

Ruth 3

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Preacher: David Helm

[0 : 00] Today we will be reading from Ruth chapter 3. Ruth chapter 3. Then Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her, My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? Is not Boaz a relative with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Wash, therefore, and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak, and go down to the threshing floor.

But do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. But 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.

And she replied, All that you say I will do. So she went down to the threshing floor, and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain.

Then she came softly and uncovered his feet, and lay down. At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet.

[1 : 16] He said, Who are you? And she answered, I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer. And he said, May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter.

You have made this last kindness greater than the first, and that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear.

I will do for you all that you ask. For all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman. And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I.

Remain tonight, and in the morning. If he will redeem you, good, let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then as the Lord lives, I will redeem you.

Lie down until the morning. So she lie at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.

[2 : 19] And he said, Bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out. So she held it and measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. Then she went into the city.

And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, How did you fare, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done for her, saying, These six measures of barley he gave to me.

For he said to me, You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law. 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. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Amen.

I want to title my words from this text, Get Some Rest. Get some rest.

[3 : 24] I'm sure you've heard it or have said it to someone else yourself. Hey, get some rest. And often we mean more than simply a good night's sleep, don't we?

We sense in the individual that we're speaking with or within our own mind and soul that we have a need for rest of another order.

Some soul rest. Some peace of mind. Some sense of being reconciled with difficult things or a season in life. Perhaps the rest of redemption even from an unsettled conscience of living a life that seems to have slid off the rails.

After all, the world can be a wearying place. Get some rest. The desire for rest, given the weariness of life, is where our chapter begins.

There it is in verse 1. Then Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her, My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?

[4 : 34] This need for rest is the final benediction we almost pray over every human life, is it not?

Rest in peace. What are we saying? We're saying may you now receive that which this world so seldom affords.

The way the story ends by the final verse 18 is that the rest which Naomi sought for Ruth was now secure.

Take a look at verse 18. She replied, Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but settle the matter today.

We should expect, then, in this story to discover an answer to the question, What did Naomi learn that led her to believe that the rest Ruth needed was a sure thing?

[5 : 44] That it was settled? More importantly for us, how might what we learn allow us some rest?

Full disclosure here, what you can expect the sermon to reveal is that the kind of rest that Ruth and Naomi needed, Boaz had the power to provide, but the kind of redemption that you and I need in this world rests only secure in the promises that Jesus can keep.

That's where I'm going so that you know where we are. But let's take a look. How is Naomi convinced that Ruth's rest is secure?

Verses 2 to 5, Naomi makes a plan, and I would say, and so should you. Is it not Boaz, our relative, with who's the young woman you were?

See, he's winnowing in the barley tonight at the threshing floor. Wash, therefore, and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak, and go down to the threshing floor. But do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

[6 : 57] But 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. Naomi made a plan, and so should you.

We've already seen the desperate plight of Ruth and Naomi in the opening two chapters. If you haven't been with us, I'll at least pause long enough to say that these two are widows.

They've had a difficult life. Personal pain. The kind of pain that had made one of them an embittered person.

These two, then, were, as we meet them here, without protection in the ancient world, and without provision to move on their own. They were neither safe nor secure.

And it was within that desperate context that Naomi makes a plan. And it's a plan, as you're going to see, that is not without great risks. Risk that would require of Ruth a massive element of faith or trust.

[8 : 02] I'm reminded of the words of another widow, Catherine Marshall. Her husband served a generation ago in the House or the Senate as the chaplain.

He died. Catherine was left a widow. And she writes, you are not really trusting God until you are trusting him for the ultimates of life.

When life has tumbled in and we sit in the wreckage. Anybody sitting in the wreckage this morning? Anybody wondering what has happened or gone wrong?

The discouragements, the disappointments, the losses, the isolation. That's where Ruth and Naomi were. And notice her plan. The verbs in the story carrying the weight of Ruth's actions.

Wash. Anoint. Put on. Go down. Observe. Uncover.

[9 : 11] Think of the risks. A woman out at night. No streetlights. That's for sure. Heading down to the place where all the men were.

On a night to make merry. The harvest was in. The celebration was begun. The risks certainly would have been rejection.

