

A Proposal to a Redeemer

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[0 : 00] Please turn in your text to Ruth chapter 3, Ruth chapter 3. I'm going to take a little bit of a different tact on this sermon this morning.

We're actually going to go read, we're going to read through it together throughout the sermon and I want to add relevant comments and the reason I want to do so is that this is a text that is so full of cultural and implications and the symbolism there is so incredible that I don't want you to miss it when we go through it.

So as you're turning to Ruth chapter 3, just as many as you know, previous to my life in ministry, I actually had the opportunity to serve as a counter-terrorist agent working for the Canadian government.

Part of my role was to protect Canada and its interests from all enemies, foreign and abroad, in order to protect our freedoms.

What was interesting as one of our first exercises as we were in training was we were given a situation and we were to plan out an operation.

[1 : 23] We were put in different teams and we were asked to evaluate and look at all the different ways that we would go about this operation.

And it was interesting, there was different people from different backgrounds who were just like me, knew some incredibly smart, different lawyers, people who had different backgrounds, good in different areas.

And we'd all come together and we'd write out this document of everything that we would do. We would try to consider every detail, every scenario, every possible outcome.

We all thought we knew what we were doing. What was interesting is at the end of the time, they would bring in senior officers.

And these senior officers would pretty much redo everything that we had worked so hard to do.

[2 : 28] And I was absolutely amazed by how much knowledge and wisdom came with experience. that these senior officers were able to anticipate in work in ways that was so much quicker than what we could do as a team just because of their experience.

When I read Ruth chapter 3, I have every belief that Naomi would have made a fantastic senior officer.

When she comes to this situation with her daughter-in-law, Ruth, she shows complete understanding of the circumstances.

She has an understanding of the individual people. She has an understanding of the customs by which they live under. More importantly, she understands the rules and laws that come to them through the word of God.

And it comes at a focal point that she has a desire to, A, find Ruth a husband, secure a future for herself.

[3 : 46] And little does she know she's actually being used by God to provide the line to Jesus. So please take a look in your Bibles as we turn to look at this incredible chapter.

The goal of this sermon is for us to understand the text and the cultural implications from it. And my prayer is that you would understand the symbolism behind these actions of these Old Testament saints and more importantly, what it says about God.

So that through our understanding, perhaps it will shed some light into our own life and our own situation. Let's begin in verse 1.

Notice it begins, Some interesting things that we need to pull out of this text.

Notice it says then. Another way to describe what that then means is one day. And we take it from the context that this was after the beginning of the work that Ruth had been doing from chapter 2.

[5 : 17] As she had been going out to the fields to glean and to get the food that they most desperately needed. So we have this assumption that if this was the harvest in Israel at that time, it would have lasted anywhere from six to eight weeks.

So when we come to chapter 3, we believe it is essentially six to eight weeks after chapter 2. So then on this one day, notice how Naomi's affections have changed for Ruth.

Before, at the end of chapter 1, she's kind of ignored, not even introduced to the people she comes home to. And now we find her calling her, my daughter, this term of dearness, of affection. It's almost during this time as Ruth has worked and served her, that she has fully embraced Ruth as her own. Now notice when it says, should I seek rest for you?

What she's doing is she's actually, and where we're getting into it, should I find a husband, a home, a place for you with my people?

[6 : 45] Now this is an incredible, huge switch for Naomi. Before, she was kind of taken with herself, not really caring for Ruth.

Now Ruth has become her focus. Rather than just her lot in life, she's now looking towards this daughter-in-law of hers.

I believe it's directly because of chapter 2. We've seen God's goodness, his kindness, shine on them.

Remember in chapter 2, as Ruth, the word it says, as luck would have it, she came to the field of Boaz. In that time, I'm sure a young woman, a young maiden, would have been very cautious about approaching a field, wanting to make sure it was safe, that the landowner honored God's commands, that he would allow foreigners to harvest the food that was left behind by the reapers. So now that she has experienced God's kindness as Ruth continued to bring home food, there's something that God is doing in her heart.

