

The Redeemer Ruth 3

Romans 8:1-17

Romans 8:18-39

Responsive Psalm 106:1-12

This morning we are in chapter 3 as we continue the story of Ruth, the faithful Moabite woman who is caring for her aged mother-in-law in a land that is foreign to her. Last week in chapter 2 we talked about Ruth going out into the fields to gather grain, an act that was customary for the poor to do, as they were allowed to glean from the leftovers in the field, but as she was doing so she found favor from Boaz, the owner of the field, and was able to glean not only from the portion of the land left for the homeless and beggars according to the law, but with the harvesters as they were instructed to leave some available for her. In this we see a picture of God's provision and mercy as Boaz has provided for a gentile woman who was outside of their laws and traditions, just as Christ has provided for us sinners who were deserving judgment. Ruth, this outsider Gentile woman was invited to sit at the masters table and eat, partake of the masters food as he broke bread with his people, again just as we are invited to sit at the masters table and partake in the bread of life which was broken for us.

We also see Boaz treated Ruth with generosity, going above and beyond the requirements of the law, offering the protection of working with his people in his field warning her to not venture into any other field but his own, giving her food to eat in abundance where she was satisfied and there was enough to bring back to Naomi, and she left that day with 30lbs of barely which since this is noted here and brought to our attention in this story it is likely that this was a very large amount for a days gleaning again showing the generosity of Boaz to Ruth and by extension Naomi. So Ruth goes home with the barely, and the bread and tells Naomi all about what had happened that day. Naomi recognizes that Boaz is a close relative and blesses him as she said in verse 20 of chapter 2 "Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken his kindness to the living and the dead." Boaz has shown kindness in remembrance of Elimilech, his close relative, and did not forsake the provision needed for Naomi and Ruth. While I didn't see another other commentaries or scholars mention this, I think that it is worth noting here that again, this sounds like a praise that can be given to Jesus. Who has come, and provided for the living and the dead, not forsaking those who came before, or leaving out those who have come afterward.

Christ is the redemption of all people, the believers of the old testament, and the believers of the new, he has not forsaken his kindness to the living and the dead. As we see throughout the new testament, and hinted at in the old salvation is through the messiah, through the redeemer that was sent. It was never found in the law, it was never found in the sacrifices but all of those things were to teach, to point to, to instruct about the one who was promised, the one who would come and take away the sins of his people. Who would give of himself, whose body would be broken like bread, and whose blood would flow like wine as the willing and only worthy sacrifice to pay the penalty of the curse upon Adam making way for a new life, a life in the spirit, under the provision of the father who provided for himself a worthy sacrifice that we may be reconciled to him, that we may be redeemed and returned and brought back to feast at the masters table.

Throughout this story of Ruth and Naomi we see the themes of suffering, and redemption, poverty and provision, hardship and mercy as we can relate our own lives and relationship with God through Ruth's journey. One who was cursed, as we pointed out a few weeks ago in Deuteronomy 23 where it says in verse 3, "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord, even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord forever. Because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia to curse you. Nevertheless the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the Lord your God loves you."

Just as we are cursed under Adam, generation after generation lost in sin, unable to find redemption, we needed the grace and mercy of another to bring redemption to us. And in that redemption brought about by Jesus who gave of himself on the cross, "the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing, because the Lord your God loves you." He redeemed us from a life of sin and judgment and brought us in to partake in the inheritance promised Abraham. We are now adopted children through the blood of Jesus Christ, heirs of the promises of redemption, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life in paradise with him. This story of Ruth mirrors our own redemption, it gives us a physical story to relate to a spiritual truth. That we have been redeemed, by God, through Christ, that we were outsiders made family through a transaction, and we are now blessed beyond measure having received the gift of faith of which we did not deserve, but God gave freely out of his own grace and mercy.

Which now brings us to chapter 3 this morning, so let us just go ahead now and read our passage, I think we should just go ahead and read the entire chapter this morning to get the full account of what is happening here. (read chapter 3) The first thing mentioned here in this chapter is Naomi recognizing the generosity of Boaz and seeking security for Ruth. Wanting something better for Ruth than a life of begging, and gleaning and taking care of her mother-in-law Naomi saw an opportunity. So instructed Ruth in their customs, so that she could seek after Boaz as a provider, and a redeemer of her family. By the law, a widow could be remarried by a close relative of the dead husband, this was a provision given to protect her, and to facilitate in the carrying on of the family line. This was a hope that Ruth had given up, she resigned her opportunity and chances for such a life when she chose to remain with Naomi and go to Bethlehem. But now, she has found favor in the eyes of Boaz who has been highly generous in his provision and actions toward Ruth. Naomi sees this, and instructs Ruth in these traditions so that she may find a husband, and security in her life.

Naomi herself likewise had these rights, to seek after the next of kin in marriage for her own security, and Boaz was likely closer in age to Naomi, but had shown favor to Ruth so Naomi here is waving her own rights in seeking that provision in favor of her daughter in law. We see a mutual respect and love here, Ruth giving of her self in care for Naomi, and Naomi looking after the interest of Ruth and not her own selfish needs. So, Ruth was to go to Boaz while he was at the threshing floor, this was a public place where people would take the harvest and separate the grain from the chaff. These are areas that would have been likely built upon a hill top, an area of consistent wind, and contained a hardened floor, either packed dirt, or stone and the person working the threshing floor would lay out the cut sheaves of grain on the floor. Then oxen and donkeys would be walked over those stalks repeatedly often times dragging a threshing sledge which was a heavy wooden board embedded with sharp stones or spikes grinding down the sheaves, separating the wheat itself from its casing, the chaff.

