

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE : 11 December 2011 MORNING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Scripture Versification 3-1:2,3

*Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:*

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Beloved grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

**Amen**

Psalm of praise: Psalm 66:1,7

**Confession of faith:** Apostolic

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell, the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy universal Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting

**Amen.**

*After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Scripture Versification 9-4: 4,5*

Law

Scripture Versification 9-4: 4,5

**Prayer:**

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation of the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises**
- **General prayer**
- **Enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word.**

**Amen**

Psalm 128:1,2

**Scripture reading:** Ruth 4

**Scripture text:** Ruth 4:14-15

The women said to Naomi, "Praise the Lord! He has given you a grandson today to take care of you. May the boy become famous in Israel! Your daughter-in-law loves you, and has done more for you than seven sons. And now she has given you a grandson, who will bring new life to you and give you security in your old age.

( Good News Bible)

**Theme:** God gave us a Redeemer

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, at the end of Chapter three of the book Ruth, the Holy Spirit left us with great expectations. It is the same great expectations that Naomi had had in her heart. Boaz, the affluent relation of Elimelech, is one of the redeemers had in his hand great promise for Naomi and Ruth. It was indeed at this stage that Naomi and Ruth were in dire need of a redeemer, as the harvest had been completed, as we read at the end of Ruth 2. If someone did not help them now, it would be very difficult for the two women.

But it is about much more than their daily living that has to be cared for. The fact that Ruth can still get married and have children, opens up the possibility that Boaz as redeemer could still marry her. This is the expectation that Naomi cradled in her heart. She very badly wants Boaz to marry Ruth. Nothing is said of Ruth's feelings, but we can assume that Ruth also has this desire in her heart. By now she has known Boaz for some months and he has gone out of his way to care for her and Naomi.

Brothers, sisters and children, apart from the fact that we know the story of Ruth very well, we can admit that we also want Boaz and Ruth to get married. But now there is someone else who by law can keep Boaz from marrying. The night at the threshing-floor, Boaz told Ruth: It is true that I am a close relative and am responsible for you, but there is a man who is a closer relative than I am. With this remark from Boaz, the Holy Spirit builds tension. Will Boaz succeed in marrying Ruth, or will this unknown relative take Ruth as his wife? Will the one who marries Ruth have a child with her in order provide and heir for Elimelech, or will his name disappear from Israel?

Noami, must have seen the tinkle in Boaz's eye when he looked at Ruth, and that is why, when Ruth returned from the threshing-floor she said: Now be patient, Ruth, until you see how this all turns out. Boaz will not rest today until he settles the matter.

Boaz's love for Ruth motivated him to act immediately. Early in the morning he goes directly to the city gates to negotiate with this other relation before witnesses. Just as when Boaz and Ruth met each other for the first time, we see how God has the movement of other people in His hands as well. When Boaz reaches the city gates, the other relation also arrived there on his way to his fields. Within the boundaries of what is right and righteous, Boaz took up the matter. He calls the other relation closer as well as ten elders to act as witnesses.

There are two matters that need to be discussed , that is the piece of land that Naomi has and Ruth the widow of Maglon. Ruth comes from Moab which makes the chance of a marriage difficult. Boaz does

not speak about her initially. The existence of the piece of land that can be sold, could improve the chances of a marriage with Ruth. That is why Boaz first mentions the piece of land which is for sale.

Boaz is someone who lives under the wings of the Lord, that is how Ruth came to know him in Ruth 2. For this reason he acts without fault. This redeemer who is a closer relation to Ruth and Naomi first has to know about the piece of land which is for sale. When he hears of the piece of land he quickly stated that he would act as redeemer for Naomi. If he can add this piece of land to his existing land he can augment his income and to provide food for one more person, would not place such a great burden on him. Besides, Naomi is an old woman, she cannot eat that much. And then there is the possibility that she may die soon and then the piece of land will be his forever, as Naomi had no male descendants that can claim the land. This piece of land will also enlarge the inheritance of his children.

For us, who want Boaz to marry Ruth, it is disappointing to hear that this relation is willing to act as redeemer for Naomi. Naomi would surely also have been disappointed. Boaz is a wise man and wants everything concerning Naomi and Ruth to be transparent. That is why he says it very clearly: if you buy the field from Naomi, then you are also buying Ruth, the Moabite widow, so that the field will stay in the dead man's family. When the other redeemer heard this he quickly recalculated. The marriage to Ruth, places the piece of land, no matter how attractive, in a totally different light. If Ruth is to have a son when he has married her, it would mean that he would not have a say over the piece of land. The land must remain in Elimelech's family because the land was not allowed to be sold permanently (Lev 25:23). And if the son that Ruth has, is his eldest child, it would mean that his own children's inheritance would be so much smaller.

After this other redeemer had weighed all the options, he let go of his right as redeemer. Before witnesses he said that Boaz could buy the piece of land. He took off his shoe as a confirmation that he handed the right of redemption over to Boaz.

Beloved, from the actions of Boaz we learn another characteristic of someone who lives under the wings of the lord. Such a person does not try to humiliate another, even if that person deserves to be humiliated. According to the law, Ruth should have removed this redeemer's shoe and spat in his face saying: "This is what happens to the man who refuses to give his brother a descendant." And then the Holy Spirit adds the following remark: "His family will be known in Israel as 'the family of the man who has his sandal pulled off'". (Deut. 25:9-10). Instead of humiliating the person, Boaz allows him to calmly lay down his right to redemption.