[8 : 09] It's almost he's peeled those layers of bitterness, hurt, anger that have happened in her life. I think this is something that we can directly relate to as we begin to see God's kindness around us as if it's never there, but our eyes are open to it.

We come to a point of confession and repentance of our sin. And God begins taking out that old baggage, what used to hurt us, irritate us, frustrate us, begins to fall away.

We begin to see God's goodness, his love for us. We get to see his work and we, our faith begins to grow in those moments.

Oftentimes, when I meet someone who is struggling with sin, there's usually a complaint or a sadness that perhaps God has forgotten them.

But as we confess and repent and we draw near to him, we understand the words that James speaks, that God draws near to us.

[9 : 27] We understand truths that are eternal. We understand this love and affection that God has for us. I believe this is exactly what Naomi has been experiencing.

As she was selfish, she is now becoming selfless and God is melting that heart that she wanted to call bitter.

Now let's go back to the text, verse 2. It says, Is not Boaz our relative with whose young women you were?

Now, although Scripture doesn't say this implicitly, but I'm going to be certain that every day that Ruth experienced the kindness of Boaz, when she would go home, there would be a conversation with her mother-in-law about Boaz.

I believe the kindness that he displayed would have been overwhelming. That Boaz was so kind in allowing Ruth to work in his fields, they were being poured out with food and grain.

[10 : 36] And in that, God's goodness and kindness was very easy to see. And because of this, Naomi did not have to think too hard on who would be a suitable man for her daughter.

And not only that, he was known relatives as we were introduced in chapter 2. He is a redeemer. We see that from chapter 2, verse 20, where Naomi informs Ruth that Boaz is a redeemer.

So what does that mean to be a redeemer? Now, I need to explain to you there's two differing Middle Eastern Jewish customs that are coming into play in our understanding.

It is the custom of the levir and the goel, which we see translated here as redeemer. Now, the first custom that I want to explain is the custom of the leveret.

And what this means is that if a man were to die without children, the responsibility would be passed on to the man's younger brother, would have the responsibility of marrying his older

brother's wife, who's now a widow.

[12:05] And the first child that they would have would be given in his name. and he would inherit his brother's allotment of the inheritance.

And the children that he would have after would kind of be under his inheritance. And God had set that up to continue each individual line of the family for family protection.

We read this, these instructions in Leviticus 25. Let me just read them to you. There's five verses here. It says, If brothers dwell together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger.

Her husband's brother shall go into her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of the husband's brother to her. And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother.

brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. So God had given them this custom, this command to continue that man's line.

[13:22] Now what we do learn, verse 7, there's actually a warning. If the brother were not to do this, the widow would actually go before the elders of the town where they were and share this with them.

And if the man does not wish to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, my husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel. He will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me. Then it says, then the elders of the city shall call him and speak to him. And if he persists saying, I do not wish to take her, then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face.

And she shall answer and say, so shall it be to the man who does not build up his brother's house. There would be complete and utter shame for not following and taking care of his brother.

So we have that understanding. that is going on here. We also have the understanding of the Goel, that is the Redeemer. And in Israel during that time, every 50 years you had the year of Jubilee.

[14:46] Now you had to understand the most important value that you were given when Moses and the 12 tribes came into Israel, they are all given an allotment of land.

And it would have been every family's responsibility to continue working that land and that would be generating the income whether you've got goats or sheep or grain or barley, whatever you were doing.

Now often what would happen is when you owed money you would give someone a part of that land. Now what's interesting is that at 50 year mark that land would return to the original family line. so that was to continue again the health of that family. Now what's interesting is if you were 10 years in and you lost that land or you were unable to work it and you had to give it away, you've lost 40 years of family wealth that was meant to sustain you to the next generation.

Now what a family member could do if they were demonstrating a profit is that they could go in and buy back that land, pay back that debt so the family could have it so it would be a brother buying it for a brother.

