

Sit Still By Resting Upon the Lord

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[0 : 00] The Lord lay at Boaz's feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another.

Then he said to those who were there with them, 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?

When 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.

[1 : 22] Verses 16 to 18 then of Ruth chapter 3, and particularly verse 18. Under the title, Sit still by resting upon the Lord.

Sit still by resting upon the Lord. Naomi said to Ruth, 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.

Now when God in his word tells us to wait, or to rest, or to sit still, or to be quiet, he never means do nothing.

And we actually see in this beautiful story the importance and the dignity of work.

We've been, in the earlier studies, we've been noticing how Boaz the farmer and Ruth the worker exemplify how followers of the Lord should act.

[2 : 37] How they should be industrious, how they should be unafraid of hard work. There is a rightness, a fitness, in doing all we can.

There is a dignity attaching to work. I think Professor Murray in his book, Principles of Conduct, has an excellent piece on the dignity of work.

And he looks at it in the pre-fall state of things. And it reminds us that God made our first parents to be at one with their environment, and yet to work in that context.

There was something right and proper about it. So, sit still, rest, wait, be quiet, never means when God speaks, do nothing.

But you see, what is here, and we were thinking about this too, is a focus on doing things in a balanced way. We saw last time in our study about the rightness of guarding the good name of our neighbour and ourselves.

[3 : 57] And we saw in earlier studies that it was right to do all we can to improve the spiritual and the temporal well-being both of our neighbour and ourselves.

We saw these in the earlier studies. But we have to admit, if we're honest, that sometimes in our zeal to see things happen in the work of God, we ratchet up our activity and we strive to push the work forward, actually to push God forward, to make things happen in our own time.

Hurrying, as it were, the Lord, to do what we want done. And the more we have a heart for seeing people's lives changed and people brought into the kingdom, the more susceptible we are to falling foul of this problem.

It happens to me frequently. It probably happens to some of you, if not all of you. It's as if we want to push God along. We want Him to get on with it.

We want to get on with it at our pace. And have it done in our time. And in this passage, you see, Ruth, as we shall see in a moment, was a bit like that.

[5 : 22] She wanted what she wanted, and she wanted it done as soon as possible. But God reminds us, and He reminds us in this passage, that He will do things in His own time and in His own way.

And He requires us to wait upon Him, to sit still, to rest in Him. Not to be full of agitation and anxiety about things and pushing on.

And sometimes He just makes us stop. And we can't go forward. We just have to wait. It was, some of you know Milton's poem on his blindness, it was Milton who said, very rightly I think, there are those who serve by simply standing and waiting.

Not waiting and standing in idleness, but in a spirit of readiness to do God's bidding. And I want us as we look at this to think about two things in particular, and then to notice some points within these headings.

First of all, the biblical principle enshrined in the words, sit still. That is to say, there is a fundamental, a basic truth here, which we are to grasp and act upon properly.

[6 : 56] Now you see in the context, Ruth was being told by her mother-in-law, wait, sit still.

Boaz will settle the matter. Boaz will go and get it seen to, who is going to be your kinsman-redeemer. Now it is abundantly clear to us in the study and in this chapter, that as far as Ruth was concerned, she had weighed the thing prayerfully, as a spiritual woman, and she wanted Boaz to be that kinsman-redeemer.

We saw that she went to the threshing floor, verse 9, and he said, Who are you? So she answered, I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a kinsman-redeemer.

A close relative, specifically a goel, someone who can act as my kinsman-redeemer. And it was clear that Boaz knew this was something that she had considered.

She didn't opt for a young man, whether rich or poor. He says that in the next verse. And therefore, having made up her mind, and having put the thing to Boaz, within the framework of the law of God, and not in any brash and assy-like way, we saw that, she was now eager that the will of God be settled, and that soon enough, she would have her kinsman-redeemer, and her husband.

[8 : 39] But you see, Ruth, as we've seen, was a busy type of person. She was up and doing, having done one thing, on to the next thing, on to the next thing.

There was no stopping her. And so to be told to wait, and sit still, was not an easy thing to have to do. I'm seeing some, some wee smiles here, and this is obviously connecting.

Good. Because some of us are like that. We can't sit still. We have to be doing something. Our whole life is within the framework, of seeking to do our best for the Lord.

And even in the little things. Yes, dish washing too. We can't sit still. We need to be doing. And Ruth was like that.

