

Ruth 3 - Thursday, April 25th, 2013

- Before we jump into chapter three, I think it would be good to have a bit of the backstory given that it's really a continuation of chapter two.
- After finding favor in the eyes of Boaz, and gleaning from the field owned by Boaz, Ruth comes home with twenty-seven pounds of barley.
- It becomes very clear, very fast, to Naomi, that the owner has taken notice of Ruth and proceeds to ask her the name of who this man was.

- Upon hearing that it's none other than Boaz, Naomi then tells Ruth he just so happens to be their kinsman redeemer, vis-à-vis Elimelech.
- To say this would've been a game changer for them would be a gross understatement, because now they have provision and redemption.
- However, they also now have a problem as well, in that the barley harvest is over, and as such, she won't be gleaning in order to see him.

- Enter Naomi who knows exactly what to do in order for Ruth to make known to Boaz that she's available for him so as to be married to him.
- While I know this may seem a little aggressive on Naomi's part, such that she's trying to arrange this marriage, she's justified in doing so.
- This because of the laws and customs concerning that of the Kinsmen Redeemer, specifically as it relates to marrying a childless widow.

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 (5) "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.'

- Here Moses addresses the matter of a man dying with no son to carry on his name. In this case, the man's brother was to marry the widow.
- This was done in order to leave descendants who could in turn, not only carry on the family name, but to also have an inheritance as well.
- Moses then deals with the situation of a brother refusing to marry his brother's wife by telling them the widow is to go to elders at the gate.

- If the elders were unsuccessful in convincing him to reconsider his refusal to do so the widow was to remove his sandal and spit in his face.
- Furthermore he was to be named and identified as "the house of him who had his sandal removed," throughout all of Israel for all of his life.
- The reason I bring this up at this juncture is that it is germane to our understanding of how Ruth ends up marrying her kinsman redeemer.

(1) 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." (6) So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her.

- Please know what Ruth does here, is in every way, appropriate as it relates to the customs of that day between the woman and the man.
- For Naomi to instruct her as to what she was to do, then for her to seemingly be forward in doing it wouldn't be misunderstood by Boaz.
- In other words, Boaz, as we see next knew exactly what she was doing and wouldn't have misunderstood her to be throwing herself at him.

- By the way, I find the marriage advice that Naomi gives Ruth to be most interesting especially as it relates to the wife towards the husband.
- Here's what I'm thinking, the wives should always wash themselves, and put on their best clothes so as to look beautiful for their husbands.
- Then, the wives should never ever say anything to their husbands until they've had they have finished, eating, drinking, and even sleeping.

(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 happened 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."

- I suppose you could say that Ruth is making her intentions abundantly clear in no uncertain terms concerning Boaz taking her as his wife.
- Couple of thoughts here, the first of which is that Ruth was taking a tremendous risk in heeding her mother-in-law's advice and doing this.
- By that I mean, not only did Ruth run the risk of total failure in her efforts to communicate her intent, she also ran the risk of being harmed.

Adam Clarke - "On the whole, we must say, had not Boaz been a person of extraordinary piety, prudence, and continence, this experiment might have been fatal to Ruth. We cannot easily account for this transaction; probably Naomi knew more than she revealed to her daughter-in-law. The experiment however was dangerous, and should in no sense be imitated."

- The second thought is that in addition to Ruth taking this risk and stepping out in faith, she was submitting herself to both Naomi and Boaz.
- Here's how I get there, had Ruth not heeded the advice Naomi gave her she would have never succeeded in having a husband marry her.
- The point being that Ruth's reward came by way of her submitting herself, and humbling herself in heeding the advice that Naomi gave her.

- Furthermore, by lying at his feet, she was posturing herself in a humble and submissive way before Boaz even though she didn't need to.
- Let me explain, Ruth had every right to hold Boaz responsible as her kinsman redeemer to marry her so as to carry on Elimelech's name.
- One commentator writes, "Ruth didn't come as a victim demanding her rights, but as a humble servant, trusting ... her kinsman-redeemer."

