

Ruth

Sermon Series Guide
June 15 – July 6



The Book of Ruth

Sermon Series

June 15, 2025- July 6, 2025

Overview:

The Book of Ruth is a story of human love reflecting and enacting divine love. It is a rich text for a sermon series, particularly in summer days when farm fields flourish with the promise of an abundant harvest.

Themes of emptiness and fullness abound in this little book: famine turning to abundant food, loss turning to love, bitterness turning to joy, barrenness giving way to birth.

The improbable catalyst for all this is Ruth, neither king nor prophet, but only a widow and a foreigner. This little domestic tale is a story of God's hesed, God's faithfulness, and God's covenant love, lived out in the lives of everyday, ordinary human beings, much like you and me.

June 15, 2025	Ruth Loss and Loyalty
June 22, 2025	Ruth: Gleaning and Hope
June 29, 2025	Ruth: Daring to Act
July 6, 2025	Ruth: New Life

Resources:

Bible Project

Enter The Bible

Got Questions

Lessons From The Book of Ruth

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Bible Study: Ruth; Senior Outreach & Nurture, A Ministry of the Lutheran Home Association

Scripture Savvy: Summary of The Book of Ruth by Jamie Wilson

Compiled by Pam Miller, Adult Ministry Coordinator

June 15, 2025

Ruth: Loss and Loyalty

“Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God” (1:16). The bitterness of Naomi is not the whole of the story. Ruth’s loyalty, Ruth’s love for her mother-in-law holds the promise of something more, as does the final verse of this chapter: “They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest” (1:22). Naomi is empty (1:21), but faithful Ruth is right beside her, and the harvest is coming.

Opening Prayer:

Loving Redeemer, thank you for being a part of our day and lives. From times of hardship and tragedy to times of abundance and joy, you are with us. The story of Naomi and Ruth shows us how selflessness, faithfulness, redemption, and love in human relationships are gifts of your love for us. Guide us in this study to see how we can be more like Ruth with your guidance and wisdom. Amen.

Sermon Reflection:

- As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

Background:

The book of Ruth teaches us that genuine love may require uncompromising sacrifice. Through this beautiful story, we see how we can live according to the direction of God as a guide for our actions and conduct. You are invited to consider how God might be working in the everyday joys and hardships of your life.

The Story takes place in Israel during the time of the Judges, after the Israelites had entered the promised land but before the reign of David. Israel was in a moral and spiritual decline and was facing a famine. The story opens with an Israelite family in Bethlehem of Judah struggling to survive in the face of this famine, making the hard decision to go to Moab for food. At one time, Moab was one of Israel’s most hated enemies. When Israel was wandering in the wilderness (Numbers 21-33) Moab refused to give the people of Israel food and passage through their land. They even hired Balaam to curse Israel. Despite it being a time of peace between these two cities, the history between them remains.

Application Question: How can we show love and loyalty to others in all situations?

Reading: Ruth 1:1-22 Love and the human spirit can be more powerful and uniting than any suffering.

An Israelite family, including the father, Elimelech, whose name means “God is King”, the mother, Naomi, and two sons: Mahlon and Kilyon, whose names mean “consumption” and “disease,” moved to Moab in search of food so their family could survive. Once they were there, their lives changed. Elimelech died, and the sons married Moabite women. Mahlon married Ruth, and Chilion married Orpah.

Deuteronomy 23:3 tells us that Moabites are ineligible for admittance into the assembly of the Lord. While this may appear as a reason these marriages should not have taken place, the verse does not apply to marriage, nor does this curse follow women. Ruth and Orpah were devoted to both Naomi and the God of Israel. (See Deuteronomy 7:3) But tragedy struck again. After about 10 years, Mahlon and Chilion both died. Naomi is left alone with her two Moabite daughters-in-law, all three are widows with no one to care for them. When Naomi heard that the famine in Israel was over, she decided it was time to return home with her two daughters-in-law. (Ruth 1:1-7)

1. What was the life of a widow like in those days?
2. How does the death of Naomi’s sons complicate the situation for her and for Ruth and Orpah?
3. What made Naomi decide to return to Israel? Who was responsible for what happened in Israel?