You see, there was much to be done. She wanted to get on. Perhaps she reasoned like this. Well, I can, I can work and wait. She wanted to be going.

[9 : 42] But you see, Naomi was ahead of her. Naomi said, no, no. Sit still. Act in faith. Wait on the Lord. Boaz will do, what has to be done.

And so for this faithful, and diligent young woman, to sit still, literally, literally to sit still, was a difficult thing to do. It was not an easy option for her.

But you see, she had to learn. As indeed, we all have to learn. We're thinking about this recently, in connection with, remember on Sunday, Ecclesiastes 3.1.

There's a time for everything under heaven. A season. God has appointed for every activity. And, Ruth had to learn that.

Notice what I said. There's a time for every activity. And sitting still, and waiting, and waiting quietly upon the Lord, is an activity.

[10 : 46] It's not doing nothing. It's waiting upon him. It's a believing activity. It was then. It is for the Christian now.

There is a place for quiet, prayerful reflection, in order to simply wait upon the will of God. For God to open the way. And it seems to me that, excuse me, if you study the life of Jesus, you've got it perfectly there.

He was busy, industrious, sometimes exhausted, with his days, that he spent himself in, and poured himself out. It's where preachers get, that excuse for doing too much.

The Saviour poured himself out. All was about his father's business. All with an eye to, glorifying his father.

And, and he went about, we're told, doing good. We're told by John, in the gospel, we've got, we've got snippets. In the four gospels, we've got snippets, of what he did.

[12:07] We've got a wee, skim through the miracles. We've not got them all. John tells us, at the end of his book, well, the penultimate chapter, he tells us, that if all the things, that Jesus did, were recorded, I suppose, he says, there would be no room, for the books, that would be written.

That's busyness. That's industry. And yet, that same Jesus, who, said, I must work, the works of him, who sent me, while it is day, the night comes, that same Jesus, was found, long before others, were, were opening their eyes, he was found, alone with his, father.

Quietly, waiting upon him. Sitting still. Seeking. It's a most, profound thing. That, when Jesus, was, to appoint, his apostles, he spent the whole night, in prayer.

What was that all about? Even thought about it. What was it about? Sitting still, before his father, waiting upon him, in all that, intense activity.

And you see, he, he points us, in the right direction. He shows us, there is a very, important place, for sitting still, for waiting upon God.

[13:41] But it's not, the waiting of the sloth. And this kind of waiting, sitting still, is not to encourage, slothfulness.

Rather, if it's approached, by faith, it generates hope, and action will follow. So then, for those, like Ruth, who are eager, to work, and to be active, as a rule, that's the way they are.

Anything, that hinders that, is a bit of a bind. It's a bit of a pain. But you see, it is true, that often, in the life of faith, in following Jesus, we are called, to sit still, to wait, not to be driven, by our anxieties, to see something happen.

And I know that, very well. It's perhaps, one of the most difficult things, that the Savior, lays upon us, is to wait upon him, to wait his time.

We want the thing, then, yesterday. And you see, Ruth was a bit like that. She wanted it, then, and tested.

[15:08] And so, we are to learn, with her, not to be, of an anxious mind, not to be driven, and urged on, by our anxieties, but to wait, upon God, to genuinely, sit still, as it were, in our hearts, waiting upon him, with this, holy activity.

There's an interesting reference, although, it touches, it cuts two ways, it speaks literally, of the Israelites, but it also speaks, of a state of mind, too, of the acting, of faith.

You remember, when they, had come out, of Egypt, you find it, in Exodus 14, from verse 13, you remember, that they were, they went down, towards the peninsula, out on the, the hook of the Red Sea, there, and, and as they went out there, Pharaoh's armies, his chariots, followed them, and they were, they were caught, in that peninsula.

They had nowhere, to go, except the sea, into the sea. And they were terrified. And they began, to complain bitterly. And the word, that God gave, to Moses, for the people, was, stand still, and see, the salvation, of God.

And, this is relevant, to what we're looking at. There are times, when we simply, have to stop, and wait upon God, with the activity, of faith. Naomi, saw it that way, and she, encouraged Ruth, to wait, for God's purpose, to ripen.

[16:58] You see, more effort, in her case, would have, resulted, in a simple, waste of energy. energy. And, it would, run her, in her nervous system, into, exhaustion.

In anxious care, she would have been, riddled, as it were, with that anxious care. And, so we are wise, when having, done our best, in Judy's path, and she did, we saw that.

