

Ruth 3

God's Redeemer at Work

Ryan Perz – December 22, 2019

When a woman gets engaged, most people ask her the question, “how did the guy propose?” The more unconventional the proposal, the more interesting it is.

If you asked Ruth her proposal story, it gets very unconventional, almost embarrassing. The guy, well he was sound asleep! All the planning was done by her mother-in-law (from her first deceased husband). But that is what you have in Ruth...and God used it. God so very often uses the unconventional things in our lives for his purposes.

Boaz as a kinsman-redeemer (v12):

- To understand the role Boaz will play, we need to remember how earthly the Old Covenant is.
- What I mean is that to be part of the Old Covenant Israel, you had to be *in the family and have land*. For Naomi, that was all in jeopardy as all the men were dead.
- According to Lev 25, a family member could redeem mortgaged land to keep it in the family. Naomi had this in mind.
- But the other problem is children. Ruth is childless and Naomi without grandchildren.
- In steps in the rule of Levirate marriage (levir—in Latin means brother-in-law).

If a man dies without children, his brother can marry his wife to provide children and economic stability, so the family line does not die out. God had good provisions in his law, for the good and blessing of his people.

—Now Boaz, as an earthly kinsman Redeemer, reflects the character of our Redeemer Jesus Christ, who has made provision for our everlasting good.

Everything hinges on how we relate to and respond to our Redeemer.

1. Listen carefully to the Redeemer (1-6)

- Naomi takes the spotlight at first.

- We saw last chapter that her perspective of God has changed (v20)—Naomi had an experience of God’s goodness and faithfulness. Instead of a glass-half empty, Naomi now has hope! She was a woman with new hope! With that hope, Naomi has it in her heart to see God’s blessing come to Ruth (v1).

Hope filled people are avenues of hope for others; a hopeless person on the other hand tends to sap out the hope of others.

- (v3) Ruth is told to bathe, put on perfume, and get dressed up. Essentially, she is told to look bride-like. In our day it would be the same as do your hair, makeup, and paint your nails.
- We also see that *Ruth’s time of mourning is over*. Very similar words describe what King David did in 2 Sam 12:20 after he mourned his child’s death. Both texts use the same word for clothing.

“²⁰ Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped.”

There is an old Puritan book I’m reading called *Lifting up of the Downcast* by William Bridge. The author begins by saying that mourning is not the normal state God’s children live in.

(Eccl 3:4) “There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance.”

Sometimes downcast people need to hear from a family member or friend that the time of weeping and mourning is past—it’s time to laugh and dance.

- Now with this new hope in mind, Naomi gives Ruth the next steps:
 - Find Boaz, winnow wheat at the threshing floor
 - Wait till his tummy is full and he is fast asleep
 - Sneak up and uncover his feet
- Seems like a very unconventional way to find a mate!

- Some see the uncovered feet as something of a proposition. It could have communicated something culturally at the time, possibly with sexual overtones, but I don’t believe anything immoral happened.
- Uncovered feet in the cold of the night wakes a man up (v8)!

- But hear the last part of Naomi’s instruction: “uncover his feet, lie down next to him and *he will tell you what to do.*”

In other words, the way this relationship with your redeemer will work: You will need to listen to him. You will need to trust him. Think of his voice as the tender shepherd’s voice.

Being in a relationship with God, our Redeemer, works the same way. It’s not about living in the warm, fuzzy emotions of romance, but it’s about trusting, listening to the voice of a tender, loving shepherd.

2. Draw near to the Redeemer (7-13)

- Now Ruth was taking a risk, or better yet, what we call a *step of faith*.
- How will Boaz respond? He can very well reject her. He may mistake her forwardness as being a prostitute (it was common for prostitutes to find their clients at threshing floors).

No woman wants to be rejected by any man.

