Rest in the Lord (Ruth 3:1-18)

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[0:00] This week, we're going to get to Ruth chapter 3. Now, if you have enjoyed the story of Ruth so far, if you've enjoyed following along with this, and you've enjoyed the kind of the excitement, the ups and downs of Ruth, then chapter 3 is not going to leave you disappointed.

It's an exciting chapter. There's a lot of things that happen in this chapter. But before I read this passage, I think it's important to establish some things that we have already determined, that we've already been able to see very clearly.
First of all, it's who Boaz is. We've mentioned several times now, we've made an emphasis on this, that Boaz was a man of great wealth. He was somebody who had wealth.
But in addition to this, and more importantly for our passage this week, it's important for us to remember that not only was Boaz a man of great wealth, but Boaz was a man of great moral character as well.
He was somebody who followed the Lord. That stood in stark contrast to the people of his day. Remember, Ruth takes place during the time of the judges. And when you look through the judges, you see a nation who is on this rollercoaster ride where most people were not following the Lord.
[1:19] Most people were doing whatever they wanted to in their own eyes. And so Boaz is someone who stands in contrast to what everybody else is doing. He's somebody of high moral character.

And so taken by itself, if you look at chapter three, out of context, without the whole book, the chapter could seem a little suggestive, let's say. But I want to encourage you not to jump to that conclusion.
But let us do what we should do with scripture, as we should do with all of scripture. Take it within the context that it is written and let scripture interpret scripture. And so with this understanding, I want to encourage you to follow along as I read Ruth chapter three.
This is what the word of the Lord says. It says, 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 our 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.
[2:32] 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. And 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, in that you have not gone after a young man, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear.
[3:39] 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.

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Lie down until morning. And so she lay at his feet until morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, Let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.
And he said, Bring the garment you were wearing and hold it out. And so she held it out, and he 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 it fare, my daughter?
Then she told her all that the man had done for her, saying, These six measures of barley he gave me, for he said to me, You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.
[4:47] She replied, Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but will settle this matter today.

As we look at this passage, I want to encourage you to see a theme that I believe is coming out of this passage. It may not be something that we immediately jump to, but I believe that rest is a central theme to this chapter.
As I was preparing this message this week, I almost had to laugh as I was thinking about that, because this week, in many ways, has felt like anything but rest.
Somebody asked me yesterday, Has this been one of the busiest weeks in this church in a long time? I said, It's been a pretty busy week. It started with a Veterans Day program that took the entire church and everybody coming together for that.
We had to move heaven and earth to get into these new facilities and try to get everything set up for this morning. And to throw on top of that, a Jubal Brass concert in the sanctuary one night.
[5:49] And on top of all this, there's just the regular activities of church. And so, yes, it has felt like a very busy week. Many of you have been up here working all week and it felt probably like anything but rest.

But as we look at this chapter more in depth, I believe that rest is something that keeps coming to the forefront. I believe it's something that is continuing to come out as we look at this.
And I want us to see rest in light of four observations from this passage this week. And I want to go ahead and give you all four of these things so you can be seeing these things and see the progression as we make our way through it.
To begin with, we see the desire for rest, the plan for gaining rest, the promise of rest, and finally the importance of finding rest.
And so as we look at this, I want us to begin by looking at this desire for rest. If you look at this chapter, this chapter begins talking about rest and it ends talking about rest.
[6:57] It begins by saying in verse one, 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.

And then the chapter ends talking about rest. Naomi talking to Ruth, 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.
And so it starts off with someone seeking rest, of trying to find rest. And it ends with one who will not rest until he provides this rest for them.
And so it starts off talking about rest. It ends by talking about rest. But what is this rest that it is talking about? This rest that Naomi is seeking for her daughter-in-law is marriage, it's home, it's stability.
In this society at this time, marriage was pretty important to provide this type of rest. In fact, the Hebrew word translated as rest here, or places of rest, is the same root word that is found back in verse, or chapter 1, verse 9 of Ruth, where Naomi is pleading with her daughter-in-law, with Orpah, and with Ruth, to go back to your parents' house.
[8:12] And in 1, 9, it tells them, the Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you, in the house of her husband. So there's this idea of rest that is being tied into this.