When she did, her best, in Judy's path, she simply, now, had to wait, upon God. To sit still, to, to wait, for the Lord, to move.

He would move, things on. And, I think it's good, for us, to remember that, and, probably this, speaks to, most of us, if not all of us, but, when we're, urgent, and eager, to be about, the master's business, and we, we want to see, things happen, and we're, we're pushing ourselves, we're straining, every nerve, in whatever, aspect of the work, we're engaged in.

It's good, and sobering, to remind ourselves, I'm going to borrow, from Milton again, here, he says this, he says, God does not, need, man's, works, or his own, gifts.

[18:28] They also serve, who only, stand, and wait. He doesn't, need, our works, or his own, gifts, in us.

and it's, humbling, and it's, appropriate, to remember that. God will move, and God will act, according to his own, holy, and wise counsel, and will not, budge him.

and that's what, essentially, Naomi told Ruth. Of course, she's talking about Boaz, but she's talking within the framework, of God at work, in their lives.

After and all, did not Boaz say to, to Ruth, where is it, verse 13 there, but if, the second part of it, but if he, that is the closer, kinsman, does not want, to perform the duty, of the redeemer, for you, then, I will perform, the duty for you, as the Lord, lives.

There, these folks are working, within the framework, of trusting in God. The God who acts, for those, who wait for him. And Naomi wisely says, to Ruth, wait, sit still.

[20 : 01] When we act, upon this, biblical principle, with a, a spiritual understanding, of the way, God's, God operates, then our anxious, agitation of spirit, will subside.

Now that's not, something we learn once, and then it's finished. We learn it again, and again. Because we, we are anxious, to see things happen.

We get agitated, in our spirits. We run, hither and thither. And the more, we recognize, the importance, of, of, understanding, this principle, and acting upon it, the more, we'll experience, that calmness, of spirit, that readiness, to wait, upon God, and to cast, our anxieties, upon him.

And that brings us, to the second, thing I want us, to look at, for a wee while, and that is, simply the biblical, reason, for waiting, upon God. Well, we've anticipated, it a little, I know, but, I want to look, more closely, at this sitting still.

Sitting still, is a realization, that God's time, is best. That's easy to say. That's so easy, to say.

[21 : 36] If, you're thinking, about church growth, party free, church growth, Presbyterian, Glasgow, and Argyll, church growth, free church growth, in Scotland, Christian church growth, in Scotland, it's not so easy, to say, God's time, is best.

Because, we think, it's long past time. We would, you go further, than the psalmist, Lord, it's time, for thee to work, for the people, have made void, thy law.

We would say, oh yes, we would. We would say, Lord, it's long past time. See what I mean? No, no. We have to recognize, we have good reason, for waiting upon God, because God's time, is best. In serving the Lord, as we've been saying, we want to see, things happen.

The things, that we want to happen, we want to happen, not tomorrow, but we want, them to happen yesterday. Such is our anxiety, such is our burden, and longing.

[22 : 52] And as we've said already, Ruth was so eager, to see this matter, resolved, that she could not, easily wait. And yet, Naomi says to her, sit still, until, I like that, sit still, until, until you know, the outcome, until you know, how the thing, will fall out.

That's how it is, literally, in the original, until you know, how the thing, or the lot, falls. The word behind this, has to do with the lot.

Do you remember, when, Jonah, was discovered, in the ship, in the storm, and the, and the, sailors, were looking for somebody, to blame for the storm.

It was such a violent storm. They just knew, with their instinct, perhaps with their superstition too, but they knew, somebody was responsible, for this, on that ship.

And they got lots, and they drew lots, and the lot, fell upon Jonah. And Jonah, owned up, I'm your problem. All this has come upon you, because of me.

[24 : 04] And you've got to, check me into the sea. The lot fell, upon Jonah. And Naomi says to Ruth, sit still, until you see, how the thing falls out, till you see, how the lot will fall.

There's a really interesting, reference, in this connection, in Proverbs 16, and verse 33. It says this, the lot is cast, into the lap, but the decision, is from the Lord.

Now, don't get any ideas, about the national lottery. This is not a plug, for getting your national lottery tickets. It's a simple statement of fact, that even, even in the drawing of the lot, even in the casting, of the lot into the lap, the decision, is of the Lord.

Such, is his involvement, in providence, that even, little things like that, happen by his decision.

Ruth, think about it, how involved, the Lord is, in your life. friend, here tonight, think about, how the Lord, is involved, in your life.

