

Christ in You

by Major Ian Thomas

The sermon explores the principles of Christian discipleship through the story of Ruth, highlighting the importance of redemption, the death and burial of the old nature, and the holy wedlock between Christ and the believer.

Duration: 39:04

Scripture: Ruth 4:22, Matthew 6:33, John 14:17, Romans 7:4, 1 Corinthians 15:45, Ephesians 1:3, Ephesians 5:25

Topics: "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of man's relationship with God. He explains that man is only truly man when he has God in him, and losing God means losing everything. The preacher uses the story of Ruth from the Old Testament as a commentary on this principle. He highlights how believers in Christ have undergone a spiritual death through the crucifixion of Jesus, allowing them to belong to Him and bear fruit for God. The preacher also discusses how, by natural birth, humans are born with a fallen nature inherited from Adam, but through Christ's sacrifice, God has provided a way for believers to be freed from this sinful nature.

Transcript

...into the most exciting part of the story, for the Holy Spirit seeks relentlessly to lead us to the full-orbed truth as it is in Jesus Christ, and all the illimitable resources that are ours in Him and His rightful heritage in us. We have begun to focus our attention now upon Ruth, whose name means beauty, as the one who represents the bride of Christ, the Church of Jesus Christ, that which is His body purchased for Himself. We have seen her as opposed to Orpah, whose name means a form capable only of superficial sentimental emotional attachment, but who so soon with an extravagant gesture, a kiss, was to go back to where she belonged, back to her people and back to her gods, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

And we saw how slowly it dawned upon her that every step that she took in the direction of Bethlehem was a step away from her own people and her own gods, and just so soon as the implications of her decision became clear to go with Naomi to Bethlehem, she quit and went back to her own place, never to be heard of again. But Ruth began to speak the language of discipleship. For forever, maybe, she fully understood the implications of what she was saying, but in her conversation with Naomi on the road, she began to learn the doctrines, upon which soon she was to act in yielding obedience to the principles that were being

enunciated.

For past the peril of impressionable emotions, she was led to the place in Bethlehem where she sought grace, where grace was to be found. Let me now go to the field and glean ears of corn, after him in whose sight I shall find grace. For Naomi had told her that it was the right of the widowed stranger, poor and bankrupt, to seek and find grace, and she yielded obedience to this principle.

And as her hap was, she lighted upon the field that belonged to Boaz, the near kinsman, the one that had the right to redeem. If you happen to have a marginal translation in your Bible, you'll see that that is how it is rendered. As, for instance, in the end of verse 20, Naomi said unto her, the man is nearer of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.

Do you have a marginal translation? Or one that hath right to redeem. The one who has the right to purchase out of bankruptcy the destitute estate of a deceased brother, that the name of the deceased perish not forever. We saw yesterday how when she lighted upon that field that belonged to Boaz, the mighty man of wealth, as her hap was, although he was a stranger to her, she discovered that she was no stranger to him.

For Boaz answered and said, verse 11, it hath fully been showed me all that thou hast done. The Lord, verse 12, recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust, as one who has chosen to identify yourself with Naomi. A picture now to us of the one who identified himself with man in all his bitterness, bearing our sorrows, carrying our griefs, in his sinless incarnate humanity being made sin for us, as the one born at Bethlehem, that there might be for all fallen seed of the fallen Adam, a place of new beginnings, the beginning of harvest, that we might bring forth fruit unto God.

And as Ruth comes back to Naomi with our arms filled with the gleanings of the day, tactfully and graciously reinforced by Boaz's instructions, for he told his men, let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not to go. Let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. Just drop a little here, and drop a little there, as though you didn't know, and go on, and let her pick them up, and not a word.

These were the instructions that Boaz gave to his servants in the field, when she came back with her arms filled. And Naomi said, blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee, you found grace, if ever anybody found grace, you have. And Ruth said, well I, I'd never met him before, but when I asked what his name was, they said his name was Boaz.