Although that might have been the easiest of her risks. She was a Moabite. She was not even of the family, let alone the nation of the men to whom she was now descending in hopes of hell.

In fact, the Old Testament law, if there were any of these men who were hoping to follow God, they were told that a Moabite woman wouldn't even be able to enter into the temple.

And if she's in the temple, why would I have her in the threshing floor? The risk of redemption was real. The other risk is there as well, though, to be humiliated.

[10 : 25] Abused. Look what Naomi tells her. Verse three. Do not make yourself known.

Do not let them know that you're there. Too many bad things could happen in my plan. The plan could go awry if they know that a woman is at the threshing floor on the night we make merry.

Even later, we'll see that it isn't until about midnight that Boaz himself comes to understand that she is in his midst.

She could have been humiliated by others. In fact, it would have created a public scandal. In which it would have been her fault entirely.

The risks of rejection, the risks of humiliation. But notice there were also rewards. I mean, Naomi would not have made this plan without an upside opportunity.

[11:28] She had banked all her hopes that the field and the threshing floor of the man to whom Ruth went was a worthy man.

Who actually understood God's word. And would live in obedience to it. Let me see if I can explain this for you. Something that's not readily known.

That the characters in the text would have known. But the first readers, nor you or I, necessarily would have known. Namely, that there was a word from Leviticus that indicates if one is a widow, she could be redeemed.

She could be bought. Not in a sense of degradation of her individual identity, but to fully bring her into the family.

The nearest male relative could redeem her, take her in, marry her, and provide children in security, safety for her.

[12:32] And that is all laid out in God's word. So that a godly man, a worthy man who was a redeemer of this family, he would have the opportunity to do that.

Naomi banks all of her plans. All of the risk. She puts Ruth's life at risk. On the back of that hope.

So Ruth leaves. Literally to make a marriage proposal of her own. And she is hoping that there is at least one godly man that will still do what's right in the Lord's eyes.

Can I make a proposal to you this morning? You who might need some rest. You and I need to emulate Naomi's plan.

But let me tell you, I'm not just going to tell you to go sit at the feet of a man. I'm not going to tell you to sit at the feet of any man. I would tell you that there is only one man at whose feet you must seek rest.

[13:46] And the New Testament proclaims him to be Jesus. Can I say that again? Jesus is the worthy one. I'm not going to call you to a threshing floor this morning to put your life at risk.

I'm going to call you to read the gospels and look at the cross. And put yourself at the feet of that. Where you find one who willingly covers. Lays out his hands and protects everything that you have put at risk.

You have no fear in his presence. Even when he died, he looked at John and said, John, my mother concerned for her. He looked out, covers over, brings in, loves, protects, provides safety and security.

The Bible would have you and me seek rest from this worry world. By making a plan to sit at the feet of Jesus.

Now I concede. There are real risks for you. Even as I say this to you. Some people feel that even Jesus will reject them.

[14:57] The sensitive souls in our midst who would say, you know, great to hear that he might accept me, but I don't, I'm not worthy.

This inner sense of never being good enough to be loved well enough to consider the risks that it would take to sit at his feet.

This is a real risk. To lay everything on the line and then to be unwanted by Jesus. To not be allowed in.

But the Jesus that I read of in the scriptures is welcoming to all. He's welcoming to any. He's welcoming to everyone who takes that risk.

There's the other risk though. Maybe even greater than feeling he might reject you, but the others around you will, whether they be family or friends.

[16:02] Imagine someone seeing you in the light of the day, hanging around at the foot of the cross. Imagine being a university student and thinking of the humiliating nature of running with those who run to Jesus.

Imagine having to explain to your parents that you're putting all your hopes for rest and soul well-being in Jesus. Imagine what it would be like at the workplace to understand that if you speak his name, there might be others who would discard you in friendship.

Jesus. This is a massive real weight and obstacle and hindrance. Nevertheless, verse 5 again. And she replied, all that you say, I will do. This, this is a, a woman of sterling character.

This is a woman of unfathomable faith. This is a woman of strength and dignity and beauty. This is a woman who can walk the street in the evening, confident that God alone is going to have to be her help.

