

**REDEEMING LOVE**  
**RUTH 3:1-18 (NIV)**  
**“A COVENANT LOVE”**

Hey Newsong!

I want to take an opportunity to welcome all of our first time guests! We are so glad that you can join us today as we continue in our summer sermon series called “Redeeming Love” based on the book of Ruth.

Today we are in week three of the sermon series.

Ruth is a beautiful picture of - the redeeming love of God and redeeming love in our relationships.

So let’s get right into the text:

***Ruth 3:1-18 NIV***

***One day Ruth’s mother-in-law Naomi said to her, “My daughter, I must find a home[a] for you, where you will be well provided for. 2 Now Boaz, with whose women***

*you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. 3 Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. 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."*

*5 "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered. 6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.*

*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. 8 In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet!*

*9 "Who are you?" he asked.*

*"I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer[b] of our family."*

**10 “The LORD bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. 11 And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character. 12 Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. 13 Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the LORD lives I will do it. Lie here until morning.”**

**14 So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, “No one must know that a woman came to the threshing floor.”**

**15 He also said, “Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out.” When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her. Then he[c] went back to town.**

**16 When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, “How did it go, my daughter?”**

***Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her 17 and added, “He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, ‘Don’t go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”***

***18 Then Naomi said, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”***

## **PRAY**

Can you remember a time in the past when you had a difficult time making a choice? There are all kinds of reasons that people have for experiencing difficulty making a decision, but allow me to list just a few.

Sometimes we have a hard time making a choice because of fear. For example, think about the time you were but having a hard time attempting something because of the fear you were experiencing.

Sometimes we have a hard time making a choice because what we are told is good for us doesn't seem as appealing as something else.

I know some people who will look in the refrigerator for a snack and pull out a cup of yogurt. But very rarely do I do that because I know there is also ice cream in the freezer and for me ice cream is WAY more appealing.

And sometimes we have a hard time making a choice because choosing one thing will mean letting go of another thing.

I think about people that are single and then married without kids and who drive a cool sports car or motorcycle.

Then they start having children and start growing their family. When that takes place their sports cars and motorcycles are no longer practical and they have to look into family sized sedans and yes – minivans.

In those cases it's hard to let go of the things that have been a part of who they are for so long for something very different (which might even communicate a change in their identity). And yet oftentimes we have to make these difficult kinds of choices.

Always eating ice cream for a snack isn't going to help you lose weight. Eventually you have to start grabbing the

yogurt instead of the ice cream. And the last time I checked, car seats weren't legal on motorcycles.

So if you want to be able to drive anywhere with your infant you are going to need to purchase something that has a back seat (and probably something that also has 4 doors).

I use these illustrations because this week in chapter 3 we are going to see that Ruth had to make a choice.

In chapter 1 we saw that she needed redemption. Then in chapter 2 we met a man of noble character who was one of her kinsman redeemers and who was graciously providing food and a safe place for her to glean.

But having knowledge of one who was able to serve as a kinsman redeemer and having the provisions of food and a safe place to glean were not the same as being redeemed.

So in chapter 3 we are going to discover that Ruth had an important decision to make.

Whereas chapter 1 ended with little hope (the men in Naomi's and Ruth's lives had passed away leaving the women with no present means of financial income and no hope for future security)but we also see that Naomi comes back to a harvest, chapter 2 ended with strong reason to hope.

In chapter 2 the author of the book of Ruth introduced the readers to a new character – a man by the name of Boaz.

Boaz was a noble man of extraordinary character who initiated a relationship with Ruth out in his fields and invited her to remain in his fields gleaning until all of the harvest was done.

In chapter 2 we saw Boaz showing great compassion to Ruth and giving graciously to meet her needs. Then at the end of chapter 2 we heard Naomi explain to Ruth that Boaz was one of their redeemers (2:20).

This gave the reader great hope – perhaps God was going to use this man to provide physical redemption for Naomi and Ruth.

Chapter 3 begins by moving this remarkable story of redemption even further along.

At the end of chapter 2 it seemed that Naomi and Ruth were going to be well provided for during the harvest season.

But this wasn't a story about women in need of food – the story could not have ended there because these women needed more than just regular provision of food.

This was a story of women who had a much greater need – a need for redemption. And fortunately this story of redemption had more to it.

**(verses 1-2)** *“One day Ruth’s mother-in-law Naomi said to her, “My daughter, I must find a home[a] for you, where you will be well provided for. 2 Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor.”*

Naomi also seemed to recognize that the provision of food was not enough for Ruth. She understood that Ruth needed a home 'rest.'

The Hebrew word there literally means “place of rest,” it comes from a root word that also means security and tranquility.

Naomi realized that the provision of food wasn't going to be enough to provide Ruth with the security and tranquility that having a husband would have provided.

So Naomi sought to provide Ruth with more. We need to pause here for just a moment to also give some consideration to the context in which chapter 3 is going to take place.