Naomi initially left with her two daughters-in-law, but soon told her daughters-in-law to go back to the houses of their own mothers as the surest way for them to find husbands and security. She loved and respected both of her daughters-in-law. She prayed that the Lord “grant them rest in the home of another husband.” In her mind, she knew she could do them no good. She was not their family, could not be their surrogate mother, or provide them the husbands they needed. (Ruth 1:8-15)

1. Why did Naomi want her daughter-in-laws to go back to their mothers? What did she say about their prospects for remarriage and a better life? What did Naomi say that shows this was a difficult decision?
2. Why did Ruth and Orpah want to go with Naomi?
3. Orpah agrees to go back, but Ruth does not. Why? Does this surprise you? (See Hebrews 12:2)
4. How was Naomi feeling about her relationship with the Lord?
5. Verse 15 refers to “her gods.” What gods did the Moabites worship?

Ruth refused to leave Naomi, she considered her to be a primary family member despite their different countries of origin and different religions. Ruth then swore loyalty to Naomi, to follow Naomi, to lodge where she lodges. She also made a promise to worship the God of Israel. Ruth is taking an enormous risk going to Israel, a place where people hate all Moabites. She put her future in the hands of the God of Israel, trusting that He would watch over her. (Ruth 1:16-18)

1. What kind of life could Ruth expect in Bethlehem, as a Moabite widow in Judean territory?
2. What truths did Ruth express in verses 16-18? How would you describe her love for Naomi?
3. What religion was Ruth now? Why is this remarkable?
4. Describe the love that Ruth had for God.
5. Where do you see God’s love in Ruth’s story?

Upon returning home, the women of the community could not believe Naomi had returned. Naomi, which in Hebrew means “pleasantness,” declared herself to be *Mara*, which in Hebrew means “bitter,” claiming the hand of the Lord is against her. She responded to them in a lament. (Ruth 1:19-22)

1. Walk through Naomi’s lament. What did it say about her relationship with God and all that had happened?
2. Where do you see God’s love in Naomi’s story?
3. How was Ruth’s love for Naomi like the love of Christ for sinful mankind?
4. What is the irony of these verses? How often are we blinded by blessings when we focus on misfortune?
5. How have you embraced God’s people as your own?
6. What lessons have you learned from Ruth that will change how you show your love for your neighbor and love for God in all situations?

Dig Deeper:

What type of love does God have for us? (See John 3:16, 1 John 4:16-19, Psalm 25:6-7, 1 Corinthians 13:40-8,13)

What kind of love are we to have for each other? How did Christ model his love? (See Mark 10:24, John 10:11, 1 John 4:9)

What comfort can we draw from the following passages in times of great loss or difficulty?

Matthew 28:20, Romans 8:18,28-39, 1 Peter 1:3-9.

Closing: The Lord's Prayer

June 22, 2025

Ruth: Gleaning and Hope

The tide is turning. Emptiness is being filled. Hope is born. And it is an old widow (one who has seen more than her share of sorrow) who recognizes the hand of God in these seemingly happenstance circumstances. Perhaps it is often thus: Those who have had long experience of seeing God at work can recognize and name those times, in their own lives, when miracles begin to happen.

Opening Prayer:

Loving Redeemer, thank you for being a part of our day and lives. From times of hardship and tragedy to times of abundance and joy, you are with us. The story of Naomi and Ruth shows us how selflessness, faithfulness, redemption, and love in human relationships are gifts of your love for us. Guide us in this study to see how we can be more like Ruth with your guidance and wisdom. Amen.

Sermon Reflection:

- As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

Background:

Last week, we met the family of Elimelech and Naomi at a sad and difficult time for Naomi and her two daughters-in-law. All three of them were walking in the footsteps of widowhood. Naomi's faith wavered as she confessed her bitterness at the situation. Ruth, from *reuth*, which means "something worth seeing" or could mean "a female friend," does not seek self-pity or bitterness over her husband's death. When Naomi decided to return to her land of Bethlehem, Ruth accompanied her, choosing the hard path. They arrived in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

Application Question: How can compassion and kindness change our life and the lives of others?

Reading: Ruth 2:1-23 Acts of compassion and kindness are demonstrations of character and faith in action. They do not go unnoticed.

The harvest process has many steps:

- Cutting the ripened grain with hand sickles (by men)
- Binding the grain into sheaves (by women)
- Gleaning, gathering stalks left over (by women)
- Transporting the grain to the threshing floor
- Threshing, loosening the grain from the straw
- Winnowing, separating the chaff from the grain
- Sifting the grain to remove foreign matter
- Bagging the grain for transportation

1. How did the custom of gleaning begin? What was its purpose? (See Leviticus 19:9; 23:22, and Deuteronomy 24:19.)
2. How does this compare to our modern welfare system?