The word speaks to the security and peacefulness that a woman in Israel, this time longed for and expected to find in the home of a loving husband.
The NIV tries to capture this meaning when it translates this first verse. It says, My daughter, I must find a home for you where you will be well provided for.
This rest is what Naomi is longing for, for her beloved daughter-in-law, Ruth. What she is saying here is that this is the motivation for this plan that I'm about to give to you.
This plan that I'm about to lay out for you, the motivation behind this plan is for you to find rest. You see, the desire for rest is something that is healthy.

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[9:11] Rest is something that is essential to our welfare. We all have different levels of capacity. We all have different levels of ability to be able to continue to do things. I'm sure there's people that you know that seem to have a very high capacity.

They have what seems like endless reserves. They're like the energizer bunny. They just keep going and going and going. They continue to go. But the truth of the matter is, none of us have endless reserves.
None of us have endless reserves where we can go. None of us have an endless capacity. We all need rest in our lives. This desire for rest is a good thing.
We cannot simply will ourselves into doing more and more. In both the Old and New Testament, we see rest as a part of God's good design for us.
And what we see is that Naomi desperately wants rest and security for her daughter-in-law. The desire for rest is good, which means it's something that we should be intentional about gaining.
[10:15] Since the desire for rest, and God places this good desire is there, this is something that we should be intentional about gaining, which brings us to the next observation in this passage, this plan for gaining rest.

This plan for gaining rest. Now, I want you to listen again to this dialogue in these first five verses right here between Naomi and her daughter-in-law, Ruth. This is the dialogue between them.
It says, My daughter, should I not seek rest for you that it may be well with you? Is not Boaz our 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 is 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 you are to do.
[11:19] And she replied, All that you say I will do. You see, rest is something that needs to be intentional, something you plan for. And here, we have quite the plan for gaining rest, don't we?

We have quite the interesting plan that Naomi is sharing with Ruth to find this. The harvest is over. The winnowing has begun. All of the workers have moved from the field into the threshing floor. And what this man is that they are there and they're trying to separate the chaff from the grains. And so they're at the threshing floor. They're using shovels or winnowing forks. And they're taking this mixture of chaff, which is useless material in there, and grain.
And what they're doing, they're throwing it up in the air so that the wind, as it blows, it will blow away the chaff, all of the useless material in there, and that the grains will fall down. And so this is what they're all there doing.
And this is something that would take some time. And it was something that the workers would stay at the threshing floor to do because they would want to get up early to work on this. They'd want to stay up late working on this, but also probably to provide some security and protection for the grains that they had just harvested.
[12:28] And so they were working on this. But the threshing floors, however, could also be a very promiscuous place. This is a place where many activities would take place that should not have been taking place.

In fact, we read about this in Hosea 9, verse 1. It tells us, Rejoice not, O Israel. Exile not like the peoples, for you have played the whore, forsaken your God, and you have loved a prostitute's wages on all threshing floors.
And so there was a lot of activities that took place in this threshing floor that were questionable. Barry Webb notes, he says, In view of this, Naomi put Ruth at considerable risk by telling her to approach Boaz in such a place.
But the fact that Ruth is young and has already attracted Boaz's attention, plus the signs of God's providential involvement in this, have evidently convinced Naomi that this is a risk worth taking.
And so before we look at this risk worth taking, let's just identify those things, those instructions that Naomi gave to Ruth. She first of all told her to take a bath.
[13:41] This is a good thing to make a first impression, right? This is probably something we could all gather from this. If you want to make a good impression, take a bath. And then it says to, and then it told, Naomi told Ruth to anoint herself.

