged to the people of God at all. Genealogy wasn’t just filler or inconsequential information; it was the most important document your family owned.

With Ruth’s name listed in the genealogy of the Messiah, something unusual would’ve been flagged for a first-century Jewish reader. **Ruth is a Moabite.**

I’ve mentioned the importance of Ruth being a Moabite several times throughout this series, but you need to get the significance of it here. Back in Deuteronomy, God gave Israel a direct command about the Moabites:

³No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, not even in the tenth generation. [Deuteronomy 23:3 NIV]

Not even in the 10th generation — for 300 years! This isn’t a suggestion; it’s an absolute NO for Ammonites and Moabites. Yet, 4 generations after Ruth, this family produces David, the king of Israel. Then, roughly some 24 generations later,

this same family line produces Jesus, the Messiah. ***A Moabite woman, explicitly excluded by name from God's people, becomes the great-great-grandmother of King David, and an ancestor of Jesus himself.***

That's not an accident or a coincidence found in the Bible. Matthew clearly recognizes its importance because look at how he opens his Jesus account...

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

Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,

Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶and Jesse the father of King David...

¹⁶and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah. [Matthew 1:5-6,16 NIV]

Matthew didn't have to include mothers. In fact, ancient genealogies rarely ever did; they ran them through the fathers. But Matthew specifically names four women...

- ***Tamar***, who disguised herself to get justice from her father-in-law.
- ***Rahab***, a prostitute from Jericho, a Canaanite and outsider of Israel by every definition.
- ***Ruth***, a Moabite, excluded by name in the law.
- And ***Bathsheba***, remembered here only as "*Uriah's wife*," a subtle reminder of King David's worst sin.

Matthew doesn't hide these names to protect Jesus' reputation. He's highlighting them at the very beginning on purpose. ***Before Matthew tells you one thing Jesus ever said or did, he tells you who Jesus came from... from outsiders, foreigners, people with complicated pasts, and even from people the law technically said didn't belong.***

Here's what it means...

If a Moabite woman, someone the Law of Moses named as NOT belonging, ends up being permanently written in the Bible into the genealogy of Jesus, that's God showing us exactly His heart and who He is.

1000 years before Jesus was ever born in Bethlehem, God was reaching for a person who'd been told they weren't included.

God wrote redemption into the family tree of Jesus, using a woman who the Law said didn't qualify. This wasn't a one-time act of mercy; this is who God has always been.

The Apostle Paul affirms this in Ephesians when he wrote, *"you who were once far away have been brought near by the blood of Jesus."* Don't just hear that verse as a nice phrase about grace. Picture Ruth standing in the midst of it. She was far away, and God brought her near.

So, when Paul tells you that you were far away and you've been brought near, he's not describing something new. **He's telling you what God has been doing all along.** Long before you and I ever needed to hear it for ourselves.

Maybe you believe you're too far gone... too foreign or too disqualified for God to want to bring you close. Look today at Ruth's name as part of Jesus' family tree and let that lie go. If God did this for her, He'll do it for you.

The book of Ruth doesn't end with, *"and they lived happily ever after."* It ends with a genealogy that flows straight to Jesus through a Moabite outsider who wasn't *"allowed,"* named Ruth. The last word of Naomi's story is a name... Obed, the grandfather of King David. Bitter didn't get the last word in Naomi's story. Excluded wasn't the last word in Ruth's. **Know today, God is still writing your story.**

// WHAT'S YOUR "MARA" CHAPTER?

For many of you, somewhere along the way there's been a chapter in your life that has caused you to name yourself. Maybe you've never said it out loud or told people to call you by that name like Naomi, but **you know the word.**

- Divorced
- Addict
- Failure
- Too late
- Not enough
- Damaged
- Alone
- A diagnosis
- A mistake
- Bitter

If that's you, please listen closely. **Naomi wasn't wrong about what happened to her.** Her husband and sons really died. She really did return home with nothing. The name she gave herself was real; she WAS bitter. But that's what actually

makes this good news... redemption doesn't show up and tell you your pain isn't real. It doesn't argue with those chapters in your life. ***It just refuses to let them be the whole story.***

The women of Bethlehem didn't tell Naomi her feelings were invalid. They didn't erase what happened to her. They just added a new chapter. ***And that new chapter ended up being more true, not because the other chapter wasn't real but because God had more to say than she did.***

God's not arguing with your bitterness, brokenness, mistakes, failures, or pain. He's not trying to convince you those hard chapters of your life didn't happen or that they don't matter. He desires to write a new chapter, an ending to your story that frames the past and brings meaning to your pain.

The same God who renamed Naomi, Abram, Sarai, Jacob, Simon, and the people of Israel is still renaming people today.

That's what Jesus did on the cross. ***Before you had the right words, redemption spoke first.***

Here's the question I want to leave you with today:

Whose voice are you letting have the last word over you? Is it the voice of your worst year or biggest regret, the one you allowed to name you? Or is it the voice that's been writing a different ending this whole time, but you just can't see it?

// CLOSING

I want to give us a few moments to reflect this morning...

What name have you allowed to define you?

Read this verse and insert your name.

¹But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, _____, he who formed you, _____: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. [Isaiah 43:1]

_____ doesn't get the last word. Redeemed does.

// PRAYER