Naomi and Ruth needed to decide how they would provide food for themselves. Barley harvest had begun, an opportunity for the poor and marginalized to collect the leftover grain after the harvesters had gone through the fields. Ruth would go to the fields to glean behind the harvesters. Ruth "happens upon" the field of Boaz, A wealthy farmer related to Naomi. (Ruth 2:1-18)

1. What do these verses tell us about Ruth's character?
2. Ruth seemed very comfortable in her new circumstances. Why do you think that is? How would you feel in a similar situation?
3. What do you think verse 3 means by "as it turns out?" How do you explain that Ruth happened to go to Boaz's field? (See Psalm 37:3-6 and Isaiah 40:31)
4. Boaz greeted his harvesters. What does this tell us about his character?
5. What was Boaz's response to seeing Ruth?
6. How was Boaz's care for Ruth similar to that of a shepherd?
7. Are you surprised at Ruth's response to Boaz's kindness?
8. What had Boaz heard about Ruth?
9. Reflect on the conversation between Ruth and Boaz in verses 12 and 13. (See 1Cor 12:27-31, 13:1-7)
10. What other kindness did Boaz show Ruth?

Ruth provided food for herself and Naomi that evening. When Ruth shared the news that the "field she happened upon" was Boaz's, Naomi saw God's blessing in the attentions and kindness of her relative. (Ruth 2:17-23)

1. Why was Naomi excited when she found out the field belonged to Boaz?
2. How was her attitude toward God changing?
3. In verse 20, Naomi refers to Boaz as "one of our guardian-redeemers." Read the article below from Got Questions and discuss what a guardian (kinsman) redeemer is.
4. How does this help you understand the meaning of the Bible term "redeem"?

Got Questions:

Question: "What is a kinsman redeemer?" Answer: The kinsman-redeemer is a male relative who, according to various laws of the Pentateuch, had the privilege or responsibility to act on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, danger, or need. The Hebrew term (*go el*) for kinsman-redeemer designates one who delivers or rescues (Genesis 48:16; Exodus 6:6) or redeems property or person (Leviticus 27:9–25, 25:47–55). The kinsman who redeems or vindicates a relative is illustrated most clearly in the book of Ruth, where the kinsman-redeemer is Boaz. The story of Ruth and Boaz begins when Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, return to Bethlehem from Moab, where they had been living. Naomi's husband and both sons, one the husband of Ruth, had died, leaving the women penniless and without a male protector. Upon arriving in Bethlehem, Naomi sends Ruth to glean in the fields of Boaz, a wealthy relative of Naomi's. Through a series of divinely appointed circumstances, Ruth appeals to Boaz as her kinsman-redeemer—her *go el*. Boaz agrees to the redemption and willingly buys the property left behind by Naomi's and Ruth's deceased husbands. He also takes Ruth as his wife, and together they have a son named Obed who became the grandfather of David, the forefather of Jesus. Yahweh is Israel's Redeemer, the one who promises to defend and vindicate them. He is both Father and Deliverer (Exodus 20:2). There are numerous Old Testament appeals to God as rescuer of the weak and needy (Psalm 82:4; Daniel 6:27; Jeremiah

20:13) and preserver of the sheep of Israel (Ezekiel 34:10–12, 22). In the New Testament, Christ is often regarded as an example of a kinsman-redeemer because, as our brother (Hebrews 2:11), He also redeems us because of our great need, one that only He can satisfy. In Ruth 3:9, we see a beautiful and poignant picture of the needy suppliant, unable to rescue herself, requesting of the kinsman redeemer that he cover her with his protection, redeem her, and make her his wife. In the same way, the Lord Jesus Christ bought us for Himself, out of the curse, out of our destitution; made us His own beloved bride; and blessed us for all generations. He is the true kinsman-redeemer of all who call on Him in faith.

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Closing: The Lord's Prayer

June 29, 2025

Ruth: Daring to Act

Love and faithfulness abound, as much as the piles of grain at the threshing floor, and blessings overflow into the lives of those who once were empty.

Opening Prayer:

Loving Redeemer, thank you for being a part of our day and lives. From times of hardship and tragedy to times of abundance and joy, you are with us. The story of Naomi and Ruth shows us how selflessness, faithfulness, redemption, and love in human relationships are gifts of your love for us. Guide us in this study to see how we can be more like Ruth with your guidance and wisdom. Amen.

Sermon Reflection:

- As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

Background:

We continue the story knowing Boaz was Naomi and Ruth's "guardian redeemer." A "guardian redeemer" was a cultural practice in Israel where, when a man in the family died and left behind a wife, it was the redeemer's responsibility to marry the widow and protect the family. Naomi found hope for the future of her family.

