

Day 262 - TUESDAY: October 17th

Ruth 3

Ruth 3:1-18 NKJV

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do." And she said to her, "All that you say to me I will do." So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down. Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet. And he said, "Who are you?" So she answered, "I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative." Then he said, "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 poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman. Now it is true that I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you—good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the LORD lives! Lie down until morning." So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, "Do not let it be known that the woman came to the

threshing floor." Also he said, "Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it." And when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley, and laid it on her. Then she went into the city. When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "Is that you, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her. And she said, "These six ephahs of barley he gave me; for he said to me, 'Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'" Then she said, "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day."

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: "The word "security" in verse 1 is correctly rendered "rest" in the King James Version. It is describing the "rest" found in marriage (see 1:9), that is, "settling down"—typical of the "rest" of God's coming Kingdom (see Hebrews 3-4), wherein the glorified Church will be married to Jesus Christ (compare Ephesians 5:22-23; Revelation 19:7).

Naomi remarks again on the fact that Boaz is a close relative—a kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 1:2). "The Hebrew word refers to a relative who acted as a protector or guarantor of the family rights. He could be called upon to perform a number of duties (1) to buy back property that the family had sold; (2) to provide an heir for a deceased brother by marrying that brother's wife and producing a child with her [evidently "brother" being understood as a more encompassing family relation than just a literal brother]; (3) to buy back a family member who had been sold into slavery due to poverty; and (4) to avenge a relative who had been murdered by killing the murderer. The Scripture calls God the Redeemer or the 'close relative' of Israel (Is. 60:16), and Jesus the Redeemer of all believers (1 Pet. 1:18, 19)" ("Wordfocus: Close Relative," *Nelson Study Bible*, p. 446).

Indeed, as briefly mentioned earlier, "the concept of the kinsman-redeemer or *goel* (3:9, 'close relative') is an important portrayal of the

work of Christ. The *goel* must (1) be related by blood to those he redeems [and Christ came in human flesh] (Deuteronomy 25:5, 7-10; John 1:14; Romans 1:3; Philipians 2:5-8; Hebrews 2:14, 15); (2) be able to pay the price of redemption [as Christ was able through His blood] (2:1; 1 Peter 1:18, 19); (3) be willing to redeem [as Christ was willing] (3:11; Matthew 20:28; John 10:15, 18; Hebrews 10:7); (4) be free himself [from whatever caused the need for redemption, i.e., the redeemer cannot redeem Himself] (Christ was free from the curse of sin). The word *goel*...[thus] presents a clear picture of the mediating work of Christ" (*New Open Bible*, introductory notes on Ruth). It is also of interest that a Christian needs to agree to God's way in order to receive the blessing. A Christian needs to *want* salvation. Ruth wanted Boaz to marry her and she agreed to the system.

Naomi decides it's finally time to act. The end of harvest always meant celebration and feasting in ancient societies. Perhaps she thought Boaz would be most receptive to any appeals or proposals at such a happy occasion. She tells Ruth to wash, put on perfume and dress in nice clothes and then sends her down to the festivities, but not to approach him during them (Ruth 3:3). Rather, Naomi instructs Ruth to follow Boaz and, after he fell asleep, uncover his feet and lie down at them (verse 4). This seems rather strange to us today, but it appears to have been more common and understood in the culture of the time. Today some view it as a sexual advance, accusing Ruth (and Naomi for suggesting it) of immorality. But that is rather unlikely, as we will see. Boaz goes to sleep out in the open (verse 7). With most of the harvest at the threshing floor, it was not uncommon for the owner or a trusted servant to sleep near the pile of grain to guard against theft. He wakes at midnight, startled to find Ruth at his feet. She says to him, "Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid: for thou art a near kinsman" (verse 9, KJV). First of all, we should notice that this is a humble

petition, as she calls herself his handmaiden—his servant. This may explain her presence at his feet, the position of a lowly petitioner. Furthermore, in the NIV the expression "thy skirt" is rendered "the corner of your garment." Some see this as a reference to a cloak or outer robe that was being used as a blanket (see C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*).

"Boaz probably slept upon a mat or skin; Ruth lay crosswise at his feet—a position in which Eastern servants frequently sleep in the same chamber or tent with their master; and if they want a covering, custom allows them that benefit from part of the covering on their master's bed. Resting, as the Orientals [i.e., Middle Easterners] do at night, in the same clothes they wear during the day, there was no indelicacy in a stranger, or even a woman, putting the extremity of this cover over her" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary*, note on verse 9).

