

**It's Not What You Think**  
Series: Ruth: A Story of Redemption  
Ruth 3  
July 22, 2018

Once again, it's great to be in worship together.

We are in the midst of a series called "Ruth: A Story of Redemption." It is about Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi. Of course, a sermon about a mother-in-law must begin with a mother-in-law joke.

A fellow told his friend one day, "I haven't spoken to the mother in law for 6 months now... apparently, it's rude to interrupt!"

Today's message is entitled, "It's Not What You Think." Let me recap just a bit, so please turn to page 4 in your bulletin.

So far, we have discovered that Ruth 1 is about **resolve**. Ruth 2 is about **reaping**. Now Ruth 3 is about **redemption**. But it starts very strangely for us.

In today's passage, we see a role reversal: "a servant demanding that the boss marry her, a Moabite making demands of an Israelite, a woman making demands of a man, a poor person making demands of a rich person."<sup>1</sup>

The story of Ruth and Boaz is a love story, but beyond the scenes is the real love story of how God loves us and provides for our redemption.

First, A **Plan** for Redemption. Look at verse 1:

*Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you."*<sup>2</sup>

The Hebrew for "security" can also be translated "rest."<sup>3</sup> Naomi hoped that her daughter-in-law would find "rest" or "security" in the home of a new husband.

Verse 2:

*Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working.*<sup>4</sup>

Though the Bible does not tell us of Boaz's exact relationship to Naomi's deceased husband, Jewish tradition suggests that he was Elimelech's nephew.<sup>5</sup> This is key to understanding the story, because here is where it gets strange to us. Verse 3 and 4:

*See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do.*<sup>6</sup>

Ruth is told to wait until Boaz has eaten and fallen asleep then uncover his feet and lie down and await his response. Wow. The possibility of misinterpretation of this

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel I. Block. "Judges, Ruth." The New American Commentary. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999) p. 692

<sup>2</sup> Ruth 3:1 (NRSV)

<sup>3</sup> Ruth 1:9 in NIV

<sup>4</sup> Ruth 3:2 (NRSV)

<sup>5</sup> Mark Robinson. "Ruth and Boaz: The Story of the Kinsman Redeemer." Israel My Glory. (Feb./March 1993.) pp. 12-14

<sup>6</sup> Ruth 3:2-4 (NRSV)

scheme is enormous. Naomi seems to be taking a huge gamble that Boaz may not interpret Ruth's actions in the way in which she means.

He could awaken and willingly accept her actions as common prostitute. He could awaken and see her actions as proposition and as a virtuous man chase her away. Or Boaz could awaken and immediately understand the true nature of Ruth's actions and respond favorably.

Naomi's advice seems strange, but she was not suggesting a seductive act. Each chapter of Ruth has revealed a common practice of the day that is lost to us. Chapter 1 talked about Levirate Marriage; chapter 2 talked about farming practices. Here is chapter 3 is the practice of the kinsman redeemer.

Naomi has a plan for redemption, though it sounds strange to us. Let's keep going.

Second, A **Proposal** for Redemption. Look at verse 5:

*[Ruth] said to her, "All that you tell me I will do."<sup>7</sup>*

Ruth's faithful obedience is evident in her response, "I will do it!". When Ruth says this, it is than just simple agreement. It is an acknowledgement of several things; it is acknowledgement that Ruth's trust Naomi would not ask her to do something that was morally wrong; it is acknowledgement that Ruth's trusts Naomi's love for to not put her purity to undue risk; it is acknowledgement that Ruth trust Naomi's judgment that this is the best way to approach the situation and it is acknowledgement that Ruth trusts Naomi's assessment of Boaz's character.<sup>8</sup>

But Ruth had faith not only in Naomi but in God. Faith is believing God enough to do what He tells us to do in His Word. She did not just believe there was a possibility that Boaz could be her goal; she believed enough to do something about it. Faith is coming to the end of everything you can see and feel and then taking one more step.