This man who was the actual redeemer, reminds us of Esau and his behavior long ago – Esau also did not want to remain a part of the covenant. He was concerned only with the here and now and that which he could benefit from a situation. He does not think about what is right in the eyes of the Lord, and if it would ask too much of him he won't think anything of stepping back. May the Lord, through His Holy Spirit protect us from choosing our own profit above that which is right in the eyes of the Lord. If the Lord expects you and me to be servants to other people, it would mean that we should sacrifice something of ourselves. May the Holy Spirit make us willing to be servants to other people and so show the love of Christ. The name of the other redeemer is not once mentioned. Is the Holy Spirit leave out his name because he also did not want to be part of the covenant? It makes a person wonder.

Brothers, sisters and children, the behaviour of Boaz to ultimately marry Ruth does not only speak of his love for her but specifically of a sacrificing love of someone who really wants to act as redeemer.

Here we have an example of true devotion, love and personal sacrifice. Boaz's sacrificing love for Ruth confirmed that she belongs to the people of the Lord. Boaz practiced that what he believed was true of God's work. God shows compassion towards people and makes them a part of his people. This is the calling of all of us that are a part of the Lord. We stand in the service of the Lord to call others closer so they can experience the goodness of God and the wonder of the salvation given us by God through Jesus Christ.

For Boaz the whole matter focused on Ruth and not on the piece of land. And there, amongst the witnesses as well as everyone who was in the city gates he said with great joy: "You are all witnesses today that I bought from Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech and to his sons Chilion and Mahlon. In addition, Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, becomes my wife. This will keep the property in the dead man's family, and his family line will continue among his people and in his town. The joy of marriage starts here without Ruth's presence.

These days people more and more have the idea that a marriage is a private affair and that the community has nothing to do with it. But this is where we are mistaken. When in Genesis 2 God says: That is why man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one, it makes clear that marriage is indeed a private but also a community. When the man leaves his mother and father the couple makes it clear to the community that a marriage is to be entered into. The community gives their blessing and with that they share in the joy because a new family is to be formed in amongst the people of the Lord.

Someone made the comment: *Weddings are not merely the communities way to keep jong people within the boundaries of tradition. Weddings are the communities way to receive a new commitment with love and joy (Lewis Smedes).*

When the elders in the city gates heard of Boaz's commitment to marry Ruth, they prayed for the blessing of the Lord over Boaz and Ruth. May the Lord make your wife become like Rachel and Leah. Who bore many children to Jacob. Little did the elders know how true their words would prove to be.

In truth God brought Ruth and Boaz together and married them. And He blessed them by Ruth becoming pregnant very quickly and had a baby boy. With His blessing hand held over them, Naomi and Ruth experienced a total change in their circumstances. Where their story started with a desperate emptiness, it ends with in fulfillment. We hear it in the words of the woman with Naomi: Praise the Lord! He has given you a grandson today. The Lord answered Naomi's cry for help. He life an earth depended on this grandson. The Lord provided in an heir as well as someone who would have the responsibility to take care of his grandmother. The women also said: ...a grandson to take care of you. May the boy become famous in Israel!" Little did they know how true these words would turn out to be not only for Naomi.

Ruth's love for her mother-in-law did not wane when she married Boaz. On the contrary, her love for Naomi is confirmed one more time. Ruth gave her first-born to Naomi to adopt. Ruth gave one last enormous gift to Naomi, her own son, whom Naomi could raise as her own. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the characteristic of God's love is reflected in Ruth. Ruth gave her only son to someone she loved.

The women gave the baby the name of "Obed", which means 'servant' He will be a servant to his grandmother and through the grace of God a servant to his grandfather Elimelech, in order for the memory of his grandfather not to fade from his people.

With these last words the Lord shines His light on the story of these two widows, for us to see the meaning that God gives to them. Their story is the story of Israel. It is the story of Israel's king. And ultimately it is yours and mine, because, through them God gave us a King and Redeemer.

Obed was a redeemer for Naomi, but not completely. He did care for his grandmother to lighten her earthly need. However he could not remove the curse of sin which rested on Naomi and the rest of man-kind. Obed could only in part refresh Naomi's soul. Not even David, a man close to God's heart, could refresh man's soul completely. David was also, just a sinner. This is the reason why, when Naomi takes Obed on her lap the Holy Spirit allows us to see a different woman, Mary, with Jesus on her lap, the Redeemer and Servant of all God's people. God, truly gave His own Son for the people whom he loved exceptionally, to save us from, not only earthly troubles, but from our eternal problems- sin and eternal death.

Obed, Naomi's servant, was but a shadow of the true Servant and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. It is He who saved us from slavery to Satan and sin, for us to be servants to other people in His service.

Through the love and grace of the Lord our God, Ruth's lineage brought us a lasting salvation. Jesus Christ came and ensured an inheritance for us- a new life on the new earth. Let us rejoice over this in the birth of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of Boaz and Ruth.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

**Closing Psalm:** Psalm 128:3, 4

The Lord bless and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you, the Lord turn His countenance to you and give peace.

**Amen**

**Rev Coen Vrey  
Reformed Church Bellville  
11 December 2011**