Application Question: How do faith and obedience help us trust in God's plans during uncertain times?

Reading: Ruth 3:1-18 God's providence and redemption.

Naomi had a plan for Ruth to find a new home now that she knew Boaz was a relative and was available for Ruth. (Ruth 3:1-6)

1. What was Naomi's plan?
2. Women were not typically present at the festival of the threshers. What do you think of the plan? Was it too forward?
3. What does Naomi tell Ruth to do? What was the reason behind the instructions?
 - a. Clothing (SoS 4:7-9)
 - b. Location (Num 18:20, Mat 3:12)
 - c. Timing
 - d. Uncovering (Psa 8:6, 1 Sa 23-24)
 - e. Awaiting Boaz's instructions
4. Why was Ruth so comfortable with what Naomi told her to do?

Naomi understood the culture of her community and the importance of caring for a family member who had lost a husband. Ruth did what Naomi told her to do. When Boaz startled during the night, he found Ruth at his feet. (Ruth 3:9-15)

1. When Ruth asked Boaz to spread his garment over her, what obligation was she reminding him of?
2. What about Ruth's character impressed Boaz in verse 10? Why was it important?
3. Compare how Boaz described Ruth in these verses with how he described her in Ruth 2:12.

4. How did Ruth's noble character mirror God's design for love between a husband and wife, and our marriage with Jesus Christ? (Eph 5:21-18)
5. What barrier stood in the way of Boaz being Ruth's "guardian redeemer?"
6. Despite the barrier, how did Boaz continue to take care of Ruth?

Ruth returned home early in the morning so no one would see her leaving the threshing floor. She did not leave empty-handed; Boaz made sure to provide food for her and Naomi. Boaz left to go to town to fulfill the promise he made to Ruth. (Ruth 3:16-18)

1. How did Boaz share God's blessing?
2. What was Naomi's response to the news Ruth brought? Does this response surprise you?
3. How has Naomi changed? What caused her change? (Ruth 1:21)

Closing: The Lord's Prayer

July 6, 2025

Ruth: New Life

Abundant harvest, overflowing blessings, new life where before there was only emptiness — all of it is made possible through the hesed of God, enacted by Ruth and Boaz, everyday, ordinary people who demonstrate extraordinary love and faithfulness.

Opening Prayer:

Loving Redeemer, thank you for being a part of our day and lives. From times of hardship and tragedy to times of abundance and joy, you are with us. The story of Naomi and Ruth shows us how selflessness, faithfulness, redemption, and love in human relationships are gifts of your love for us. Guide us in this study to see how we can be more like Ruth with your guidance and wisdom. Amen.

Sermon Reflection:

- As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

Background: Boaz and Ruth had made a connection. God's hand was evident in the events that led Ruth to Boaz; his divine providence worked through ordinary events in life. Boaz took the final step to determine if he had the right to marry Ruth or if the relative first in line would be the "guardian-redeemer."

Application Question: What are the ways your life overflows with blessings?

Reading: Ruth 4:1-22 New Life

Boaz approached the unnamed relative in the "town hall," where witnesses were available. He treated this as a business and legal transaction. There was land involved in the transaction, for which Naomi had the right of redemption. She likely did not have the financial means to secure it, so she was dependent on a "guardian-redeemer" to do it for her. (Ruth 4:1-12)

1. Who were the witnesses? Why did Boaz want witnesses?
2. What was the initial response of the unnamed relative? What changed his mind?
3. Why would the unnamed relative have thought he would endanger his own estate if he married Ruth and fulfilled the obligation of "guardian-redeemer?"
4. What was the significance of his taking off his sandals?
5. What was the significance of the blessing on Ruth with the words "like Rachel and Leah?" (See Gen 30)
6. What does the word redeemer mean?

The story ends with the reversal of the suffering that had taken place in chapter 1. The loyalty of Ruth to Naomi was shown in the loyalty of Boaz to Ruth. While God's name was hardly mentioned, God's love and faithfulness was evident. This is a story of faith and trust, loyalty and commitment, the importance of relationships, and how God provides amid adversity. (Ruth 4:13-22)

1. How did God bless the marriage of Boaz and Ruth?
2. How was the blessing spoken by the women to Naomi fulfilled by the Lord?
3. Ruth and Boaz had a son named Obed, which means "a servant who worships." What did the birth of a son mean to Naomi?