Here is Ruth's next step. Verse 6-9:

*So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her. When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and he was in a contented mood, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came stealthily and uncovered his feet, and lay down. At midnight the man was startled, and turned over, and there, lying at his feet, was a woman! He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you are next-of-kin."<sup>9</sup>*

This was an amazing scene. We can well imagine that Boaz was indeed "startled," waking up in the night as he turned in his sleep, knowing that someone was out there but not being able to see clearly because of the darkness and the sleep in his eyes. Since Boaz had been there to protect his crop against thieves, it must have given him quite a shock to wake up and know someone was there. But his shock quickly turned to wondering when he found out the visitor was a woman.

Ruth identified herself and made a simple request. In beginning with the words "your servant," Ruth again showed great humility and submission. She presented herself as Boaz's servant.

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<sup>7</sup> Ruth 3:5 (NRSV)

<sup>8</sup> W. Gary Phillips. Holman Old Testament Commentary. "Judges, Ruth." (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2004) p.331

<sup>9</sup> Ruth 3:6-9 (NRSV)

When she asks that Boaz take her “spread your cloak”, she is boldly asking Boaz to take her in marriage. This was a culturally relevant way to say, “I am a widow, take me as your wife, for you are next in line.”

Remember Levirate Marriage. When a woman’s husband died, the law<sup>10</sup> provided that she could marry a brother of her dead husband. But Naomi had no more sons. In such a case, the nearest relative to the deceased husband could become a kinsman redeemer and marry the widow. The nearest relative did not have to marry the widow. If he chose not to, the next nearest relative could take his place. If no one chose to help the widow, she would probably live in poverty the rest of her life, because in Israelite culture the inheritance was passed on to the son or nearest male relative, not to the wife. So, a kinsman redeemer was required. It was the responsibility of the next closest relative redeem the woman and provide for her through marriage.

But there were requirements of a kinsman redeemer.

First, He must be **willing** to Redeem! Boaz must be willing to potentially split his estate for the sake of another.

Second, He must have the **right** to Redeem. The kinsman redeemer had to be a family member.

Third, He must have the **power (means)** to redeem. (John 10:11-18, Ruth 4:4-6)

The kinsman redeemer had the duty of buying family members out of slavery.

When you think about it, there is a great deal of similarity in what is going on here between Boaz and Ruth and what Jesus did for us.

- The kinsman redeemer had the duty of buying back land that had been forfeited; Jesus redeemed the earth that mankind “sold” over to Satan.
- Boaz, as kinsman redeemer to Ruth, was not motivated by self-interest, but motivated by love for Ruth. Jesus’ motivation for redeeming us is His great love for us.
- Boaz, as kinsman redeemer to Ruth, had to have a plan to redeem Ruth to himself – and some might have thought the plan to be foolish. Jesus has a plan to redeem us, and some might think the plan foolish (saving men by dying for them on a cruel cross?), yet the plan works and is glorious.
- Boaz, as kinsman redeemer to Ruth, provided a glorious destiny for Ruth. Jesus, as our redeemer, provides a glorious destiny for us.

All this comes back to the idea of Jesus as our kinsman redeemer; this is why He became a man. God might have sent an angel to save us, but the angel would not have been our kinsman. Jesus, in His eternal glory, without the addition of humanity to His divine nature might have saved us, but He would not have been our kinsman. A great prophet or priest would be our kinsman, but his own sin would have disqualified him as our redeemer. Only Jesus, the eternal God who added humanity to His eternal deity, can be both the kinsman and the redeemer for mankind!”

Third, we have a **Pledge** for Redemption.

Boaz made Naomi look brilliant in her advice to Ruth. The plan worked perfectly. Boaz is grateful for her kindness. Verse 10:

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<sup>10</sup> See Deuteronomy 25:5-10

*He said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter; this last instance of your loyalty is better than the first; you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich."<sup>11</sup>*

Boaz remarks on Ruth "kindness." She had demonstrated kindness that she did not just "go after young men" (implying that Boaz was older). Apparently, there was a considerable age difference between Ruth and Boaz. According to the rabbis, Boaz was about 80 years of age when he married Ruth. He is believed to have been a widower with no children at the time of their marriage. It also seems that because of this, Boaz considered himself unattractive to Ruth and had therefore ruled out any idea of a romance between them.

It also shows the character of Ruth. She based her attraction to Boaz more on respect than on image or appearance. Tragically, many people fall in love with an image or an appearance, rather than with a person we can really respect. Boaz understood that Ruth could have had her pick of men who would be willing to marry her.

