

Entering a Deeper Relationship with God - Part 2

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[0 : 0 0] All right, well, good morning again and welcome to faith. We're so glad that you're here together with us. We are continuing our study through the book of Ruth. And as we've we've looked the last time we were together at verses one through five of Ruth chapter number three, we are seeing the way Ruth is responding to Boaz. And the last time we were together, we saw how Ruth prepared herself to meet with Boaz. And then in this portion of chapter three that we're going to be looking at this morning, we're going to be seeing a little bit more. This is part two of the last time we were together. And since this book, the book of Ruth is really, in fact, more than a love story between Ruth and Boaz, it's really a picture of the relationship of Jesus Christ and the church.

Jesus Christ and the body of Christ. And we are looking the last time we looked at ways we could prepare ourselves to enter into a deeper fellowship with God. And this morning, we're going to be continuing with that. And as we this morning, we continue with the midnight meeting, the story of Ruth and Boaz. So let's take a look at the following verses this morning, beginning with Ruth chapter three.

And verses six through nine, Bible says, so she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had instructed her. Verse number seven, 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 and said, I'm Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing for you are a close relative.

Again, the last time we were together, we looked at how Ruth prepared herself. Naomi had told Ruth that she needed to go and present herself to Boaz, Boaz being a near kinsman who could redeem the family name, redeem property, and could ultimately be able to marry Ruth and take care of her, take her under his wing and under his care, and as well be able to take care of Naomi, her mother-in-law, because she was a widow. Now this morning, as we're continuing with this, we see that the things that she continued to do in this chapter, and what we see next in these verses, first of all, is that Ruth submitted herself to Boaz. Now this was during the harvest season that where we see ourselves in chapter number three. And the harvest season for the Jews was an especially joyful time. We see that in Isaiah chapter nine, verse three, Isaiah chapter 16, and verse number 10. And that's the way God wanted it. God wanted his people to be joyful and filled with joy when it was time for the harvest. As a matter of fact, he said in Deuteronomy 16, the Lord your God will bless you with increase and in all the works of your hands, therefore you shall surely rejoice. So it was a great time to be had during the harvest time. They were excited because they were going to be able to fill their barns with grain. They were going to be able to have money because they will be able to bring the grain to the marketplace.

Now most people today live lives separated from the sources of their daily bread and don't really understand the hardships that farmers go through to bring the food all the way to the table. And it might be that our prayers, our table prayers would be more joyful and maybe more grateful if we realize all that it took to get our food from the farm all the way to our table. But in this period of time, the harvesting and the threshing were cooperative measures. As a matter of fact, the whole community used the same threshing floor for the most part. And it was typically an elevated platform or something, an area that was a flatter part higher on a hill where the wind could come through. And what they did was they threshed the grain sometimes with oxen. Sometimes they beat the stalks upon the ground. And what they would do is they would take the grain and they would throw it up into the air.

[5 : 01] And normally they waited until the evening time when the wind had picked up a little bit, the breeze had picked up. And as they would throw the grain up in the air, the wind would take the chaff, the husks, and the grain would fall back to the ground. And then the grain would be heaped up, carried away, either to be brought to the marketplace or for storage. And as we look at Ruth's plan, it involved part of this process. Because typically what happened was the men stayed by the threshing floor overnight so they could guard the grain, they could guard this whole process.

And we kind of wonder why Ruth did it exactly this way. Now we alluded to it in the past few times together where this was the way God had designed it. And this was part of the courting process in this day for a kinsman redeemer and for someone to, for the woman to ask for this protection and for the kinsman redeemer to be able to take her under his wing. So we might ask, why didn't Ruth wait for Boaz to propose to her? We say, well, it was kind of a little bit forward, right? For Ruth to do it this way. But we notice Boaz's statement in chapter 3 and verse number 10.

And there's really a couple of reasons. In verse number 10 suggests the first reason. First reason was he fully expected that Ruth would marry one of the young eligible bachelors. Because Boaz was quite a bit older than Ruth. Ruth was a young woman. We see that in chapter 4 and verse number 12.

Evidently, he concluded he was out of the running. And so there was no point in proposing to her, expecting she would marry a younger man. But the second reason is there was a nearer kinsman redeemer, meaning there was another man who was a closer relative to Naomi and therefore also closer to Ruth because Ruth was her daughter-in-law married to one of Naomi's sons. And so Boaz is thinking, either she's going to marry one of the younger eligible bachelors in town, or the nearer kinsman redeemer was going to come and was going to take this opportunity for this other nearer kinsman redeemer to take the first option on Naomi and her property. But what Ruth did was she forced the issue.