In the plural the Hebrew term translated "skirt" is usually understood to mean *wings*, and thus some translations, such as the New King James Version, translate it here as "wing." God used this terminology in describing His taking of Israel as His wife: "Behold, thy time was the time of love; *and I spread my skirt over thee*, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine" (Ezekiel 16:8, KJV). In the New King James Version, the key phrase here is translated "*so I spread My wing over you.*" Clearly, Ruth's intent was a proposal of marriage—that she come under the wing or cloak of a husband's protection, namely Boaz's.

What is also rather significant in this regard is that Boaz had earlier spoken to her of "the Lord God of Israel, *under whose wings you have come for refuge*" (Ruth 2:12)—here using the plural form of the same Hebrew word. Yet he had not sent her on her way to be protected by

God somewhere else. Rather, to a great degree, he took on the duty of providing and caring for her himself.

Since this true story illustrates the relationship between Christ and the Church, there might seem to be a breakdown in the typology. Jesus said, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you..." (John 15:16). This is after God the Father selects those who are to be part of the bride for His Son (John 6:44). But consider that Ruth did not initiate the relationship. Boaz had already taken a keen interest in her and had shown obvious favor toward her. Indeed, it is likely that he very much wanted to be her husband. But we see that he is an older man who expected Ruth to marry someone much younger. The wise Naomi recognized Boaz's feelings for what they were. She may have known that Boaz was a conservative man who lacked romantic assertiveness. Naomi decided it was time for Ruth to show some initiative as a response to Boaz's interest. Likewise, after being called by God we are to exercise initiative in seeking Him. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8).

Boaz is deeply touched. And he is immensely impressed with Ruth's great "kindness" (verse 10)—the Hebrew word here, *hesed*, meaning "loyal love" or "covenant faithfulness." Not only had she stuck by Naomi, but now she was seeking to fulfill the obligation of preserving the lineage and inheritance of her deceased husband, which would restore the family line of Elimelech and ensure that Naomi was well provided for.

Boaz's response really helps us to see that no sexual impropriety was occurring. If Ruth had been doing something immoral, his first words would surely not be to bless her in God's name for her faithfulness and moral virtue (verses 10-11). His telling her to sleep there until morning (verse 13) was most likely to ensure her protection. It would not have been safe for her to walk back to town in the middle of the night, when she might have been accosted—just before dawn would be safer, when

no one was awake. It is true that, in verse 14, Boaz does not want anyone to know she'd been there. But that doesn't mean anything wrong had transpired. Perhaps he just didn't want the encounter to be misconstrued and Ruth's reputation brought into question. Or maybe he just didn't want his intent of marriage to become public until he was able to sort out the situation with the other relative he mentions. For Boaz, we find out, was not the nearest kin (verse 12).

In the morning, Boaz sends Ruth home with a gift of grain—6 unspecified measures (verse 15). The New King James has ephahs but that would be around 187 pounds, pretty difficult for her to carry in her shawl. Perhaps Boaz just used a scoop and dumped six full scoops into her shawl. This gift may have been a pledge of his intentions to marry her if possible. At the end of the chapter, Naomi tells Ruth to, in modern parlance, "sit tight and wait and see." Naomi is confident that Boaz, who has repeatedly demonstrated uprightness and compassion toward them, will have the matter resolved before the day is over (see verse 18)."

[END]

Verse 11 – Boaz says that everyone knows that Ruth is a “virtuous woman”. This is the same Hebrew word that is used for the Proverbs 31 woman. “Who can find a virtuous woman...” (see Proverbs 31:10).

Verse 12 – The Midrash of Ruth says that Elimelech had a brother still living who was nearer in relation than Boaz. I find it interesting that Boaz had already thought this all through and knew who was the closest relative. To me, this shows he was interested in being her redeemer.

Verse 13 – This verse translated in the NKJV makes it seem Boaz would be pleased if the other would redeem her, but that wording seems to be added. The Literal Standard Version says: “if he redeems you, well: he redeems”. The actual Hebrew is more of a literal fact than a happy

outcome. That was the law, if the other decided to act on this duty, there was nothing Boaz could do about it. The law was the law.