[16:08] So when they call Boaz a redeemer, he follows in the line that he is of the same family which he has every right to perpetuate the line of Elimelech and two, he has the right to buy the land and return it to the family.

So those are two major undercurrents to this whole story that's going on here. So because of these things we now see Naomi going into action and the operation is finding or getting Boaz to love my daughter and marry my daughter Ruth.

believe. So let's take a look at verse two. It continues. If you have the ESV, you're reading it, it says see. He is winnowing.

See is a demure word that is being used here. The word that we would probably use, and I believe the NIV uses it, it's behold or tonight. There's a sense of excitement, an aha moment.

this is the time to strike. It is an opportune time to bring about our desired outcome of seeing Boaz marry Ruth.

[17:33] So here we see the men are winnowing barley. Winnowing is after the harvest, they would take all the kernels to a hard surface, a rock, and often it would be on a hill where the winds would come through, and as they would crush the kernels, dividing the seeds in the shell, the wind would blow the chafe, and they knew that this was one of those nights because it was most likely

windy on that evening.

It would be a breeze going through, and Naomi knowing the customs of the land, and how the men thought, and how wise they were, knew that there would be an opportunity on this night for Operation Rope in Boaz.

So she prepares her daughter. Verse 3, wash, therefore, and anoint and put on your cloak. dog. Now, the NIV uses the words best clothes, and maybe that is not the intended meaning, but what does she want?

She wants her daughter-in-law to be wearing clothes that demonstrate she is no longer mourning after her husband.

[19 : 04] men. So she's going to wear something different, something kind, possibly attractive, but the goal wasn't seductive or any of those type of worldly mechanisms, but it was clothes that would demonstrate that that part of her life is now ended.

And it says, go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the men, the man, being Boaz, until he has finished eating and drinking.

So Naomi, again, is letting her know what is the perfect time. There's a lot of operations in history that we know, especially in war, that were absolute failures because they did not start.

at the right time. Operation Overlord, which is the eventual invasion of Europe in World War II, it was an invasion that was actually put off over a year in waiting to make sure the specific time, weather conditions, the right manpower, the right equipment was all ready to go.

And this is here, is that time for Naomi to lead Ruth in how to begin her operation. Verse 4 and 5, But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies.

[20 : 37] 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.

Now, is Naomi using some kind of word that God has given her that she is able to predetermine what Boaz is going to do?

I believe she has an understanding of God's word. She understands that Boaz has revealed himself to be a man of character, a man of honor.

We read that he is a man who knows God. He's being blessed by God. And she knows that he is going to do the godly thing. So she's sending Ruth into a situation that's going to communicate that one, Ruth is ready to be married.

And two, as we're going to see, that he is in the position, the unique position, to be the one to redeem her. So what's interesting is if you go back to chapter 1, verse 9, Ruth has a prayer, or Naomi has a prayer for her daughters-in-law.

[22 : 05] It says, the Lord grant you may find rest, each of you, in the house of her husband. And what's unique in that prayer is Naomi is now the answer to that prayer.

She is the acting agent of her prayer. And I think there's a lesson for us in this as believers in Christ. As we come to the knowledge of God's word, we understand and we grow in the faith and maturity and understand God's character, we see that God uses active faith for his people in those that take initiatives by God's word.

Because we understand that God is trustworthy, his word is trustworthy, it allows us to act in a way that is consistent and confident with what God's words says.

So we see here that Naomi knew what the word of God said in regards to these things. She understood Boaz to be the kind of man that he was.

[23 : 29] And we're seeing this faith rekindled in her, God's God's God's word in regard to Boaz and Ruth.

Very rarely do we find people who are mistrusting or lacking in faith of God to act in bold faith.

She understood the provision of the law of the kinsman redeemer, gave Naomi the background to act according to how she did. She uses logic.

She uses wisdom. She understood that this young woman Ruth needed a husband and she needed a man who would fulfill the redeemer qualities.

So it's as if she is perfectly walking alongside God's will. I don't know about you but I get asked that question all the time.

[24 : 38] How do I know God's will for my life? It's a big question but a lot of people are seeking what God's unrevealed will is when they're not following God's revealed will.

I get asked this all the time. What should I do? Well are you living according to God's commandments and precepts in your life? When you do you will become the type of person your character will be transformed.

You will be acting in wisdom and you will know the way of wisdom. Two biggest areas that I always wonder about people is that two of the things where I have seen that people tend to make exceptionally unwise foolish decisions is in regards to marriages and businesses.

When they pursue people who are unbelievers or businesses that are built upon ungodly principles, thinking that somehow because they're a Christian that God will bless them in those endeavors. others. It's never happened. Sometimes despite their sin God demonstrates his goodness and favor by redeeming the other life but more often than not a series of compromises occur and pain enters into those situations.

[26 : 19] decisions. The question when we make decisions is does it draw us closer to God or is it an impediment to our faith?

Is the person I marry going to draw me into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, or is it going to be a hindrance to my future walk with Christ?

Is this business opportunity because I might be in a situation where I might have to compromise?

Will it tarnish the witness of Christ or will it elevate it?

They're just simple things that we as Christians tend to use extreme foolishness when figuring out.

The fact is God gives us the responsibility to make our decisions and he delights when we use faith and trust in those decisions.

Let's take a look at verse 6 and 7 here. So she being Ruth went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded.

[27 : 41] 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, which would mean quietly or secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down.

There is no shortage of ink that has been written on what does it mean to uncover his feet. feet. I believe that the text says exactly that, to uncover his feet.

The reality is my wife knows if she wanted to wake me up in the middle of the night, she just has to take the blanket off my feet. I hate cold feet when I sleep.

And I believe this is just a similar situation in life. I believe there is no hint of any sexual impropriety. If so, why wouldn't she just give herself to any other man who might be willing to provide her? This is a woman who is steeped in a desire to serve her God.

[28 : 51] She's seen God's goodness in blessing. And we see in the text that Boaz is an upright and honorable man. And he sees Ruth as a noble woman of character.

They both know that God's word is quite clear that sex, although good, is to be enjoyed by those who are married. I believe there is nothing in this text that suggests that Boaz and Ruth misuse God's good gift of sex.

I believe it was just her way of waking him up. Verse 8, at midnight, the man was startled as he shivered and turned over and behold, a woman lay at his feet.

He said, who are you? Would have been dark, but there's this woman that he can clearly see. She had bathed, she was anointed in oil. I am Ruth, your servant.

Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer. What an interesting way to propose marriage, right?

[30 : 08] A couple of things that I want you to note about this. Notice when Boaz asks her who she is, she does not reply, I am Ruth, the Moabitess, but I'm the maid servant.

That is signaling to her that she is now eligible for marriage. If you recall, she said, spread your wings over your servant.

If you look at Ruth 2.12, when Boaz said to Ruth, may you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, whose wings you have come to take refuge.

If you notice throughout this story, these people are prayer, they're wishing godly blessings to others, and now they are the vehicle that God is using to answer those prayers.

Earlier, we saw Naomi wishing a future for her daughter. now she's providing it. Here, Boaz being asked to spread his wings to be the redeemer when he had prayed that for Ruth earlier.

[31 : 38] So what we see is that Ruth is asking Boaz to be the Lord's servant in answering her greatest need.

What a wonderful picture of marriage. If you have an NIV, they translate this, sadly, as garment. Spread your garment on me as a symbol of spread your wings, your protection around me, and we're seeing this wonderful picture of marriage and how God has designed it for the man to spread his wings of love and protection over his wife.

But I want you to pull out this truth out of this text. That is a bold move love. It's a love by Ruth. Even Naomi, this is bold. There's nerves. I still remember in my youth, we couldn't even call a girl up because we were so nervous to talk to someone on the phone.

Just ask them on a simple date when we were in high school. But here, this woman goes before him and she does what she knows that God's word says. It reminds us of Hebrews 4 16, which simply says, let us approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

[33 : 35] What a wonderful instruction to us by our Lord and Savior. Too often we are too afraid, too tired to actually come with confidence, with the understanding that God loves us, that God cares for us.

And we see in chapter 2 that God is pouring out his kindness and loving kindness to Ruth day after day after day as she serves her mother-in-law by going and working in the field.

And Boaz continues as the Lord's servant to pour out blessings. She has been relying on his grace this whole time.

And now she comes and she makes this request that is totally in line with God's word. How often we fail to come boldly before the throne of God.

How often we feel that we do not deserve it, that we should not be sitting at this beautiful banquet table that the Lord God has given us.

[35 : 01] More often than not, their greatest impediment is sin. But when we've sought confession, we've repented, we can come and eat as a child of God to live in that glory, to live in the blessings that he gives to us.

God has every right to ask for this protection from Boaz. And in this, Boaz serves as a type of Christ figure.

He illustrates for us in earthly terms what a redeemer is. And serves as an example of what Christ is for those who approach the Lord Jesus Christ and humbly request of him to protect them.

Ruth's humble request illustrates what truly is involved in becoming a Christian. Becoming a Christian involves us as sinners humbly asking the Lord Jesus to protect us.

That's simply what it is. It's to protect us from the wrath that we richly and gainfully deserve from God. But as a redeemer on the cross, he can protect us.

[36 : 36] The fact is we all need his protection. We all need his protection from the condemnation which sin rightfully deserves. The fact of the matter is self protection is absolutely impossible.

And only through the redeeming sacrifice on the cross is protection from condemnation for all those who take refuge in Jesus.

Jesus. What a beautiful picture we have here. This is the request that we make as believers in Jesus Christ. It's to recognize that we cannot self-protect, that we need protection from the redeemer.

mother. I don't know for Ruth if that moment, whether it was the seconds that passed or minutes, must have felt like eternity.

But Boaz provides his answer in verse 10. Read with me. And he said, may you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter.

[37 : 57] You have made the last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. What Boaz is acknowledging that she could have pursued her own safety, her own livelihood, through other younger men that would have taken her as their wife.

But he recognizes that she's taken the responsibility to secure her family's future, to continue the family line, something that she could have foregone.

She was a foreigner. No one would have faulted her. And in her request, she's actually looking after Naomi as well.

Verse 11, 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.

woman. What a tender-hearted response. First, he acknowledges her as daughter. He compliments her for her actions and lets her know of her true worth.

[39 : 38] What he's communicating here is that she is worthy of marriage. She has made herself worthy of redemption.

Imagine that excitement. Yes, yes, yes. And then the other shoe falls as it were, verse 12. Well, and now it is true that I am a redeemer, one who has the right to buy their property to protect them, yet there is a redeemer nearer than I.

But notice the boldness he takes. 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 laid his feet until morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, let it not be known that the woman came to the thrashing floor.

And he said, bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out. So she held it out and he measured out six measurements of barley and put it to her. Then she went into the city.

[40 : 58] Here we see this man of integrity. Although desiring to redeem Ruth himself, he lets it fall as the Lord wills it.

He recognizes that there is a closer redeemer. So he's going to give this man a shot. He's going to let him have the right of first blessing as it were to redeem Ruth and Naomi.

He recognizes he is not the nearest relative, but what follows is that he is willing to accept that responsibility. But I want you to pay attention to how he cares for her at the end of verse 11.

Do not fear. How often does fear drive our sin and our foolishness?

How easy it is for us to give into the stress of the situation. I am guessing that Ruth kind of digs Boaz.

[42 : 11] He has demonstrated incredible kindness and protection to her for this whole time of the harvest. And I'm wondering if her heart was a little bit let down knowing that there was someone else.

But he, Boaz, continues to give her this barley as evidence of his commitment to care for her.

Again, we see Boaz pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ. In his humanity, the Lord Jesus Christ accepted responsibility on the basis of God's word for us.

Even at the cross, he demonstrated his obedience to God's law as he fulfilled his responsibility to his mother by arranging for her to be cared for by John even when he was at the cross.

And as Jesus died on the cross, he accepted responsibility for the sins of all who would believe.

And he really took that condemnation so that we could all be set free.

[43 : 26] That is what a redeemer is. The lesson we have for us is you see, we learned that active faith in Christ means accepting the responsibilities that God's word sets out for us.

This includes responsibility of parent to child, child to parents who are aging, husband to wife, wife to husband.

In our church, we have relationships and responsibilities to one another. One of the things that most people I find overlook is that when we do a marriage ceremony, we're actually inviting a community not just to celebrate a man and a woman to become one, but we're actually making the commitment before God that we are going to care for them in their union.

We are going to support them, bless them, help them. That's what it means to be a Christian. We just don't do these things for empty symbolism, but we're charging ourselves to be responsible with the care of those who are around us.

That means speaking truth during times of difficulty, perhaps providing financial means to help them during difficult times. These are the things that the active people of faith are to do.

[44 : 52] And in verse 16, we find that Ruth has returned to Naomi. It says, and when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, how did you fare my daughter?

I'm sure she didn't even sleep that night just waiting in anticipation at the door. The verbiage in the Hebrew is actually, who are you?

Excited to hear what the identity of her daughter is now. And here she is, Ruth, with more barley at the door. More signs of God's continued provision.

Then 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.

And then Naomi gives this incredible response. 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.

[46 : 04] How incredible, when we look back at this incredible short story, if you look back at Ruth chapter 1, 21, Naomi says, I went away full and the Lord has brought me back empty.

Guess who just filled her up. God is good. I'm going to read the words of the song that we just sang, this last song.

Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea. a great high priest whose name is love, whoever lives and pleads for me.

My name is graven on his hands. My name is written on his heart. I know that while in heaven he stands, no tongue can bend me thence to part.

When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see him there who made an end of all my sin.

[47 : 26] Because the sinless Savior died, my sinful soul is counted free. For God the just is satisfied to look on him and pardon me.

behold him there the risen lamb, my perfect spotless righteousness, the great unchangeable I am, the king of glory and of grace.

One in himself I cannot die. My soul is purchased by his blood. my life is hid with Christ on high. With Christ my Savior and my God. Before the throne of God above I have a strong and perfect plea.

my friends we would be absolutely foolish to not go before the Lord God himself with a strong and purpose perfect plea and make all requests and praise to him and not be ashamed in any way.

[48 : 48] For our sinful souls are counted free. Let's pray. Dear Lord Heavenly Father I am overwhelmed by the continued goodness that you tell us in this story.

It is a simple story but yet it is our story. too often we doubt we fear even as Christians we go elsewhere for answers rather than to our perfect God who has already died the perfect death so that we might live.

Father let us always go to you even as we talked about today I am disgusted with some of the things that I see in this world I'm hurt I do see abuses of government and power police I do see sin that is beholden in the people the citizenry and there's this tension this groaning that is there but you are waiting there to redeem us the reality is you are going to make everything in this world right you are going to bring justice to this land you have always been true to your word and that is what your word promises father as saints

I pray that we would lead in on you continues to be with you father for those of us who have made foolish decisions in their past we pray for your extended mercy and grace to redeem those decisions that you bring honor and favor to our brokenness our foolishness may we be a people that are quick to confess quick to respond in your love love and may be reflected in the love for others as

Boaz has been such a wonderful example to us so father as we wait for the conclusion of this wonderful book next week I pray that you continue to be with us strengthen us provide for us with your richness and your goodness I pray that our cup would overflow we ask you these things in your most just and perfect name amen