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Now, the ESV here and some of these other translations, it'll try to kind of spiritualize this a little bit and say anoint, but what they're saying is, put on some perfume. Put on, anoint yourself with this mixture of olive oil and these spices and herbs that have an aroma to it.
And so put on some perfume. Put on something that smells nice. One person I was listening to reading one, they said, Naomi's telling us, put on that midnight Moabite. Put on that that's going to attract and that's going to really get his attention here and to get that involved.
And so she says, hey, wash yourself, anoint yourself. It says to put on your cloak. Now, this is where I think the NIVA can make it a little confusing for us because it says that it, and the NIVA, I believe it translates it as put on your best clothes.
But that's not the actual Hebrew word that is in here. It's just talking about an outer garment. Put on a cloak. And so I think what it's really getting at is the fact that Naomi is realizing that she's going to be spending the night out in this area that could probably be pretty chilly at night.
[14:56] And so for a lot of people, especially poor people, they would have this cloak that would serve two purposes. It would be an outer garment, but it would also be something that would keep them warm during the night.

And so it's just put on your cloak and go to Boaz at the threshing floor when he's in a good mood. Now, this is a very important part of the instructions right here. Observe where he lies down. Make sure that you know that it's Boaz before I give you these next instructions. Make sure that you see where Boaz is lying down so that you know that this is him before I give you this next instructions.
It was a great amount of trust in the character of Boaz. If Boaz were a lesser man, a man like the men of his day, if you flip back one page at the end of Judges, the Judges ends with everyone did what was right in his own eyes, if he were like the other men of his day that just did right of what was in his eyes, then this would be a very difficult place that she's putting around.
But there's a lot of trust in Boaz. This act shows a great amount of trust in the character of Boaz. Then when you understand it like this, it understands that this risk is not significant.
[16:15] But as Naomi gives these instructions and as Ruth wholeheartedly accepts them, they are placing an enormous amount of trust in the integrity of Boaz.

I love how Tony Morita describes this situation. He says, The riskiness of the strategy Naomi commends to Ruth serves to expose one thing that will make it secure.
This risk that this strategy is talking about here, there's one thing that it shows that it highlights that makes it secure, and that is Boaz.
Ruth and Naomi are not trying to take a shortcut to the path of rest by compromising their morals, but they're going about this the right way. Previously, we mentioned the fact that this desire for rest is a good thing.
Now we see the plan for gaining it, the plan that we're looking for it. But we have to be careful in our day and time that we go about it the right way as well.
[17:20] We have to be careful to where we look to find rest. Yes, the desire is good. Yes, we should be seeking rest. We should be planning for it. But we've got to be very careful on where we plan for it.

Sometimes we look for rest in compromising ways. Sometimes we look for this rest in ways that go against the good character that Christians are called to live by.
Sometimes we look for rest by working longer hours that are well beyond what is healthy. And I know that sounds crazy to think about working longer hours just seeking rest, but in doing so, in hopes that we can have enough financially to give us comfort and ultimately security and rest.
Or sometimes we see our hard work and you can, or sometimes we see that someone else can see our hard work and we can rest in that. Like, oh, well, I've given a long hard work.
Now people will think that I'm a good hard worker. They'll think all of these things about me. But ultimately, money is not going to provide rest. Recognition is not going to provide lasting rest.
[18:27] Sometimes the opposite is true. Sometimes we look for rest in getting as little as possible done. where we just are not working hard, where we're not putting in the effort, we're not doing everything as unto the Lord, and rest itself is our ultimate goal.

So we don't work hard, we don't put forth the effort, and assume that someone else will take care of it. That's not fulfilling, and ultimately will probably leave you looking for another job as well.

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But sometimes, rest looks more like an unhealthy distraction than anything else. sometimes we're seeking rest. And what we're really doing is just trying to distract ourselves when unhealthy practices.
It looks like drinking for the purpose of momentarily escaping. It looks like endless scrolling on social media to take your mind off the day, but at the expense of being present with the ones that you love the most.
Unfortunately, for many in our day and time, it looks like a pornography addiction that gives you a momentary escape from the difficulties of the day. We seek to find rest in all of these things.
[19:40] Seek to remove the stress from our lives by going in all of these different directions that are unhealthy ways. All of these things, they promise rest.

They promise to make you forget. They promise to give purpose and security, but they never deliver on what they promise. Only God can deliver on what He promises, which brings us to this next observation, the promise of rest.
The promise of rest that we see here, and we see this in verses 10 through 13. And it says, 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 here 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.
[20:54] As the Lord lives, I will redeem you. Ruth can rest because what she has longed for and ultimately couldn't accomplish on her own is being accomplished by her Redeemer.