And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. Naomi said unto her, verse 20, the name is, the man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen, Boaz, whose name is strength, the mighty man of wealth, the near of kin, the one who had the right to redeem. In our closing remarks last evening, I reminded you of the passage in the first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 15.

For you see, this Old Testament story is a commentary. And so it is written, verse 45, the first man, Adam, was made a living soul. Elimelech, my God is king.

Living in that sweet relationship with God that enabled him to be man as God intended man to be. Hope you haven't forgotten the first basic principles. Man is man by virtue of what God is in man.

Only what God is in man makes man, man as God intended man to be. Lose God, lose everything. But my God is king, stooped to marry pleasure.

He believed the devil's lie. Lose God, lose nothing. And in the day that he repudiated his love towards and his dependence on, he died, which presupposes that he had life to lose or he could not have died.

He didn't die physically, so he must have died spiritually. And he forfeited that quality of life that God had imparted to him in the person of his Holy Spirit within the human spirit. And the lamp went out.

The first man, Adam, was made a living soul, and he died. For as by one man sin came into the world, and death came with sin, and death passed upon all men, but the last Adam, the next of kin, the one who has the right to redeem, our greater Boaz, was made a quickening spirit, who said, I am come that you might have life, and that you might have it superlatively. I'm come to raise dead men to life again.

For the first man, 47, is of the earth, earthy, and the second man is the Lord from heaven. Thus it is written, the first man, Adam, became a living being, an individual personality. The last Adam, Christ, became a life-giving spirit, restoring the dead to life.

But it is not the spiritual life which came first, but the physical, and then the spirit. The first man was from out of the earth, made of dust, earth-minded. The second man is the Lord out of heaven.

And Boaz, the mighty man of wealth, the next of kin, fulfilled his gracious office. And as we turn to the fourth chapter now of the book of Ruth, we read this in verse 9 of chapter 4. And Boaz said unto the elders and unto all the people, ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, I have bought all that was Chilean's, I have bought all that was Marlon's of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Marlon, have I purchased to be my wife? To raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren and from the gate of his place.

Ye are witnesses this day. And thus Boaz, the mighty man of wealth, purchased out of bankruptcy the destitute estate of the dead, and he purchased Ruth to be his wedded wife. And the one who was willing and able to redeem Ruth would have been willing and able to have redeemed Orpah.

But she wasn't there. She went back to her own place. She repudiated grace.

She turned her back on this gracious provision for the destitute. And she's never heard of again. What a tragedy it is, what a tragedy, when a man or a woman or a boy or a girl fails to find grace, enter into the good of that redemptive finished work of Christ.

Because they have repudiated the love of God and gone back, gone back to where they belong. How little did Orpah maybe realize what awful poverty she was imposing upon herself, when with an extravagant kiss she went back to her people and to her gods. But Ruth was purchased, and beauty married strength.

This is the church of Jesus Christ. A redeemed people added to the Lord, married to another even to him who is risen from the dead. And all the people, verse 11, that were in the gate and the elders said, we are witnesses.

The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Lee, which too did build the house of Israel. And do thou worthily in Ephrata and be famous in Bethlehem. Verse 13, so Boaz took

Ruth, and she was his wife, and she bare a son.

And the women said unto Naomi, blessed be the Lord which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, one who has the right to redeem. A redeemer, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he, the redeemer, shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age, for thy daughter-in-law which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons hath borne him.

The redeemer famous in Bethlehem is to be to thee a restorer of thy life. For the Lord Jesus said, I am come that you might have life, a quickening spirit to raise the dead. And Naomi took the child, verse 16, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it, like all good grandparents.

Verse 17, and the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying there is a son born, that is to say a grandson, to Naomi. And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Obed was his name, and Obed means worship. For when Elimelech, my God is king, stooped to marry Naomi, pleasure, pleasure was turned to bitterness. But when Ruth, beauty, was married to Boaz, strength, the mighty man of wealth, the home was filled with Obed, worship.