[17 : 32] If there is going to be help at all, that the shade, which she seeks can only be sought by this risk. And so she goes.

Thank you. And so the story moves from Naomi making a plan, in my sense that you should too, to Ruth pleading her case.

And so should you. Verses 6 to 9. It's really storytelling at its best. So we'll just let the story speak for itself.

Verse 6. So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain.

Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down at midnight. The man was startled and turned over and behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, who are you? And she answered, I am Ruth, your servant.

[18 : 32] My Ruth pled her case.

Take a look, especially at what she said. I am Ruth. Spread your wings over me for you are a redeemer.

And take that in conjunction from what she did. The writer is not coy with what's happening here. It's a single woman laying at the feet of a man, uncovering the sense, and pleading to be taken as his own.

spread your wings over me for you are a redeemer.

And, and, and, and, and, and, and, I know that my redeemer lives.

[19 : 43] The redeemer, of course, is what I've already mentioned, the nearest or a nearest living relative who actually had the power in that day to provide provision and protection.

In essence, the kind of rest that Ruth and Naomi needed, Boaz had the power to provide. But, the kind of redemption that you and I seek only will rest secure in the promise Jesus can keep.

Nobody else. Nobody else. A redeemer. But notice this phrase, spread your wing. It's actually an echo from the story we had last week where Boaz met her in the fields and said to her, may the Lord bless you as you have sought to come under his wings.

So what she's actually saying here, spread your wings over me is saying, may you do for me what you asked God to do.

But while God rests in the heavens, you have the power here to entertain my request. This is a beautiful thing.

[20 : 58] And so should you. Ruth said, I am Ruth. And if you go to the cross where Jesus died for the sins of the world, the place where he would make a covering, just say, oh, you are.

Thank you. Just say your name. Yes. I am Dave. I am Lisa. I am Jeremy.

I am Janice. I am Carolyn. I'm not going to leave you out, sister. I am here. Who, who's here, says Jesus.

I am here. And then, cover me, please. Tell him you're coming to him for cover, for dress, for rest. He already knows your plight. He already knows your situation. He's already been told of the losses and the disappointments and the failures.

[22 : 24] He knows of the weariness. He even knows of the waywardness. Request rest.

Ask for peace. Articulate your need for help by faith. Because salvation is in the midst of personal desperation.

Naomi made a plan, and so should you. Ruth pled her case, and so should you. Finally, look at this. Boaz pledged his word, and I'm telling you, Jesus will do it for you, too.

Notice in verse 11 through 15, this pledge. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you're a worthy woman.

And now it is true that I am a redeemer, and there is a redeemer nearer than I. Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good, let him do it. But if he's not willing to redeem you, then as the Lord lives, I will redeem you.

[23 : 35] Lie down until morning. Let's just stop right there for just a moment. Notice the threefold use of his language. I will do all that you ask.

Verse 12. I am a redeemer. Verse 13. I will redeem you. This is a pledge. This is a promise. That I will make good.

Even though there's another who's nearer, he's aware that if not, I will. His promise has been made. It's as if that promise in our day would be a ring to indicate the security of his word.

The ring was everything, as are these words. In the midst of Boaz's wonderful promise, though, to Ruth, there's something here that I find fairly interesting.

Verse 10. Can I read it again? Yes. And he said, may you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You've made this last kindness greater than the first, and that you've not gone after young men, whether rich or poor.

[24 : 50] This is interesting. For Ruth, as for us, there are some redeemers that appear to be closer at hand, more attractive even.

And we've often gone for them, have we not? We have sat, some of us for years maybe, at their feet. We headed to the threshing floor, looking for rest, and we weren't afraid to go in the light of day.

We ate our fill of that food. We drank from the well of this world. We looked time and again for the rest that was promised.

But the young, the healthy, the nearer, the more attractive, always has failed. Tell me, you do know this to be true, don't you?

We're not. In the end, they are all unworthy redeemers.

[26 : 01] They are lesser substitutes. And so I tell you, if you're thinking about coming to Jesus for the first time, or if you've been backsliding over time, both of you are aware of one thing at the same time, that he is the only one who will satisfy.

