

Ordinary People, Extraordinary God

A study of the book of Ruth

Part 4: A glimpse of hope- Ruth 2:18-3:7

Tonight, we continue our study of the book of Ruth. Last time, we left Naomi & Ruth with full stomachs & ample food stores because of Ruth's hard work. We'll start to notice a change in Naomi's attitude as God's plan is unfolding before their eyes. Not only will Naomi change her tune, but we'll see Boaz step into his God-ordained role as redeemer.

1. From *bitter* to *blessed*

- Last time, we left off with Boaz being impressed & blessing Ruth, a *proselyte* to Judaism. No longer a Moabitess, but a woman in the fold of Yahweh.
- Ruth returns with the yield of her hard labor, & Naomi is ready to eat.
- **2:18b**; *"Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough."* Naomi asks Ruth where she had worked to receive such a bounty?
- Then she utters a blessing: **2:19b**; *"Blessed be the man who took notice of you!"*
- Ruth's answer: **2:19c**; *"The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz."*
- A second blessing: **2:20a**; *"The LORD bless him!"* For the second time, Naomi exclaims a blessing instead of bitterness. Her *unbelief* is turning to *faith* in God.
- **2:20b**; *"He has not stopped showing His kindness to the living and the dead."*
- *"Things are looking up!"* We say things like this when a hard situation around us gets better. Her *outlook* is changed, & her view of God is also *corrected*.
- A seed of *hope* has been planted in Naomi, a hope that God is up to something.
- Ruth's love for Naomi caused her to leave her people, her land, & her false god (Chemosh), & tied her future to the life of Naomi. So, Ruth took on her care.
- God's love & grace are about to become even more evident through Boaz.

2. *Rescuing* relatives

- Naomi is changing, Ruth is changing, & Boaz's life is about to change forever.
- Naomi is no longer depressed & thinking only of what she has lost, she is looking to the needs of Ruth, who cares for her.
- **2:20c**; *"That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers."*
- *What's a kinsman-redeemer?* A family redeemer is another way to put this, "Go *el*."
- Family should always be *the first line of defense* in a financial crisis. Failure to do so *dishonors* God. Jesus even scolded the Pharisees for not providing for their parents' needs while claiming all they had was committed to God.
- The command within the Law is **found in Leviticus 25:25-55**. This text covers a wide range of commands dealing with poverty & the need to retain tribal/familial ownership of the land. Land, seed, & covenant are repetitive themes in scripture.

- **Lev. 25:25;** *“If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to **come and redeem** what his countryman has sold.”* A way to keep the property within the same family & people group.
- A redeemer must: **1. Be of the same blood, 2. Have the necessary resources, & 3. Have the desire to buy & redeem.**
- At some point in Israel’s history, we are not sure when, this command was joined to what is commonly called **Levirate Marriage** & outlined in **Deuteronomy 25:5-10.**
- **Deut. 25:5-7;** *“If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow **must not marry outside the family.** Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.”* You could not inherit the land without inheriting the wife, even a 2nd wife.
- This not only continued the ownership of the land but also continued the line & name of the deceased brother. Furthermore, it was God’s principle of **redemption.**
- Naomi knows Boaz to be one of the close relatives, a man who could have the right & the resources to redeem.
- **One more clue:** Ruth shared one more detail with her mother-in-law: **2:21;** *“He even said to me, ‘Stay with my workers until they finished harvesting all my grain.”*
- The men who were harvesters would have been blue-collar men, likely on the lower end of the character spectrum. A foreign woman, among such men, would be an easy target for assault. Naomi instinctively knows that Boaz is inclined to Ruth.
- **Vs. 22;** *“It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else’s field you might be harmed.”*
- Their prospects have changed, going from just surviving to being potentially provided for by a wealthy benefactor. Suddenly, there is hope of redemption.
- **Vs. 23;** *“So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvest were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.”*

3. Might get **cold** feet

- The barley harvest took place between March & April each year. The book of Ruth is read publicly by rabbis at **Shavuot** or **Pentecost** each year.
- **Naomi felt responsible:** remember, when Naomi attempted to send Orpah & Ruth home? She said it was best for them. Now, she wants to truly **‘find rest’** for Ruth.
- **3:1;** *“One day Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her, ‘My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for?’”* Time had passed.
- At this time, it was the responsibility of the parents to find a match for their children. We can see that Naomi does see Ruth as her daughter now.
- With Elimelech deceased & Ruth’s biological parents in Moab, Naomi takes up the task of making a marriage match.

- **3:2;** *“Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor.”*
- Winnowing is the process where the barley is thrown into the air & the grain is separated from the worthless chaff. Sifting & bagging the grain was the last step.
- Perhaps he worked late into the night, or perhaps he needed to protect his stores.
- **Naomi hatches a plan.** We might feel odd about what she told Ruth to do, but these are similar steps that we would do today before going on a date.
- It’s important to remember that this is more than a love story between a man & woman, but it is a **picture** of **salvation**.
- **Naomi suggests several steps:** *wash, perfume yourself, wear something nice, go to where Boaz was, & don’t interrupt what he’s doing.*
- **3:4;** *“When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.”*
- **Why such an odd action?** To our eyes today, this seems odd, maybe even improper. Was Naomi suggesting that Ruth climb into the bed of Boaz & seduce him?
- **Far from it!** This was a Middle Eastern custom or tradition amounting to a **proposal**. Yes, Boaz would’ve clearly understood this action as an offer of marriage.
- Unlike so many naturally born children today, Ruth is willing to obey. **3:5-6;** *“I will do whatever you say,” Ruth answered. So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.”*
- Ruth places herself at the feet of her redeemer!
- **3:7;** *“When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down.”*
- A successful day/harvest, a celebratory meal, & a well-deserved rest began. He might’ve had cold feet, but next time, we’ll see how Boaz reacts.

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1. From _____ to _____
 - Ruth became a _____ to Judaism.
 - Her _____ is turning to _____ in God.
 - Her _____ is changed, & her view of God is also _____.
 - A seed of _____ has been planted in Naomi, a hope that God is up to something.
2. _____ relatives
 - *What's a kinsman-redeemer?*
 - Family should always be *the first line of* _____ in a financial crisis.
 - Failure to do so _____ God
 - **Lev. 25:25;** *"If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to **come and redeem** what his countryman has sold."*
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 - This is commonly called _____ Marriage & outlined in Deuteronomy 25:5-10.
 - **Deut. 25:5-7;** *"If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow **must not marry outside the family**. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel."* This was God's principle of **redemption**.
3. Might get _____ feet
 - Ruth is read publicly by rabbis at _____ or _____ each year.
 - *Naomi felt* _____. Now, she wants to truly ' _____ ' for Ruth.
 - *Naomi* _____ a _____. A _____ of _____.
 - *Naomi* _____ several steps.
 - *Why such an odd action?*
 - This was a Middle Eastern custom or tradition amounting to a _____.