4. What kind of mother do you think God was preparing Ruth to be? (See Psalm 127:3)
5. Review the Genealogy. Who came from this line? Compare it with Matthew 1:5 and Luke 3:23.
6. What is the significance of Ruth, A Gentile by birth, being a part of the lineage of Christ?
7. How is the promise of Romans 8:28 fulfilled in the story of Ruth?
8. How was the love of Ruth for Naomi and for Boaz the perfect love described in 1 Corinthians 13?

Got Questions: Who is the true redeemer in the book of Ruth?

A redeemer is one who delivers or rescues someone by paying a price. To redeem is, literally, to “buy out.” A kinsman-redeemer, under the Mosaic Law, was a male relative who had the responsibility to act on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, danger, or need. The law of the kinsman-redeemer is given in Leviticus 25:25: “If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold.” This law is key to how events in the book of Ruth take shape.

Ruth was the Moabite daughter-in-law of Naomi, a Judean. Both were widowed, and Naomi was being forced to sell her late husband’s property due to their extreme poverty. Ruth went to glean in the nearby fields, to help provide something for them to eat, and she “happened” to come to a parcel of land belonging to Boaz (Ruth 2:3, ESV). That evening, Ruth told Naomi the name of the man who owned the field, and Naomi was hopeful: “The man is a close relative. He is one of our kinsman-redeemers” (verse 20, BSB).

Ruth approached Boaz and asked him to act on her and Naomi’s behalf as their kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 3:9). Boaz was willing to purchase their property, marry Ruth, and provide for the two women, but there was a nearer relative who was first in line for the job (verse 12). Boaz assured Ruth that, one way or another, she would be redeemed: “If [the other relative] does not want to redeem you, as surely as the LORD lives, I will” (verse 13, BSB). The next day, Boaz went through the legal process to become the kinsman-redeemer for Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 4:1–10). Later, a child, Obed, was born to Ruth, and this child eventually became the grandfather of King David (verse 17).

The theme of redemption, found throughout the Bible, is central in the book of Ruth. In studying Ruth, some raise the question of who is the “true” redeemer in the story. The answer depends on the perspective one takes.

Perspective 1: Boaz is the true redeemer in the book of Ruth. This is the most straightforward, literal answer. Boaz is explicitly called a kinsman-redeemer in Ruth 2:20, and he gathered witnesses when he officially took on that role (chapter 4). Scripture indicates that Boaz was a comparatively older man (Ruth 3:10), and some question the likelihood of his ability to provide for Ruth for the rest of her life. Given that his redemption was likely temporary, can Boaz be considered the “true” redeemer?

Perspective 2: Ruth is the true redeemer in the book of Ruth. In a sense, as the heroine of the account, Ruth served as a redeemer. Near the beginning of the book, Naomi is a destitute widow, bitter and living in a foreign land (Ruth 1:1–5, 20). When she decided to return to Bethlehem, she sent her daughters-in-law back home to their families (verse 8), but Ruth refused, choosing to go to Judea instead and saying to Naomi, “Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God” (verse 16). The fact that Ruth “clung” to Naomi (verse 14) makes her a candidate for being the story’s “true” redeemer. Were it not for Ruth’s faithfulness, Naomi would never have been redeemed.

Perspective 3: Obed is the true redeemer in the book of Ruth. According to some, the “true” redeemer of the account is Obed, the son of Boaz and Ruth. The women of the city identified Obed as Naomi’s redeemer (Ruth 4:14). After the death of Boaz, Obed would have been the one to care for Naomi and Ruth in their old age; he was a more “permanent” redeemer than Boaz could have been. Also, Obed was the grandfather of David—through whom the Redeemer of the world would come. It is the mention of David at the narrative’s end that gives the whole story its significance.

Perspective 4: The LORD is the true redeemer in the book of Ruth. We know that the Lord God is the ultimate Redeemer (Psalm 106:10; 130:8; Isaiah 35:10; 48:17; Galatians 3:13). And we see God’s hand working behind the scenes in the book of Ruth: God sent the famine that drove Naomi’s family to Moab, where Ruth was (Ruth

1:1); God made certain that Ruth “happened” to come to the field of Boaz (Ruth 2:3); God had previously instituted the law of levirate marriage (Ruth 4:5; cf. Deuteronomy 25:5–6); and God enabled Ruth to conceive (Ruth 4:13). Through it all, God’s plan was to bring David into the world and continue the line of Christ (verses 17–22).

We praise God for Christ’s redemption of us, spiritual paupers that we are, and we are grateful for the profound illustration of that redemption we find in the book of Ruth.

Closing: The Lord’s Prayer



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