

Day 20, Feb. 24

Ever heard the word, “Christianese”? It’s a phrase used to describe the particular language of church people, usually evangelicals. Christianese includes words that most people, even many who use them, don’t understand. Sometimes they are catchphrases that have come into use, like “born again” or “on fire for God”. And sometimes they are large, liturgical words (like “liturgical”!) that most can’t quite define. Words like atonement, liturgical, or periscope fall into this category. And so does the word “Redeemed”.

We are all redeemed by Christ, but what does that really mean? Can the average person on the street define it or even understand it? Probably not. We redeem coupons, but not people. Yet this is the key to the book of Ruth – Boaz as Ruth’s redeemer, and a model of Christ’s redemption of each of us. So let’s take a look.

Redeem:

1. compensate for the faults or bad aspects of something  
*That Superbowl was so boring! It was only redeemed by its half-time show.*
2. gain or regain possession of something in exchange for payment  
*I had given my heirloom watch away, but later redeemed it for \$150.*

In the story of Ruth, we find her redeemed by Boaz, who is regularly called her “Kinsman-Redeemer”. This is a title in the Old Testament that was not uncommon. When a man died leaving no heirs, his widow would have no way of supporting herself. And without nursing homes, people were supported in their old age by their children, without which a widow would have no one to feed or shelter her when she couldn’t do it herself. Worse yet, with no male heir the land the family owned would go to another, and land was everything. So, the Law put in place a Kinsman-Redeemer.

This Kinsman-Redeemer was the nearest male kin, typically a brother, who had the duty of sleeping with his widow sister-in-law and thereby giving her a son, a male heir who would support her, care for her in her old age, and keep the family land in the family. This Kinsman-Redeemer would “redeem” this widow by compensating for her fault (having no male heir) and giving her worth again.

Yet in this situation, Boaz’ redemption of Ruth was even more. You see, this was no legal or even familial transaction. This was love. And so Boaz redeemed Ruth not out of obligation but out of love for her. And so when he “compensated for her faults”, he also, “gained possession of her for payment”, and most importantly he showed his love for her and they became one.

How Christlike! Jesus did the same for us. Through His righteousness, he compensated for our faults. Through His death on the cross, he gained possession of us in exchange for the ultimate payment. Yet it wasn’t a legal obligation or even a familial one. Jesus redeemed us, gave us ultimate worth, because He loved us, and He showed us His love by redeeming us. So thank you, Boaz, for teaching us what true Redemption could look like. And thank you, Ruth, for allowing us to identify with you. But ultimately, thank you Jesus for redeeming us out of Your unfathomable love for us. We have worth because of You. Praise be to God!