Now isn't that a beautiful picture? This is the message of the book of Ruth. It's the story of the church of Jesus Christ. And he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

How little did Ruth imagine how wealthy she was to become, that in the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that in his seed every family of the earth should be blessed, the one who was to be born king in Israel, famous in Bethlehem, Jesus, the son of the living God, would have coursing within his veins the blood that once cursed in the veins of Ruth. When she took her place as a poor, destitute, bankrupt, widowed stranger, and sought grace where grace was to be found. Well, that's the story.

Now turn with me to the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans. And we will see in this story a most thrilling, vivid illustration of the principles involved in Christian discipleship. I'm going to read to you out of the Amplified New Testament because I believe that it clarifies the issues very much.

Romans 7. Do you not know, brethren, for I am speaking to men who are acquainted with the law, that legal claims have power over a person only for so long as he is alive? For instance, a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he, her husband, lives. So how long was Ruth bound to Marlon, to whom she was wedded as the fallen seed of the fallen Elimelech? So long as he lived. And so long as Marlon lived, Ruth was bound to Marlon.

She was not at liberty to marry Boaz. But if her husband dies, she is loosed and discharged from the law concerning her husband. She's at liberty to marry another.

So that Ruth's ability to marry Boaz was dependent upon the death of Marlon. Accordingly, verse 3, she will be held an adulteress if she unites herself to another man while her husband lives. Ruth could never have become the husband of Boaz during the lifetime of Marlon.

The prerequisite of her marriage to Boaz, to become as wealthy as he made her, was dependent upon the death of Marlon. But if her husband dies, continuing in verse 3, the marriage law no longer is binding on her. She is free from that law.

And if she unites herself to another man, she is not an adulteress. That's the argument illustrated by the book of Ruth. Verse 4, here's the conclusion.

Likewise, my brethren, those of you who are numbered in the bride of Christ, the redeemed, blood-bought, purchased possession of the living Son of God, our greater Boaz, likewise, my brethren, you have undergone death, so far as the law is concerned, through the crucified body of Christ, so that now you may belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. Likewise, my brethren, in other words, bear in mind that when you were born into this world, you were born by your natural birth in unholy wedlock to an old fallen nature, the fallen seed of the fallen Adam, a corruptible seed, that by our natural birth we are co-heirs, together, of the fallen nature of a fallen Adam, the sin principle of satanic origin called the flesh. For in the day that man fell into sin and repudiated his love toward God, in demonstration of which he repudiated his dependence on God, the Holy Spirit not only withdrew himself from the human spirit, so that the righteous royal resident was no longer in the royal residence, the human spirit, but the music room of the human soul was invaded by a usurper who substituted himself there for the sovereignty of God.

And the usurper is a sin principle of satanic origin called in the Bible, the flesh, not to be confused with your physical body, for your physical body is simply the house, beautifully and wonderfully fashioned, given to you by God, with which you are clothed, which in itself is not sinful, it is simply the instrument or the agency, either for God in righteousness or the devil in unrighteousness. Your body is not in itself sinful. So the flesh, when it is used in the Bible, is not to be confused with the body.

It is a little bit confusing, for there are one or two occasions when the same term is used for the human body, as for instance in Galatians 2.20, where Paul says, I am crucified with Christ, and when he speaks of that I, he is speaking of the flesh as a sin principle. The flesh as a sin principle, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh. And what he means by that is the body, the house.

The life that I now live in my body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself to me. In other words, the sin principle of satanic origin that had usurped the sovereignty of the living God within my human soul, I reckon to be identified with Christ in his death upon the cross, so that now the music room is reoccupied by the Holy Spirit representing the royal resident who has come back to indwell the royal residence, my living Saviour, Jesus Christ. So don't confuse the flesh, where it is used in its special significance as the sin principle of satanic origin, with the human body.