- Yet Ruth takes the risk and *draws near*. *Faith always draws near*
- It’s interesting how the narrator makes us see Boaz in (v8); there are echos of Gen 2, when God brings Eve to Adam in a deep sleep. This union is not man-made, but God ordained.
- V9, Ruth boldly proposes marriage.
- She calls herself a servant. Yet this is not the word of a slave, but a servant who lived in the house and could bear children like Bilhah in Gen 30:3.

Ezek 16:8 uses the same symbolism for marriage Ruth uses:

⁸“When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord God, and you became mine.”

Note also, marriage is a *covenant*—bond not meant to be broken or taken casually.

Note - as Ruth draws near, Boaz speaks two things over her:

1. Blessing
2. Calming words: do not fear

Finally, note the time reference: at night.

- A Hebrew day is reckoned different than ours.

We start our day at midnight technically, but functionally with the first cup of coffee!

- The Hebrew day started when the stars came out and continued until the stars came out again—that was the measure of one day.
- This is how Gen 1 reckons times and a day.
- It also has some symbolic elements in Jewish tradition.

Life begins in the womb and in darkness, but then eventually light comes, as new life emerges.

- Gospel: Boaz's words of blessing and comfort in the middle of the night to an outcast reminds us of other words of blessing and calming spoken to outcasts at night.
- The most significant work that God did in human history begins in the darkness of a womb—as his son takes on human flesh and nature.
- Ponder the birth of Jesus:

(Lk 2:8-11)

⁸“And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Drawing near to the Redeemer. 1. Like Ruth, it's a step of faith. Faith is backed with actions and words.

Drawing near to the Redeemer is listening to his voice, receiving his blessing and his calming words. Drawing near to the Redeemer is good news of great joy!

Finally, look at how Boaz sees Ruth, a “worthy woman” (v11).

It's a phrase that's only used two other times in Scripture (Prov 12:4, 31:10); in the order of the Hebrew Bible, Ruth follows Prov 31. It's the living picture of a worthy woman.

How did Ruth get this reputation? She gained this reputation by her stable love and commitment, her *Hesed*. Loyalty—a reflection of God’s core commitment.

A word to the many young ladies here. The world you live in is really challenging. You live in the world of “post the best, hide the rest.” I’m convinced that countless numbers will come to the end of their lives and feel the emptiness of it all. They wasted their life living for some image that only comes up empty.

There is something fulfilling, drawing near to the Redeemer.

Where can you find a good model? Try a young Moabite woman who spoke a different language, lived in a foreign culture, but loved and lived for the same God.

Above all the fluff, seek a loyal commitment to an everlasting God.

3. Find hope and joy in the Redeemer (14-18)

- In this final section, there is a mix of hope and joy.
- First, there is hope. Ruth will have a husband one way or another (12-13).
- There is also hope in that Naomi—the once bitter, empty handed, is now finding her hands full and overflowing (17). Naomi’s empty days are over!

Friends, we need to hear what God says about our empty days.

That’s what the gospel promises!

(1 Pet 1:18 CSB)

¹⁸“For you know that you were redeemed from your *empty way of life* inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb.”

And this leads to a strong emphasis of joy!

- We see this back up in v7. The way Boaz ate was with joy!

- Harvest season is a joyful celebration, especially when the harvest is abundant! It's not a time of mourning or weeping but laughing and dancing!

- That is certainly the picture in v15ff.

The joy of the harvest is also how Christ is prophesied.

(Is 9:2-3)

² The people who walked in darkness

have seen a great light;

those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,

on them has light shone.

³ You have multiplied the nation;

you have increased its joy;

they rejoice before you

as with joy at the harvest,

as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

Conclusion:

The opening words from Naomi are fitting for our closing word, "that it may be well with you." Is it well with you this Advent season of 2019? Is it well with you and your soul?

God holds out the same blessing — "that it may be well with you", friends.

If a Jewish mother-in-law holds out this blessing, how much more does an Everlasting Creator who from eternity past set his love and affection on a people created for his praise?

This wellness and blessing comes as we listen to the Redeemer, draw near to him, and find everlasting hope and joy in his presence.

Just like Ruth, everything hinges on how we relate and respond to our Redeemer.