- You probably already know where I'm going with all this so I'll simply say, that God will always bless us when we're submitted and humble.
- Conversely, we can actually thwart the blessing of God in our lives by being obstinate and proud. It's not that God won't, it's that He can't.
- If I as an earthly father want to bless my children, how much more does my heavenly Father want to bless me? But, sometimes I thwart it.

- One of the most common ways, if not the most common way that I can thwart the blessing of God in my life is to harbor an attitude of pride.

Proverbs 16:18 NKJV Pride *goes* before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 11:2 NKJV When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble *is* wisdom.

Proverbs 13:10 NKJV By pride comes nothing but strife, But with the well-advised *is* wisdom.

Proverbs 18:12 NKJV Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, And before honor *is* humility.

Proverbs 16:19 NKJV Better *to be* of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Proverbs 29:23 NKJV A man's pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor.

Proverbs 16:5 NKJV Everyone proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD; *Though they join* forces, none will go unpunished.

Psalms 138:6 NIV Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar.

(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.

- There's a couple of things I want to point out here in these two verses, the first of which is why it is, Boaz responded to her the way he did.
- Notice how his favorable response to Ruth is based chiefly on her virtuous character inwardly and not her beautiful appearance outwardly.
- That's not to say that Ruth wasn't a beautiful woman outwardly rather, I would suggest that she was a stunningly beautiful woman inwardly.

- I'm of the belief that it was her humility, and her work ethic, coupled with how she honored her mother-in-law that made her so beautiful.
- Perhaps better said, Ruth did not lack inward character, such that it would mar outward beauty, as is often the case with beautiful women.
- Lest you think I'm being sexist, let me hasten to say, this goes both ways, in the sense that it applies in the same way to handsome men.

- This actually dove tails into the second thing that I want to point out, which is that Boaz may not have himself been a very handsome man.
- The reason I say that is because of verse ten where it says he blessed her for not going after young men whether they were poor or rich.
- This would seem to indicate that Boaz may have very well been much older than Ruth, which again, was not inappropriate in that culture.

- This is further evidence that Ruth was a woman of extraordinary character in not basing her decision solely on Boaz's outward appearance.
- The narrative would seem to suggest that Ruth could have gone after a much younger man, in that she could've had any man she wanted.
- It should come as no surprise that Boaz would respond to her by telling her not to fear because he will do for her all she had requested.

(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."

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is Boaz knows this will not be an easy do because of a closer kinsmen.
- What I find so interesting about this, is the way that Boaz goes about this, or maybe better said, the way he does not go about doing this.
- Notice first and foremost that he's going about it in the right way, instead of trying to figure out another way around this closer kinsmen.

- Also, when he says, as the Lord lives, what he's essentially saying is that if the Lord wills it to be, then he will perform this duty for her.
- This speaks to not only his character, in wanting to do everything by the book, but it also speaks to his patience in not wanting to strive.
- By that I mean Boaz doesn't want to strive for this if this isn't God's will, and as such, he is, in effect, giving the Lord plenty of elbowroom.

(14) 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) 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."

- You'll forgive my weird sense of humor, but if Ruth is able to carry home what is about 60 pounds of barley, I would not arm-wrestle her.
- Actually, what Boaz does here is not arbitrary in the sense that these six ephahs of barley were essentially his way of sending a message.
- It's thought that he wanted Naomi, who he knew set this up, to know that it was a symbol of working six days then resting on the seventh.

- This is why she tells Ruth that Boaz will not rest until he has finished his work this day, which is what we'll see Lord willing, in chapter four.
- Here's one take away in closing from this chapter, never underestimate the value of inward humility and character over the outward beauty.
- Here's another take away to go with it, never underestimate the value of stepping out in faith and taking a risk trusting the Lord to provide.