Suffice it to say that when God withdrew, Satan moved in, for the human personality was left available with vacant possession. And instead of the Holy Spirit representing the triune God occupying the music room and amplifying in terms of human behavior through the body as an agent for righteousness the nature of God, the sin principle of satanic origin took its place at the keyboard, at the console, in the music room, and began to perpetrate those awful discourses that reflect what the devil is in terms of human behavior, temperament, attitude, and reaction. That which is corrupted and polluted and prostituted humanity all down time.

And when you and I are born, as I have taken pains to declare, you and I are born empty of God, uninhabited by God, inhabited only by this sinful, fallen nature to which you and I, by natural birth, as the fallen seed of the fallen Adam, are wedded. Our Marlon. But you see, in God's eternal economy, when the Lord Jesus, in his sinlessness, went to the cross 1,900 years ago, God identified what we are, apart from

what Christ is, in the flesh, with him, sentenced and executed that old nature with him and buried it.

So that in Romans chapter 6, the preceding chapter, we read, are you ignorant of the fact, verse 3, that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, speaking, of course, of that spiritual baptism, whereby God recognizing and accrediting us as being identified with Christ in his death, buried, restores to us the true spiritual content of our humanity, God, by the Holy Spirit, were baptized into his death. We were buried, therefore, with him by the baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, so we too might habitually live and behave in newness of life. As those who now being released from the marriage law that bound us to an old nature, executed in the person of Jesus Christ and buried, have been married to another, even to him who raised from the dead.

In God's economy, the old nature to which you and I, by natural birth, are wedded, was executed 1,900 years ago and there. And so far as the law is concerned, we are released from that old nature and are at liberty now to be married to another. Do you see how gloriously simple it is? That when you give yourself to Christ, you don't come along telling him how thankful he ought to be that he's got your gift on his side, your scintillating personality, your chin that sticks out three inches farther than anybody else's, and God ought to congratulate himself that he's got such wonderful reinforcement for his cause on earth.

That isn't the purpose which God asks you to give yourself to Christ. It isn't your bank balance he wants, nor your scholarship, nor your personality, nor your gift, nor anything else. He'll use all these things if he so chooses, but that isn't the purpose which he wants you to give yourself to Christ.

It isn't a bit flattering when we come to understand the purpose which God wants us to give ourselves to Christ. For God wants you to give yourself to Christ so that he may take you to the only place for which you'll fit, the place of execution. Because for what you are, apart from what he is, you're fit for nothing but the dung heap.

You're fit for nothing but to be buried. Now isn't that flattering? You and I, like Ruth, were married to Marlon, the seed of the fallen Elimelech. And what you and I are, apart from what he is, we are bankrupt through and through, rotten through and through, degenerate through and through, degraded through and through, the utter degeneracy and degradation of human nature.

And God says, when I call you to give yourself to my son Jesus Christ, it is that what you are, in all its wicked sinfulness, in all that flesh in which I see absolutely no salvageable content, I call you to give yourself to him for what you are, that what you are may be added to what he is, your guilt to his guiltlessness, your sinfulness to his sinlessness, your wickedness to his purity, and he will take you to the place where I in him will execute you and bury you. So that you, having given yourself to him and reckoned so far as the law is concerned to be dead, to that old nature, you may be wedded to the one who from the place of death rose again. That as you give yourself to him to die, he gives himself to you to live.

That henceforth, wedded to him, the one who is risen from the dead, you may live and behave habitually in newness of life. In whose life? His life. That's the Christian life.

The Christian life is the Lord Jesus himself. But only by virtue of the fact that the Lord Jesus not only died for what you've done, but that you died with him for what you are, are we at liberty today, redeemed, repurchased out of our bankruptcy, to be wedded to the one in whom now we enjoy this unique, amazing relationship. A holy wedlock, as between the greater Boaz and his bride, the Church.

Now that's the basic truth. But don't miss the point. After the wedding had taken place, could you imagine Naomi suddenly bumping into Ruth on her way to the fields? And Naomi says to Ruth, where are you going? Oh, she says, I'm going to glean something for breakfast.