And she forced Boaz to act. Now put yourself in Boaz's place. You know, life is full of rude awakenings, as one cartoon canine says quite often. As we think about it, Adam went to sleep and woke up, not realizing he had had surgery and woke up a married man. Imagine his rude awakening. We also hear of Jacob who went to sleep and in the morning woke up to the wrong woman. And if you read that Bible story about Jacob and what he worked for, for his bride, ended up getting the older sister first and ended up having to work extra seven years for the one he really wanted. So a rude awakening.

[8 : 47] But when Boaz asked, and we see here in chapter number three, when he asked, he startled awake, he realizes there's someone at his feet, and he asks, who are you? And what we see the way she answers is, she answers, it's Ruth. Now you notice she doesn't say it's Ruth the Moabitess. A number of times Ruth is named here in the book. A number of times she's, she is named as Ruth the Moabitess. Sometimes just simply Ruth. But what she says here is she calls herself the handmaid of Boaz. So she is rena, or she is taking on a new identity. She was making a new beginning. Twelve times she's named here in this book. And five of those references is that she was from Moabitess. But she calls herself your servant. So she was prepared for what Boaz was going to do.

Now, you might say, well, that was a kind of a strange way of proposing. Well, to spread one's mantle or one's cloak over a person meant to claim that person for yourself. We see that in Ezekiel chapter 16, verse 8. We see that also in 1 Kings 19, 19, particularly in marriage. Now the word translated skirt in some translations could also mean wing. And we look at the Bible talks about that we are covered or we are taken in under God's wing as a chick is under a hen. And in this way, this was a very, very clear picture of Ruth that was going to be taken in under the protection of Boaz. And now she could be under his wing, her, ultimately her beloved husband. Now this was a very, very beautiful picture of marriage. He was taking her under his protection and he was going to be taking care of her. So number one, Ruth submitted herself to Boaz. And in the grand picture of what we see in the way we relate to our heavenly father, that's a picture that, that we are to submit to him.

And God, the father, like a hen gathers his chicks and places them under his wing. And we are under his protection and under his care. So she submitted first to Boaz. And secondly, what we see is Ruth listened to Boaz. She listened to Boaz. Let's look at verses 10 through 14.

Then he said, he continues on and he says, 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. And

here we see where he realizes that she's a lot younger than he is. He said, whether poor or rich, and now my daughter, do not fear. He calms her fears. Don't worry. He says, I will do for you all that you request.

He knew what she was asking. He knew what this process entailed. And so he says, don't fear. Don't worry. I'll take care of you. I will make sure that you are taken care of for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman. Now it is true that I am a close relative.

[12 : 45] Then he goes on to say, however, he says, there is a relative closer than I or closer than I am. 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 her. Then he said, do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor. So what we see here is that in response of Boaz to Ruth, we see how the Lord responds to us when we approach him and when we come to him. And just as Boaz is speaking to Ruth, he says, don't worry. Don't fear. I'll take care of you. He says, don't worry.

I will make sure that you're taken care of. He says, I am not the closest relative. There is a closer relative, but I will make sure first thing in the morning, I will see to it that I give him the opportunity to either accept the responsibility or to pass on it. But either way, you will be taken care of. Because we also know that the book of Ruth is a picture of the way God relates to us, I believe we see some things here that we can correlate, that we can see how God is speaking to us. And as Ruth listened to Boaz, since Ruth's experience with Boaz is a picture of Christ's relationship with us, what does his word tell us? Well, the first thing God's word tells us through this account of Ruth is that God accepts us. You know, there are many who go through life wondering if they're okay with God, wondering if they're accepted by him. They may be thinking, maybe they've done things that were too wicked or too bad for God to accept them. Well, the good news is God accepts us the way we are. And he cleans us. He redeems us. He cleanses us through not only the blood of Jesus Christ, but also through his word. He accepts us. Verse number eight. 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? She answers, I'm Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing for you're 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. Boaz might have refused to do anything for Ruth. Could have been that he would have said, I don't have time and this is not my responsibility. But in his love for her, he accepts her. He accepts the proposal and he promises to her that he will take care of her. He says, don't worry. Don't be afraid. I will take care of you. And he called her my daughter. We see that in chapter two and verse number eight. He, he even pronounces a blessing on her. And our, our heavenly father's looking for a closer relationship with us. And as we come close, as we draw closer to him, we shouldn't be afraid of him not accepting us. See our heavenly father and our Lord Jesus Christ is, uh, they're seeking a closer relationship with us and we shouldn't be afraid to draw near to him and to their love. Uh, if only we could realize in a small way, what our kinsman redeemer, Jesus Christ has done for us. I believe we would forsake everything else and we would enjoy his fellowship because he accepts us. And that's part of worship. That's part of our coming to him and realizing we're accepted and we don't have to worry. We don't have to fear. So he accepts us. The second thing is he assures us. We see that in verses 11 through verse 13 in the way Boaz assured Ruth. And he says, now my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, everything you ask. He says,