Here is water that will not run dry. Here is food that is sustaining you in life. And not only this life, but the life to come. Here is the security that you're looking to find elsewhere.

Here's the safety that you wish you had elsewhere. Here's the fun, the enjoyment, the joy that you cannot find anywhere.

It is Jesus. He is the one who will keep all his promises to you. I, not only do I know I have a redeemer that lives, I know a man who will not fail you.

I mean, do you hear me? I know a man who will not fail you. He's the same man who the Bible claims alone can redeem you.

[27 : 13] It's Jesus. Listen to the words of his promise. Come unto me, all that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon me and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. That's his promise. Those are his words. Come unto me, all that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Step off the threshing floor and under the cross, and that is his word with his arms outstretched. Safety is here. Security is here. Provision is here. Joy is here.

Life, which you're seeking, is actually here. Listen, not only to the words of his promise, but the pledge of the provision he will supply.

He says, ask and it shall be given to you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives, and the one who seeks, finds, and the one who knocks, it will be opened.

[28 : 20] For the son who asks for bread, do you think his father is going to give him a stone? The one who would ask for fish, do you think he's going to hand him a serpent? But your father who is in heaven is giving good things to those who ask him.

So ask, receive, seek, find, rest. The kind of rest you can die on.

these are Jesus's promises to you. Jesus's pledge to you. Just as Boaz gave her six measures of barley to say, my, my word to you is good, but my pledge to you is this.

So to Jesus spoke with his voice and promissory note, but he hung on the cross as a pledge of his provision. And in him, his life, the bread of life, help forever.

More. Can I tell you the kind of power that he has? Boaz had a power to redeem, but Jesus has a power to save and redeem and strengthen and bring you into an everlasting comfort.

[29 : 32] Now, where does he get this kind of power? He gets this kind of power because he was the only one anointed to give you rest. And in the book of Hebrews, it actually indicates that he overcame the death that awaits you.

And in overcoming that death, he had a power given to him by the Holy spirit. And the writer says, Paul, what I want you to know, what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of his great Mark might that he worked in Christ. When he raised him from the dead, the power that's in work in those of us who believe in finding rest is the same power that was at work in him that rose life from the dead. And so you and I one day are going to go in the ground or we're going to be in our urn. And somebody is going to say, as they walk away from you, may you rest in peace, but you'll be dead. But in Christ, even though you die, yet shall he live. Because the resurrection extends beyond this life.

[30 : 45] What am I saying this morning? As pastor Jackson used to always say to us at the close of his message, what am I saying to you today?

I'm saying on the basis of Christ's resurrection from the dead, he alone has the power to accomplish the rest you need. He is the appointed one. Are you aware of your need? Are you ready to risk it all? Are you willing to go to Jesus and not someone else? Are you this morning wanting to trust him or re-trust him?

Your faith will have a reward. He can be your keeper. He will be your shade.

He can cover you, help you, hold you, redeem you, provide for you.

[31 : 45] He can take the most destitute in our midst and put you into a family in which you flourish. If you're wondering if you can trust the words of Jesus, I invite you simply to re-read the final words of Naomi, because this woman knew a thing or two about life.

What does she say, verse 18? She says, wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, but the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today.

And so too, you can settle the matter of your rest with Jesus today. Today can be the day of your salvation.

I know it sounds foolish. I know in your mind, you're already thinking, this is a simplistic message with humiliating consequence among those with whom I live and work. I know the risk you're feeling, but I'm telling you, tell him your name, ask him to cover you, and he will give you rest. I invite you today, as I said at the outset, get some rest. And I've got more in mind than simply a good night's sleep. Get some soul rest, get some peace of mind, get some sense of being reconciled with different people.

[33 : 16] Get some rest that seems to have slid off the rails and know this, the rest and the redemption that you will seek rest secure on the promises that my Jesus keeps.

Why not now? Why not today? After all, the world, this world, can be a weary place.

Our heavenly father, we consider these ancient stories in hopes of present help.

And I pray that this word, which has long ago been put down, would through the inadequacy of this speech, convert, save, strengthen, draw back, hold your own, comfort your own, bring life, even from death, in this place, at this hour.

In Jesus name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.