But Naomi says, you don't glean now something for breakfast, you're married to Boaz. Everything that is his is yours. Whatever would he say if he could see you going out into the fields gleaning? What a tragedy it would have been if Ruth had gone on behaving as though she was the wife of Marlon, wouldn't it? Although she was married to Boaz, supposing she had behaved as though she was still the wife or the widow of Marlon.

Acting like a beggar, behaving like a stranger still, a widow destitute. How grieved would Boaz have been, what a sense of shame would overwhelm him if he saw the one whom he had purchased to be his wedded wife picking up the droppings in the field. How grieved would he have been had she gone to him every morning wringing her hands and saying, oh please give me some breakfast.

Don't you see that the moment Boaz purchased her to be his wedded wife, we purchased her out of the bankruptcy of her previous wedlock. Everything that was his was hers. She became joint heir with him.

He would say, my dear Ruth, you don't beg anything now from my servants. You don't beg anything even from me. What's mine is yours.

We're joint heirs together of this estate. You take what you need and enjoy it to the full. Oh but of course perhaps lurking at the back of Ruth's mind might have been this idea, well I don't want to get too dependent upon Boaz.

I've got an idea that one day I'm going to hear from my lawyers way back there that Marlon left me something in his legacy. And in the meantime I don't want to get too tied up with Boaz. After all if I get totally dependent upon him for what he's got, well he'll tell me what to do.

Do you see the subtlety of this? When the Lord Jesus redeemed you with his precious blood to be his wedded wife, everything that was God's was his and everything that's his is yours. All that he is you have. For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead body and you're complete in him.

And we do one of two things. We either in our ignorance behave like beggars and keep on bringing him a sense of shame and grief as we plead for this and plead for that and God is frustrated. He says to you, I've given you Christ.

I've given you the best that heaven could afford and you keep on sending up little, little begging notes. Please give me this and please give me that. You ask for strength, you ask for victory, you ask for power.

God says I cannot give you any of these things for I have already given you Christ and there is nothing to add to what I can give to you in him. For blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus who have blessed us with all spiritual blessings and heavenly things in Christ Jesus. Tell me this, how many more spiritual blessings can you have than all? You can't.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus who have given us, blessed us with all spiritual blessings and heavenly things. I do hope you don't go from one conference, one convention to another looking for a blessing because if you do it'll be phony, it'll be a pseudo thing, it'll be something on the circumference in the area of your soul because anything other than Christ is extra to all and therefore it

must be counterfeit. I want you to know this, that in the day that you were redeemed in the precious shed blood of the Lord Jesus the Redeemer who repurchased you out of bankruptcy and bought you to be his wedded wife, you received all that heaven could ever give you, for you received Christ.

How long have you had the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling within you by his indwelling Holy Spirit? How long have you been wedded by this unique new relationship to the Lord Jesus, the one risen from the dead? Ever since you were converted, ever since you were baptized into the body of Christ by the restoration to you of the Holy Spirit, ever since you became a member in particular of that body on earth which is his church, the bride of the greater bridegroom, ever since. And if the Lord Jesus Christ lives his life in you, doesn't he live the same life in you today that he lived 1900 years ago? Is there any difference about the quality of the life of Jesus Christ in 1960 and the quality of his life 1900 years ago? None, whatever. He lived victoriously then and he lives victoriously now.

So how long have you had a victorious Christian life ever since you've had Jesus Christ? Then why do you keep on asking for victory? Why do you go around picking up the droppings and sending beggarly letters to heaven? Why don't you begin to thank the Lord Jesus for what he is in you by virtue of what he did for you? He purchased you when he died and thereby made you joint heir with him as the risen Lord of his vast estate. Thank him for his victory. He doesn't give you strength as I reminded the folk over the air this morning.

He is your strength. He doesn't give you wisdom. He is your wisdom.

Stop asking for the things that are yours in Christ. Stop begging if that has been the measure of your ignorance of how wealthy God made you when he redeemed you. And God forbid that there should be any amongst us here who are afraid of becoming too dependent upon the Lord Jesus because it means that if we do, we have to obey what he says.

