



Daily Devotionals

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RUTH 4:7-10 HE DID WHAT?

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⁷ *(Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.)*

⁸ *So the kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it yourself." And he removed his sandal.*

⁹ *Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰ I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records. Today you are witnesses!"*

The giving and receiving of a sandal symbolized the act of renouncing one's ownership of that which he has possessed and placing it in the hands of the other. So the right to redeem Naomi's property and to propagate descendents for the deceased husband and sons was given to Boaz. It would have been a wonderful story of redemption if it had simply stopped there, but Boaz takes it even a step further. The levirate law says nothing about taking the redeemed widow as your wife. Boaz not only fulfills a community responsibility but he turns it into a societal event – takes it from a business transaction to a celebration.

Marriage is more than a contractual agreement between two individuals, it is something that is performed in the context of the community – a public proclamation of the couple's intention to provide for the stability and propagation of the clan, community and culture – it is a relationship with and for the entire society. The sacrament of Holy Matrimony is the earthy image of the relationship between God and his people. Just as the exchange of the sandal symbolized a solemn and permanent release of property from one individual to another, the public vows in Christian marriage are a witness to the world of the permanent commitment of God to the Church. *The Book of Common Prayer* includes this statement in the description of marriage:

The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by his presence and first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. It signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and Holy Scripture commends it to be honored among all people. (BCP, p.423)

The loving-kindness of God through Jesus Christ goes beyond fulfilling the role of our kinsman-redeemer and extends into an intimate and personal relationship of marriage. And that is not all – it is an eternal relationship based on the love and mercy of God and in which we are able to exercise true love without threat of rejection.

“I do.” That is my answer to your proposal of marriage and redemption, O Lord. May my marriage (present or future) be a suitable witness to the world of your loving-kindness. Through your Spirit enable me to accept your model of redemptive love as the pattern for my marriage. Amen.

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