These words and this promise of redemption and rest are only as good as the one who is making the promise. There is a reason the narrator has put such an emphasis, not only on the ability, not only on the means that Boaz has to be a Redeemer, that he's a man of great wealth, but also this emphasis that he's placed on Boaz being one of great character.
There's a reason that we have made such an emphasis on this as we've looked through this book so far, that Boaz is a man of great wealth, but he's also a man of great moral integrity because the promise that he is making hinges on these things.
The reason being the validity of the promise is directly linked to the ability and the character of the one making the promise. Think of it like this.
I like to think that I'm a pretty honest person. I know you at least hope that I would be a pretty honest person, and so imagine that I came to one of you after the service today and I said, look, I just appreciate you.
[22:18] Here's what I want to do. I want to give you one million dollars. I want to give you one million dollars. None of you would get excited because, I mean, you understand that I'm a, you know, my characters, they're like, I'm an honest person, but you realize I don't have the ability to do that.

I don't have the means to do that. I don't have the ability to do that, nor would you get very excited if, let's say, a bank robber showed up in here with a million dollars in a suitcase that he had just robbed from a bank and they told you that, hey, I'm going to give you a million dollars.
You wouldn't get excited. They may have the means to do it, but their character's not there. And so what we see is that there has to be both the ability and the willingness to do it.
I love to think about this when it comes to our relationship with God in terms of a trust fall. I've shared this numerous times, but to me, it's the easiest way to understand what it means to trust the Lord.
In a trust fall, what you realize and what you're, you're answering two questions without whether you realize it or not. The first question you're answering is, does this person have the ability to catch me?
[23:26] Because you're not going to do a trust fall if this person doesn't have the ability to catch you. We could go into this new children's area and all these kids over there, there's a lot of kids that would do their very best to catch me if I turned around and fell, but I would never do it because they don't have the ability to do that.

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And many of you in this room today have the ability to catch me, but there's no way that I would trust you to do that because they would like to see me fall probably. And so there's, when we make these decisions and when we start looking at what it means to trust the Lord, to trust in those promises, we're looking at does He have the ability to do what He says He's going to do and does He have the willingness to do it?
And when we look at the Lord, we can take His promises to the bank because we know that He has the ability to do whatever He says He's going to do.
And we also know that He has the willingness to do those things. Boaz had the means to provide redemption and rest and he had the willingness to provide redemption and rest.
What this means is that His promise to provide this for Ruth, it carries weight. is a promise that gives Ruth hope. Chapter 3 concludes when they only tell Ruth, wait my daughter until you learn how the matter turns out for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today.
[24:56] Ruth can rest because her Redeemer will not rest until her redemption is secure. And what this means for us is that if God promises rest, if He promises redemption, then we can take Him at His word.

You heard it earlier but Matthew 11, 28 says, Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Ruth was finding rest in her Redeemer. I want to encourage you to do the same thing today. You see, what makes Christianity different than all other religions is that our hope is not in that we are doing this ourselves.
Every other religion says, Do enough works. Follow these pillars. Do all that you can and one day, hopefully, you will have done enough that maybe, just maybe, you can obtain what it is that you really hope for.
Maybe, you'll have done enough good to outweigh the bad and you can obtain what it is that you long for. I mentioned a couple of months ago about a trip that Jason and I had the opportunity to take to Utah.
[26:19] We met with several church planners but one interaction really struck a nerve to me. We were standing outside of a Mormon temple in Saratoga Springs talking about the lives of Mormons and this never-ending quest to be good enough.

To make sure that you kept your temple recommend card so that you could have your eternal family. Make sure you're doing enough. Make sure you're doing all of these things. Stayed in good standing with the church.
Gave money. Did good. All in hopes of securing where you will spend in eternity. This is the opposite of rest. That's not restful at all.
This is not what Jesus promises. The Bible tells us very clearly that we are all dead in our trespasses and sins and no matter how hard we try we can never be good enough.
But that we have a redeemer who tells us that we can come to him and find rest. We can come to him to gain that which we could not obtain on our own.
[27:23] You see if we live this life where we're constantly trying to be good enough. Trying to thank you. You know Lord I hope that I've done enough. I hope that I've done enough. Maybe one day if I'm really good from this point forward then maybe one day that'll be enough.