I'll do for all the people of the town. No, that you are a virtuous woman. Now it's true that I'm a close relative, but he says, there's a relative even closer than I am. Then he says, stay this night in the morning. It shall be that if he will not, that if he will perform the duty of a close relative, then he says, 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. Now when the midnight darkness, Ruth couldn't see the face of Boaz, but she could hear his voice. And this voice of Boaz spoke loving assurance to her. Think about this. Our assurance is not in our feelings.

[18 : 21] Our assurance isn't how we, how we feel when we wake up in the morning. Is God accepting us today? Are we good with God? Are we right with God? Because our assurance lies not in our feelings or our circumstances, but his word. And it's like the old hymn says, how firm a

foundation, ye saints of the Lord is laid for your foundation or is laid for your faith in his excellent word.

We know that it's not up to what we can do, but God will take care of us and he assures us. During the Boxer Rebellion, when the workers of China Inland Mission were experiencing quite a bit of suffering, the founder, James Hudson Taylor, then he was late, he was in his late seventies by this time, said to a colleague, he says, I cannot read, I cannot think, I cannot even pray, but I can trust. And isn't that so true? It doesn't matter how we feel. It doesn't matter our abilities, but all, if all we can do is trust, then that's all we need to do. Romans 10, 17. So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by word of God. So we, he tells us in his word, we can have faith and his faith, his word bolsters our faith. And what Boaz says to Ruth, fear not. It's a word of assurance that the Lord, that God has given to many of his followers, to Abraham, Genesis 15, 1, he says, don't be afraid, to Isaac, Genesis 26, 24, to Jacob, Moses, the nation of Israel, Exodus 14, 13, to Joshua, to King Jehoshaphat, the Jewish remnant remaining in the land. He says, don't fear, don't be afraid to Daniel, to Joseph, to Zacharias, to Mary, to the shepherds, to the apostle John. And you and I can stand with these giants of the faith and can say, the Lord is my helper. I will not fear as we read in Hebrews 13, 6. So we don't have to worry. He accepts us. And not only did Boaz calm Ruth's fears, but he also made a promise to her concerning her future. He said, I will do everything you say. I will do everything that you request in verse number 11. And we know this, that whatever God starts, he finishes. And whatever God does, God does well. Philippians chapter 1, verse 6, also Mark 7, 37.

And it wasn't Ruth's obligation to do for herself. It was only what Boaz could do for her. You see, Ruth was in a difficult situation. She was a widow. She had no external means of support.

[21 : 32] But now Boaz was going to take it up and be able to take care of her. Now, what seemed to Naomi, a simple procedure, Boaz is telling Ruth, and I think he's preparing her, that there's going to be a little bit more involved in this process. There's a closer relative. I'm going to have to go to him.

And there was a process for this as well. And it was an interesting process. But he would have to go to her. And he would have this nearer, this closer relative would have to reject this responsibility. And then it would become Boaz's responsibility or Boaz's responsibility for him to either accept or to reject. And what we see is a picture of our redemption in Jesus Christ.

There was a way for this to be done. And what we see is God obeyed his own law in the way that he has taken care of us when he accomplished our salvation in Jesus Christ. Because the Bible said, the soul that sins, it shall die.