God help you if that's your attitude to the Lord Jesus. Remember this, when Adam fell into sin it was because he repudiated his love to God in repudiating his dependence on God. For he knew that he could only be the kind of man that God intended him to be by virtue of what God was in him and therefore to be the man that God intended him to be depended upon his dependence.

And if he loved God enough to be the kind of man that God wanted him to be that dictated total absolute dependence. Isn't that right? But when he ceased to love God enough to be the kind of man that God wanted him to be he no longer needed to be dependent. He could obey the devil's lie, lose God, lose nothing.

You'll have all that you ever had before you repudiated God, for God adds nothing to you. That was the devil's lie. Now if the fall of man was a repudiation of his dependence on God, what will repentance produce? True repentance.

True repentance, my Christian friend, will restore you to an attitude of total dependence. For true repentance means that you want to be again what man ceased to be through sin and you know from God's word that you can only be what God intends you to be by virtue of what God is in you. Therefore the measure of your true repentance toward God tonight will be the measure in which you have restored dependence in your life.

Show me the man or the woman who is still living as a Christian independent of Jesus Christ and I will show you a Christian man or woman who hasn't begun to understand what it means to repent. The measure of your repentance will be the measure of your dependence. In any step that you are prepared to take other than independence upon Jesus Christ you are doing one of two things.

You are looking up into God's face and you are either saying to him this, your presence in me adds nothing to me for this step. Thank you very much. Or you're saying although I am inadequate for this step you add nothing to my inadequacy.

In other words the inverted lie. Adam believed what the devil told him. Lose God, lose nothing.

Every step that you and I dare to take other than independence upon what Christ is in us is saying in so many words I've gained God but I've gained nothing. And so I take every step that I take in independence still and I perpetuate in my walk the lie that was first perpetrated by the devil in Adam. My Christian friend do you realize the blasphemy of taking one single step other than independence upon Christ? To enter into any situation, to assume any responsibility, to make any decision other than in absolute reliance upon what Christ is in you is a repudiation of your very manhood.

Because man is man only by virtue of what God is in man. It's only what God is in you that makes you man and enables you to be man as God intended man to be. Take one single step other than independence therefore upon Christ in you and you repudiate that truth and you perpetuate by your behavior today the lie that Adam believed then.

That's how serious is the situation. Now I'm quite sure that you wouldn't be here tonight if you wanted blasphemously to perpetuate the basic lie that was perpetrated in Adam by the devil in repudiating the basic truth. But it is possible that some of you have a deep personal regard for the Lord Jesus and you've trusted him as your Redeemer but you've never yet realized how inexpressibly wealthy he made you and all unwittingly to his eternal grief you've been behaving like a beggar instead of like a bride.

Now will you stop picking up the droppings? Will you stop following the men around and picking up the bits they leave behind? And will you for the first time step out on the assumption that you have been purchased to be the wedded wife of the wealthiest man who ever walked this earth, the man at God's right hand and who by his indwelling Holy Spirit fills your body and floods it with God? As you have thanked him for what he did for you 1900 years ago will you step out into every new day thanking for what he is in you in 1960? And as you enter every situation say, Lord Jesus, I didn't deserve what you did and I don't deserve what you are. But grace gives guilty people the right to have what they don't deserve. And I have found grace.

And I am being saved, being saved, not just I have been, I am being saved, dear Lord, by grace. And I'm going to live up to the limit of my income. And that's inexhaustible.

Because in thee dwells all the fullness of the Godhead body. You're able to make all grace abound toward me that I always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work. How much more can I have? I cannot have more.

And I don't need to have less. And so I'll step out into a future that is as bright as the promises of God and every horizon heavy with blessing and the one who is in me adequate for every situation. That's what it means to be a Christian.

Now isn't that thrilling? That's the message of Ruth, the bride of Christ, married to another, even to him who is risen from the dead, who makes you as wealthy as God himself. Now we'll bow our heads in prayer.

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