Even if you could be perfect from this day forward it's not enough. Because present obedience doesn't make up for past disobedience. You're just doing what is the bare minimum required.
Lord. But Jesus says come to me all who labor and I and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.
And so as we close I want to clearly see and understand the importance of finding rest. There are two ways in which we see finding rest in Ruth chapter three.
To begin with Ruth seeks this rest. There's a proper place for planning and seeking this rest. So long as no moral boundaries are crossed.
[28:28] Look for opportunities to rest from the busyness of life. Be intentional about providing this for your family. Be intentional about setting the tone in your family's lives.

And not adding one more thing to an already full and busy schedule. Be intentional about this. Plan for rest and seek it. But the second way in which this chapter teaches us to find rest is by understanding that it is ultimately a gift and it cannot be found by our planning for it alone.

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The truth is Naomi and Ruth's request to find rest could not have been possible if Boaz had not made a promise. His promise was to provide for them what they could not obtain on their own.
And ultimately this goes beyond Boaz. Ultimately this goes beyond Boaz and above his head and ultimately we see that where Ruth ultimately finds this is in serving the Lord.
And back in chapter 2 verse 12 as Boaz is encouraging Ruth he says the Lord repay you for all that you've done a full reward be given to you by the Lord the God of Israel under whose wings you have come to take refuge.
[29:49] Ruth is already looking to God. She's already finding her refuge in Him. She's already finding that identity in Him. This is ultimately where she is finding this rest.

The only way that you and I can ultimately find rest in this life is trusting in the finished work of Christ. The quest for rest is the search for acceptance, for inclusion, for provision, a future of purpose and meaning.
And we will never experience these things the way that God intended us to apart from the finished work of Christ. Jesus says come to me all who labor and heavy laden and I will give you rest.
He's giving us rest for our souls. Rest that this is not some understanding that this is not something that we can obtain on our own but it can only be accomplished with a redeemer.
And so are you looking for rest today? I imagine that most of us, if not all of us, could use a little rest. I imagine most of us, not all of us, are looking for rest in different ways.
[30:58] But the question that I want you to answer before we get to that question is, have you placed your faith and your trust in Jesus? Because if you haven't placed your faith and your trust in Jesus, then you're not ultimately going to find rest.

You're not ultimately going to find that rest that you long for. But if you have placed your faith and your trust in Jesus, then live in that. Understand the gospel message.
Don't let the gospel be something that you accept and then move past, but let it be something you grow deeper into. Where you constantly see your need and that this need is so great that you can never do this on your own, but let it point you to Jesus.
Let it point you to the one who has already paid that price so that you can rest in his finished work.
This doesn't mean that we don't live for him. This doesn't mean that we don't serve him, that we don't work for him, but we do so out of the rest that he provides.
And so let me encourage you to look to Jesus for this rest. Look to your redeemer because he has promised this. And if this is something that you haven't taken care of, if this is something where you haven't placed your faith and your trust in Jesus, then don't leave here today without doing so.
[32:17] Father, I thank you so very much. For Jesus, I thank you for the rest that only he can provide. Lord, I thank you that you are our great redeemer, that you are the one who is providing what we long for, what we couldn't do on our own.

And so, Lord, I pray that as we continue to look at the book of Ruth, as we continue to look at Boaz being this great redeemer for Ruth, Lord, that we would look beyond this and see how it points us to you, our true and better redeemer who is always there for us, who never leaves us, who provides rest that no one else can provide.
And so, Lord, help us to look to you. Help us to look to the cross to see the way that you have redeemed us, redeemed us in a far greater way than we could ever imagine.
And so, Lord, help us to look to your finished work and rest and serve you out of that. Lord, I thank you so much for everything that you do.
Be with us today. Help us to honor you with all that we say and do. In Jesus' name, amen. I want to invite you to stand. If the Lord is speaking to you this morning, won't you respond as we stand together and sing?

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