And in order for God to be able to redeem us, he had to do it according to his own law and to do it according to his own word. God didn't seek a way to evade it. But what he did was he did the only thing that he could do, send his only son, Jesus Christ, to become a human being, to die on the cross in our place. And so he was completely justified in saving us because someone died in our place, the only one who was eternal and had no sin. And so he wasn't dying for his own sin. He was dying for the sin of the entire human race, Jesus Christ. So God did, God did the only thing he could do was give up his son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place. And we know that there was no other kinsman. There was no other that could take our place. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven whereby, or given among men whereby we must be saved. We see that in the book of Acts chapter 4 and verse number 12. He took care of us. Then we go on. We see Ruth received gifts from Boaz. And we see the correlation how God has taken care of us as well, the same way that Ruth is being taken care of by Boaz. We see in verse 15, and he said, bring the shawl that is on you and hold it. And before she left that morning, he said, and when she had 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.

[24 : 50] Now, during her days as a gleaner, Ruth had received some generous treatment from Boaz. He said, don't go to any other field. Stay in my field. He had told his, his reapers, his harvesters, don't bother her. Let her gather. As a matter of fact, I want you to drop more, and I want you to even leave some of the, leave some of the stalks for her. And so his workers allowed her to follow the harvesters.

They protected her from harm. They deliberately dropped sheaves for her to pick up. Boaz had even shared the noon meal with her, even taken some off his plate and gave to her. And on that first day of gleaning, Ruth had gone home with a little more than half a bushel of grain. Now, what Boaz does is he fills her cloak, he fills her shawl with more grain, about two weeks worth of grain. He didn't want her to have to go out and work in the fields like a poor laborer. He said, don't worry, I'm going to take care of you. Boaz not only calmed Ruth's fears, he said, don't worry, I'll see to it that you're taking care of. He also met her present need in a gracious way so that she wouldn't have to work for it. And he provided that for her. She hadn't asked him for anything, but he gave her the grain because he loved her. He was about to marry her and he didn't want his prospective bride gleaning in the fields like a poor laborer. But then we come to verse 16, or we see back in verse 16, when she gets back home, her mother-in-law says, is that you, my daughter? Now, this statement has caused some differences of opinion in the commentators and the Bible scholars. Different translators have translated in a different way. And they're wondering, well, why in the world is Naomi asking her daughter-in-law who she is? She ought to know her by now, right? Well, I think based on what she did or based upon the mission that she was sent on, and when she comes back, Naomi, by asking, is that you, my daughter? I think, in other words, what she was saying was, are you still Ruth the Moabitess, or are you the prospective Mrs. Boaz? Is that you, my daughter? And she was wondering, that was kind of the open-ended question, of did it work? And is that you? So Ruth remembers Boaz's words as he had done before, and she shared with Naomi all that Boaz had done, all that Boaz has said. And she also showed Naomi the generous gift that Boaz had provided for her. You see, a man who sends a generous gift to his prospective mother-in-law is certainly a good choice for a husband, right? And so he says, don't go empty-handed back to Naomi. I think he might have been trying to make some brownie points with Naomi. So Naomi could no longer say, as she said in chapter 1, verse 21, remember? She says, I've come home empty-handed. Well, Naomi is no longer empty-handed because she is about to be taken care of by this nearer kinsman redeemer. And so Ruth also comes home with her shawl full of about two weeks worth of food. They were full because of the grace of this kinsman redeemer. Ruth's faith and obedience had brought about a complete transformation in their lives, and now they were living by grace like we saw a couple of weeks ago, that we need to be willing to live by the grace of God because it's not how, it's not what we are able to do, but it's what God does for us. And then the next thing that we see as we're ready to close is Ruth waited. Ruth waited for Boaz to work. You see that in verse number 18. Then she said, sit still, my daughter. Good advice. She says, don't go ahead.

[29 : 37] Don't run ahead and try to check on Boaz to make sure he's doing what he said he would do. She said, no. She says, 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. Hebrews 6, 12, 10, 36 is through faith and patience that we inherit the promises, the Bible says. It is not by doing it ourselves. It is through faith and patience. And since Naomi and Ruth believed that Boaz would accomplish what he set out to do, they waited patiently until they received word that he had done what he said he was going to do and that hopefully she was soon going to be a bride. Psalm 90, 37, 5, Bible says, commit your way to the Lord. Trust also in him and he will do it. Now that's his word for us. Commit your way to the Lord.

Trust also in him and he will do it. Now I'll confess that waiting is not one of my spiritual gifts. I don't like waiting in line. I don't like waiting for a table at a restaurant. I don't like waiting for a delayed flight. I just don't like waiting. And probably none of us here do. I'm an activist by saying, I don't like waiting for a while. I don't like waiting for a while. I don't like waiting for him. You know what? Let's just make something happen. And maybe that's why the Lord has arranged for me to wait more often than not, because it's against my nature. And he wants us to wait for him.