Boaz compliments her saying, "All the people of my town know that you are a worthy virtuous woman." Boaz was also attracted to Ruth because of her character. We don't really know how Ruth looked, although according to the Midrash, the ancient Jewish commentary, her beauty was outstanding "as that of a young girl" although she was about 40 years of age. But we do know that she was a woman of godly character.

However, there is a complication. Verse 12:

*But now, though it is true that I am a near kinsman, there is another kinsman more closely related than I.<sup>12</sup>*

Apparently, though Boaz was a recognized kinsman towards Ruth, there was another one closer in relation to her deceased father-in-law Elimelech. So, Boaz could not exercise his right as kinsman redeemer unless this closer kinsman redeemer relinquished his rights towards Ruth.

Finally, a **Prospect** For Redemption. Verses 16-18:

*She came to her mother-in-law, who said, "How did things go with you, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her, saying, "He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said, 'Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'" She replied, "Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today."<sup>13</sup>*

Ruth returns with food and a promise: that Boaz will see to the fulfillment of the kinsman redeemer. She and Naomi would no longer fear for what the next day would bring.

We know that Jesus has fulfilled the kinsman redeemer for us. We who believe have a new family and a new future. And that is what we find a Jesus' feet. The kinsman. A redeemer.

Seven-year-old Tommy had been asking his parents for a dog but they were not convinced that the family needed one. After Tommy's repeated pleas, his dad told him if he would help his mother with chores around the house he could earn enough money to buy a dog. Tommy was more than eager to accept this challenge. He didn't mind working if it meant that he could get a dog.

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<sup>11</sup> Ruth 3:10 (NRSV)

<sup>12</sup> Ruth 3:12 (NRSV)

<sup>13</sup> Ruth 3:16-18 (NRSV)

His parents took Tommy to a pet store in town to see what they had in the line of dogs. Near the rear of the store was a cage containing a beautiful black and white puppy. For Tommy and the puppy, it was love at first sight. While Tommy was occupied visiting with the puppy that he was sure you would own, his dad was negotiating with the store owner regarding the price. Finally, it was agreed that \$100 was a fair price.

Now Tommy's dad knew that his son's earnings, plus his allowance, wasn't up to that figure, so he wrote the owner a check for \$90 with the provision that Tommy would be told that he had to come up with \$10 if he wanted the puppy, which just happened to be the amount of money Tommy had amassed. Tommy eagerly counted out his ten dollars, paid the owner, and then waited with great eagerness as the proprietor opened the cage and handed him the puppy. Before the family had gotten back home, Tommy had already named his dog "Spots".

For a couple of years whenever you saw Tommy, you saw Spots. One weekday morning, as was his custom, Tommy gave Spots a big hug before he left to catch the bus to school. What Tommy did not realize was that he failed to latch the gate. It did not take much of a wind to blow ajar the gate. Spots was out to explore the neighborhood.

When Tommy got home from school he immediately headed to the backyard to play with his much-loved friend. But Spots was nowhere to be found. Tommy looked under every scrub and bush with no success. His mother joined the search but to no avail. She called their neighbors and nearby friends to see if Spots had been seen. None of them had, but one friend mentioned seeing a city animal control truck in the area that day.

Tommy's mother called, and sure enough, Spots had been picked up and was being held in the dog pound. Mother and son left immediately to free Spots from his sad plight. When they arrived, they found that Spots had already been put in a small cage. Tommy asked the attendant if he could have his dog back. The attendant replied that he could, but he had to pay a \$25 fine for Spots running loose. Tommy's mother reminded him that his carelessness had caused this problem but that she would loan him the money and he could, once again, do some chores around the house to repay the loan. Tommy agreed and paid the fine, then anxiously waited until Spots was brought out to him.

Soon Spots and Tommy were reunited. On the way back home, Tommy hugged Spots real tight and told him he loved him. Then he said, "I bought you when you were a puppy, and now I have bought you out of the pound. Spots, you are my dog two times over!"

Redemption is the act of buying back. Man is God's by creation but when sin entered the human race that relationship was broken. When Christ died for our sins, and we claimed His sacrifice, we were bought by His blood and born again into the kingdom of God. Thus, we are God's property twice-over.