[25 : 39] If the lot, is cast, into the lap, and the decision, is of the Lord. The decision, is of the Lord. Who gets what? Well, isn't it wonderful, that he is, so, intimately involved, in what goes on.

You remember, the disciples said, on one occasion, on the lake, when that furious storm, came down, Master, don't you care, that we are going, to perish?

What a thing, to say. What a thing, to say to him, who cares, who really cares, who invites us, to cast our cares, upon him.

Yes, the little things, of life, as well as, the bigger things. Ruth, sit still, wait upon, the Lord's time. Boaz, will do, what he has to do. And what we have here, therefore, is, the reason, why we can, wait upon God. The season, of fulfillment, is his.

[26 : 52] I remember, in happier days, John Harding, sent me, a, a card, you remember, John Harding, was in, Shettleston, and when I went, seconded, by the free church, into, CWI, I was, given, a, a, a, kind of, induction, into the work, we, we laugh about it, ourselves, kept calling it, set aside.

Anyway, I, I was, inducted, in a manner, of speaking, to that work. And John Harding, sent me a card, and on it, in Hebrew, was, the verse, the man, who goes forth, sowing the seed, and weeping, shall come, shall come again, rejoicing, bearing, his sheaves.

A lot of years, have passed, since then. But do we say, God's got it wrong? I don't think so.

No, we recognize, his timing. We recognize, his wisdom, and his way, and more particularly, his rights.

If our desire, is God honoring, he will fulfill, the desire of her heart, in its season. Ruth's desire, was God honoring, to have Boaz, as her kinsman, redeemer, and husband, wasn't something, that, was superficial.

[28 : 38] She felt, a deep constraint, yes, the constraint of love, but, she felt, a constraint, that was deeper, desire, and, her desire, was God honoring, and God, would see, that desire, fulfilled.

We can rest, on that. This is, this is the reason, for waiting upon God. He has his time, of fulfilling, what is God honoring. If you think, about the natural world, that Ruth, was involved, in the gathering, of the harvest, she was involved, in the gathering, of the wheat harvest, and the barley harvest, but it was after, long months, of waiting.

And this, biblical principle, too, requires those, involved, in seeking, and winning souls, to Christ. To wait, upon the Lord.

To sit still. To keep calm. To keep trusting. To keep praying. To keep working. In a controlled manner.

Not rushing, and over anxious, as sadly, were wont to be. So care ridden. So filled, with agitation, in her spirits.

[30 : 05] Did not our Lord, say to Martha, Martha, Martha, you're, cumbered about, with Mitch, K, you're fretting, and anxious, you're running, all over the place, Mary, has chosen, the better part.

Mary's got, a better angle, on things. She sits, and listens, and speaks, to Jesus. and perhaps we need to do more of that waiting upon him waiting his time bringing our needs to him and asking him to act for us as those who wait upon him Ruth says Naomi effectively let God have his way the time is set and Boaz will do what he has to do and you'll see the outcome and you'll be glad and of course the story goes on and he did, he fulfilled his task and Boaz of course acted he's already told that how he feels about it he loves it his desire is for it to marry it he will not rest says Naomi until he finishes this business now why shouldn't we lift all that onto the higher plane surely Christ acts on our behalf he acts on behalf of his own people in their service to him he loves us he has betrothed us to himself let him then do his work in us and for us and through us and let us rest upon him sit still be rid of anxious care and let's be frank most of us are full of it concerning the work wait patiently for him do not fret said the psalmist it only causes harm and at least we can pray for the wisdom and the patience to see when we need to cease from rushing around and fretting as if everything depended upon us

God does not need man's work or his own gifts they serve who only stand and wait and it may be of course that you're here tonight and you're happy to pass that on and you're thinking well the members got it tonight good I'm not there yet so I'm exempt don't think it don't think like that rather act upon the word we've been looking at act upon this great principle wait upon God we sing it often I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear was it at the waiting of the sloth hanging upside down at length to me he did incline what he inclined oh yes my voice and cry to hear oh so you were not just waiting sitting still doing nothing oh no no no

I was praying I was pleading I was begging and at length he listened or rather he answered he'd been listening all the time but he answered my voice and cry to hear what did he do he took me from a fearful pit and from the mighty clay and he set me upon that blessed rock Christ Jesus my dear friend where you are tonight fill your own mouth with these pleas for spiritual deliverance and for the grace to wait always upon his will Amen So Amen to you