Or in some cases, smaller operations they would use wooden flails, or heavy sticks to accomplish the same thing. After that was done, they would take basically pitch forks and throw it into the air, the constant wind would take the lighter chaff and unwanted part of the grain away, and the heavier grain would fall to the ground successfully separating it. It was here that Boaz was, working to separate the grain from the chaff. So Naomi instructed Ruth, put on her best clothes, dress up nice and go up to the threshing floor where Boaz was, but not to make herself known to him until after his work was complete, he had eaten and was satisfied. It was just as Naomi had described, after working a long day at the threshing floor, Boaz took a meal, had some drink, and lied down at the end of the pile of grain to rest.

Ruth was to wait until Boaz had fallen asleep, uncover his feet and lie down at his feet. As odd as this may seem to us today, this was a custom of that time and a way for Ruth to approach Boaz asking for his protection in marriage. It should also be noted, that this was an open, public place some want to take this account and turn it into something sexual but that would have not been the case here at all. And we can see that in the context when Boaz speaks to her in verse 11 he says, “all the people of my town know you are a virtuous woman” Ruth conducted herself honorably, and was known about the town as such, she was not a woman of ill reputation, but rather held to fairly high regard as she conducted herself properly and cared for Naomi. In this system of proposal, it was low key, and secretive, Boaz would have the opportunity to reject and neither he, nor her would suffer any societal consequence. Just because Ruth carried out this ritual in asking for such protection did not mean that Boaz was by all means obligated to oblige.

We know that this was a secretive thing, for it says in verse 14 “she arose before anyone could recognize her.” This protected the reputation of both Boaz and Ruth. But Boaz didn’t directly accept, he said there was another relative who was closer, whose responsibility of this tradition would fall upon first and that he would go to them before giving her an answer. One of the things that I take away from this is that Boaz is a man of honor, and also this takes out the sexual aspect of attraction in this entire story. One could read this story and likely come away with the conclusion that Boaz found Ruth attractive therefore gave her special treatment, and while he may have found her attractive, the fact remains that he was going to pass up marriage to her in the case that a closer relative may want to perform the duty of a close family member this shows it wasn’t just that she was an attractive young woman, but he had compassion on her for the sake of her position, and for the sake of Naomi.

Boaz accepted her offer, and his responsibility toward her, though being a just man, knowing of a closer relative he said he would bring it to him first. Being a gentile, a Moabite no less I am sure there would have been some level of societal scrutiny in their marriage, but it seems Boaz is not to concerned though as we will see in chapter 4, the closer relative was not interested in taking on that risk. Again Boaz here shows great generosity as he sends Ruth back home in the morning with 60lbs of barley. In his response to her proposal he recognized Ruth’s faithfulness, in verse 10 he says, “Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter for you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether rich or poor.” Ruth could have stayed in Moab, could have remarried, had children and a successful life, but she gave that all up to follow Naomi, and her God.

There isn't much more to say here about this chapter, it is pretty straight forward. Ruth sought after Boaz as the protector and redeemer of her family, to take that which had been destroyed by death and bring life back into it. Ruth previously had no hope of such things, had considered such opportunities as past as she cared for her aged mother-in-law in a foreign land.

But God provides beyond all odds. As scripture says, nothing is impossible with God, in fact as I have pointed out a few times as we have been going through this story really, God has been working his purpose and plan this entire time, which included some hard things, and some trials but it was all to bring Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz to this point. There is a picture of our own salvation, our own redemption in here, sometimes God has had to allow tragedy for us to hear him. Through death, he brought about life, the spiritual life of Ruth, the strengthening of faith of Naomi, and the offspring which would go on to be the lineage of kings. In our own lives God has brought about life, from the death of sin, making us a new creation in himself. We are now heirs of the king, brought into the lineage of the faithful, the promised spiritual offspring of Abraham, because of what Christ had done.

He performed for us, this role of redeemer of his own will, for his own purpose. He gave of himself in death, so that we may live. At it's core this story of Ruth is a redemption story, an outsider becoming a part of the family of God, her family, her life, being redeemed in a physical sense which mirrors the spiritual reality. Ruth was a woman of faith, believing in the one true God, having turned her back on her pagan idols, for what looked to be an opportunity or prosperity and instead to go into poverty for she believed in God, and loved Naomi. And God in turn rewards her with the very things she believed she could never have again, a husband, and a child. Something I have learned in this life, is that all things truly are temporary, but that I mean..times of hardship and trial tend to inevitably pass, but likewise so does time of ease and blessing. Time is ever moving forward, and life is ever changing as we are on that forward march to the end. None of us are probably where we believed we would be 20 years ago, or even 10 years ago, but in it, God has provided, he has blessed us all greatly in many different ways. And more times of hardship will come for that is the nature of this life, but we can rest knowing that our redeemer will see us through, we can rest in knowing that he has a purpose and a plan for us, and that nothing is outside of that.

God's plan is never thwarted, and all things work to perpetuate his purpose in our own lives. A famine drove Naomi and her Husband with their children out of the promised land, and look what unfolded....trial, hardship, followed by great blessing. And it was over the course of 10 years or so, the redemption we see in this story here was not a fast moving one, but took time through a process that God designed to bring each person involved to exactly the point they needed to be. So if there is anything we take away from our study in Ruth I think it should be this...that God works, and God is faithful. Though it may not feel like it, though we may like Naomi say...call me bitter because God has dealt harshly with me, we can know and we can rest that this to shall pass, and all things are for the glory of the father who has called us, and he says that he works all things for the good of his children. There is purpose, there is meaning, and there is a plan...we just need to simply rest in him, and look to him for our provision and strength, as we look to the life ahead of us, running the race of this life toward the reward of the next. Always moving forward, always trusting God, always resting in what Christ has done for us.