He sometimes organizes our life in such a way that we're forced to wait on him. And to see that it's not our doing. It's up to him that we are to wait patiently for him. Now during those times, there are three phrases that come back to my mind from God's word. And the first are the words of Ruth, sit still. Sit still. Then in Exodus 14, stand still. And in Psalm 46, 10, be still.

Well, sit still was Naomi's counsel to Ruth. And I believe it was wise counsel, because it wasn't her responsibility to go out and to make sure Boaz was doing what he said he would do. Ruth wouldn't have accomplished anything by doing that, because we know that God will take care of doing his

will.

And Boaz was doing the same thing. But our human nature gets nervous. And we want to help God out. So we try to take matters into our own hands very often. And we try to make things work out. But what normally happens make matters worse. And so the advice of sit still, I think, is something that we need to take to heart. Second thing is that that has helped me out is stand still. This was the the advice or this was the command given to Moses and the people of Israel when the Egyptian army was pursuing them. Now, imagine how difficult that would have been to do. Here you have the entire Egyptian army on your heels. And God says, stand still. What? Wait a minute, God. That's counterintuitive. That that just doesn't seem to be great advice. But God says, stand still. There was no need to panic. God had matters in hand. Then the Lord commanded the people eventually in Exodus 14, 15, okay, go forward. He had them stand still for a while. He had matters under control. Then he says, go forward. And then he led them safely through the sea. So God said, stand still. I'm still working.

[33 : 53] And then when the time was right, he said, okay, now's the time to go. There's a time to stand. There's a time to march. And we must be alert to know when is the right time to do both.

And then the one God's used more often than not is be still. Psalm 46, 10, be still and know that I am God. I've had to pray that prayer often in waiting. Be still and know that I'm God. I've got the matter under control. Don't worry. I'm taking care of it. Don't run ahead and try to make things work. Don't try to get in my way. Just be still and know that I am God. This is a wonderful antidote for a restless spirit to be able to quote that to yourself. Be still and know that I am God. Take your hands off. Relax. That's what that word in the Hebrew translated. Be still is literally take your hands off. Take your hands off the wheel and relax. And it's so easy for us to get impatient with the Lord when it's not things aren't going as quickly as we think it should. But he's God and his hand can accomplish the impossible. Often our hands get in the way and make matters worse.

Well, worse. And so what Boaz was doing was Boaz was busy working for Ruth. Naomi was confident that Boaz was going to do what he set out to do and was not going to rest until he has settled the matter. She said, being confident of this very thing, that which he has begun a good work in you will will perform and complete until the day of Jesus Christ. God's word says in Philippians chapter 1 verse 6 that we can be confident of this very thing that what God has started in your life, he won't rest until he brings it to pass until he will complete it.

Even if we have to wait until the day that Jesus Christ returns. It encourages our heart to know that Jesus is working for us and he will work unceasingly for us while he's there at the right hand of God. He's working us, seeking to conform us to his perfect will.

[36 : 17] As we seek to grow into a deeper fellowship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we conclude with these two questions. The first, have you put yourself at the feet of our Lord, the Lord of the harvest, and are you trusting him to work?

Have we submitted ourselves to our Lord and say, God, my life is in your hands? What you choose to do is up to you. I surrender my life to you. And then secondly, what evidence of our trust will be our willingness to sit still and let him have his way?

So have we submitted ourselves and placed ourselves at the feet of the Lord of the harvest? And is there evidence in our life that we're doing so?

Because we're sitting still and we're trusting him to do his work in our lives. As we've seen in the life of Ruth and in her submission to Boaz, she listened to Boaz.

She heard that he had accepted her. She saw that he was going to work things out. He gave gifts to her just by virtue of grace.

[37 : 40] And she was instructed to sit still while Boaz took care of the matter. So are we willing to do the same as we are growing in our relationship and as we are growing in a deeper fellowship with our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ?

Let's pray. Father, this morning, we're so thankful for you doing your will in our lives. And Lord, we know that you are taking care of us. We thank you for being powerful enough to accomplish the impossible.

So help us as we sit still. Help us as we stand still. And help us as we be still.

And know that you are our God and you will take care of us. Lord, we thank you for what you're going to do in our lives today. We pray all of this in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen.