

3. The dawning of a new day

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It was the principle of redemption that God had written in His Word that gave Naomi the assurance that Boaz would rescue them. As a near relative, Boaz could redeem the family property that Elimelech had sold when he took his family to Moab. Naomi wasn't wealthy enough to redeem it, but Boaz could buy it back and keep it in the family.

However, something else was involved: The wife of the deceased went with the property. Therefore, the kinsman redeemer had to marry her and bring up children bearing the name of the deceased. They would then inherit the property, and the family name and family possessions would continue to be theirs.

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. 6 And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. 7 But if the man does not want to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.' 8 Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him. But if he stands firm and says, 'I do not want to take her,' 9 then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house.' 10 And his name shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal removed.'

This is known as "Levirate Marriage." The word 'levir' is Latin for "a husband's brother."

A. NAOMI'S INSTRUCTION TO RUTH

Ruth 3:1-5 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? 2 Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. 3 Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do." 5 And she said to her, "All that you say to me I will do."

Ever since Boaz came into Ruth's life, Naomi has been a different person. Her concern is no longer for herself and her grief rather for Ruth and her future. It's when we serve others that we ourselves receive the greatest joy and satisfaction. The martyred German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer called Jesus Christ "the man for others," and the title is appropriate.

Philippians 2:3-4 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

The time of harvest was over. I am sure that just about everyday except Sabbath, Boaz got up early in the morning headed out to the field to see Ruth at one of his

fields where she worked. He had a spring in his step, sky was blue. The distance was no issue to him, because he was in love with Ruth. We will see his feeling toward her in this chapter.

But for Ruth, it was not something she could say or do anything about her future. In that day, it was the parents who arranged marriages.

I am not condoning or downplaying matchmaking. However, you have to agree with me on this point. Listen, from God's perspective, there is much in the "dating game" that works against forming healthy and lasting relationships.

"Dating" is usually a relatively superficial way to get to know someone. Each person in a dating relationship tends to put on the best mask for the other. For example, many women have been led to believe a man is a good and nice man because he is nice to them in a dating relationship. Of course he is! Often, he's nice because he wants something in that dating relationship. Vice versa.

A better gauge to measure the man or the woman is to see how they act towards others in a group setting – because sooner or later, that is how they are going to treat you.

With all that said, please keep in mind that the Book of Ruth is much more than the record of the marriage of an alien from the despised tribe to a respected Jew. It's the picture of Christ's redemption and relationship to those who trust Him and belong to Him.

The redemption of Ruth was going to come through Boaz's willingness to marry her and purchase the property that once belonged to Naomi and Elimelech ten years ago.

I am sure that there were other men who would gladly have married Ruth, but they could not have redeemed her. Only a kinsman could do that, and Boaz was that kinsman. Since Naomi knew that Boaz would be using the threshing floor that night and staying there to guard his grain, she instructed Ruth to prepare herself to meet him.

There are several things we must notice from Naomi's instruction to Ruth:

1) Wash yourself

With regard to the Jews, the Law of Moses required ceremonial washings, and taking a bath and changing clothes usually preceded a special event. Actually, Naomi was telling Ruth to act like a bride preparing for her wedding.

Ezekiel 16:9-12 Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. 10 I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. 11 I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. 12 And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head.

If we want to enter into a deeper relationship with our Lord, we must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. When we seek forgiveness, God washes the record clean as it is mentioned in 1 John 1:9; but God will not do for us what we must do for ourselves.

Only we, as individuals can put out of our lives those things that defile us, and we know what they are. It might mean cleaning out what we read; what we listen to; or what we watch. We must separate ourselves from whatever defiles us and grieves our Father in heaven.

2) Anoint yourself

We all have been around people who have certain body odors due to their occupations or uncleanness. I remember my encounters with many homeless people while our family was ministering downtown Tucson twenty years ago.

Eastern people used fragrant oils to protect and heal their bodies and to make themselves pleasant to others. A bride would especially use fragrant perfume for her wedding day.

Anointing oil speaks of the presence and the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. All believers have received the presence of the Holy Spirit within us as well as His anointing. Therefore we ought to be a fragrance of Christ to the Heavenly Father.

2 Corinthians 2:15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

The more we are like Jesus Christ in character and conduct, the more we please our Father; and the more we please Him, the more He can bless and use us for His glory.

While here on earth, Jesus lived His life and did His work through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. If the spotless Son of God needed the Spirit's power, how much more do we!

3) Put on the best garment

I believe that though Ruth may not have a large collection of designer wardrobe clothes, she probably had one special garment for festive occasions.

In Scripture, clothing often carries a spiritual meaning. After they had sinned against God, our first parents Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves; but only the Lord could forgive them and clothe them acceptably, and He had to shed blood to do it. The Jewish priests wore special garments that nobody else was permitted to wear. Salvation also is pictured as a change of clothes.

Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

4) All that you say to me I will do

Ruth was not only a hearer of the Word, but she was a doer. A willingness to obey the Lord is the secret of knowing what He wants us to do and being blessed when we do it. God does not expect us to understand what He does, but He expects us to do what we are told by Him through His Word or the counsels by godly people.

B. RUTH PROPOSED TO BOAZ

Ruth 3:6-13 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. 7 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. 8 Now it hap-

pened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet. 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 close relative." 10 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. 11 And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman. 12 Now it is true that I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. 13 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."

"Life is full of rude awakenings!" I am sure that you've heard this phrase before, and more than one biblical character would agree. Adam went to sleep and woke up to discover he'd been through surgery and was now a married man. Jacob woke up to discover he was married to the wrong woman! Boaz woke up at midnight to find a woman lying at his feet and she wanted to marry him.

Generally we see a man propose to a woman whom he is in love with. Here we find that Ruth proposed to Boaz. Why didn't Boaz who probably was the most eligible bachelor in all the Bethlehem ask Ruth to marry him? I am sure that there were many mamas who tried to introduce their daughters to Boaz all this time.

I find two reasons from Boaz's reaction to Ruth's proposal. First, he thought that she would want to marry one of the younger bachelors in town, not him. He thought he was not even in the game because of his age. Second, we find it in v12. There was a nearer kinsman in town that had first option on Ruth and the property. Now that Ruth had forced the issue and twisted his arm, he had to do something with a big smile ear to ear.

C. SIT STILL AND WAIT

Ruth 3:14-18 So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, "Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." 15 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. 16 So 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. 17 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.'" 18 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."

Since Boaz couldn't find a box of chocolates, he gave her six handfuls of grain. How romantic!

Boaz didn't want Ruth to return home with false hopes in her heart. Joy and peace that are based on ignorance of the true facts are but delusions that lead to disappointments. The great concern of Boaz was the redemption of Ruth, even if another kinsman redeemer had to do it. Boaz was willing to follow the proper procedure of the Law.

When you see this as a picture of our redemption in Jesus Christ, it impresses me strongly that God willingly obeyed His own law when He accomplished our salvation in Christ.

Ezekiel 18:4 Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Naomi could no longer say that her hands were empty like she complained in chapter 1. Now they were full because of the grace of the kinsman redeemer. Ruth's faith and obedience had brought about a complete transformation in their lives, and now they were living by grace.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) Be still.

Psalm 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

This is a wonderful antidote for our restless spirits. Interestingly, the Hebrew word translates "be still" as "take your hands off and relax." Our Lord can do just fine without our help, really.

2) He is able.

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ

It encourages my heart to know that Jesus Christ is working unceasingly for His people as He intercedes in heaven, and that He is working in us, seeking to conform us to His perfect will.