Ruth never left Naomi and now Naomi in essence is returning the favor.

She's like okay I want to come up with a plan to help you be married because you need security, you need someone to take care of you. This is what's happening in verse one.

Verse two Naomi is telling Ruth that Boaz is a close relative of theirs. She's referring to once again a kinsman redeemer, this idea of an individual who's close in relationship who can redeem you in your situation because she's a widow.

In their culture if there's an older brother who is married and he dies the next kin the next brother who's not married would marry his older brother's wife and the first son is given the name of his older brother to carry the family name.

This is kind of what the Levitical law was all about God's grace and compassion towards widows to help carry out their name.

So this phrase “close relative of ours” is a reference to that and he's been very kind by letting you gather grain with his young women.

She tells her that tonight he will be winnowing barley at the threshing floor, winnowing is a process after harvesting where you take the Grain and you toss it in the wind and all the chaff gets blown away and all the barley the wheat the good stuff stays on the ground for you to pick up.

Now the threshing floor is literally an elevated platform that's flat in the open air, it's almost like a stage for all to see.

The winnowing process takes place during the evening or night because the wind typically picked up which blows away the chaff.

The threshing floor now biblically speaking can be a metaphor and symbolism tied to it, it can also be referred to as Judgment Day or Revelation. It's mentioned in the Bible dozens of times, both literally and symbolically.

Anytime the scripture is using this concept of threshing floor it was referring to Judgment Day or Revelation.

*In [Matthew 3:1-12](#), John invoked a sense of urgency among the Israelites to let them know that Jesus was on the threshing floor. He wanted to let them know everything they knew was about to change. Jesus was on the threshing floor and He was about to separate the good from the bad.*

Oftentimes a revelation or this moment takes place or there's this judgment so think of winnowing as this separation of wheat and tear, separation of the good and bad or the useful or not useful.

So those terms are used in the scripture and our minds should go there as soon as we hear what's happening.

In verse three we see this process of Separation at the threshing floor and Naomi has a plan to take care of Ruth.

Naomi continued in her instructions to Ruth. *“Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do”* (verses 3-4).

Remember that this work would be done at night, out of the city and away from their wives, which also meant that this was a time when prostitutes would come out to the threshing floors to offer sexual acts.

Given that the events of this story took place *“in the days when the judges ruled”* (1:1) and everyone was doing what was right in his own eyes, it is safe to assume that these kind of activities were probably taking place at the time that this story and the events of chapter 3 were taking place.

But we also have to be careful, knowing the context, that we don't read more into the text than the author intended.

Naomi's instructions to Ruth are often terribly misunderstood. The reader hears Naomi say to Ruth: "wash, anoint yourself, and put on your cloak," and often interprets this as if Naomi was telling Ruth to prepare herself for a sexual encounter.

Many readers have believed that Naomi was telling Ruth to get cleaned up, to put on some good smelling perfume, and then to put on a seductive outfit so that she could go to the threshing floor and seduce this noble man into a sexual encounter, whereby she could manipulate him into marriage.

That was NOT what Naomi was instructing Ruth to do. But in order to understand her instructions we need some additional context.

So let's look at an example from King David's life. Most of us remember that King David had an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, who at the time was married to one of David's soldiers, Uriah.

As a result of that act, Bathsheba got pregnant. King David tried to manipulate Uriah into sleeping with his wife so that the illegitimate pregnancy might be hidden and covered up, but Uriah wouldn't cooperate.

So David's plan 'B' was to have Uriah murdered by placing him on the front lines of the battle field and then having all the Israelite soldiers retreat, leaving Uriah to face the enemy on his own.

God was so displeased by all of David's actions that God chose to discipline David by not allowing the child he was having with Bathsheba to live (**2 Samuel 12:14**).

The prophet Nathan made that known to David and when the child became sick David began to mourn and to fast and to plead with God to heal the sick child. But the baby died and when the news was made known to David the text says, "*Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes*" (**2 Samuel 12:20**).

David had mourned his infant's sickness and the news that the baby was going to die. But when the baby had passed away there was nothing more that David could do – it was time to end his mourning and to move on. So

David demonstrated that this season of mourning was over and that he was moving on by washing himself, anointing himself, and changing his clothes.

**2 Samuel 12:20** gives us a much better understanding of what Naomi was instructing Ruth to do. Ruth was a widow. She would have been recognized as such by the garments that she wore (**Genesis 38:14, 19** inform us that widows wore clothes that identified them as widows).

These garments would have also communicated that she was still mourning the loss of her deceased husband. So what Naomi was communicating to Ruth was that it was time to move on.

She needed to put this season of mourning behind her and prepare herself for the next chapter of life.

She also needed to communicate to the one who might be her redeemer that she had finished mourning her deceased husband and that she was ready to be pursued.

So Naomi suggested that Ruth do this by washing herself, anointing herself, and then changing out of her widow garments and putting on other clothes.

After doing this Naomi instructed Ruth to go out to the threshing floor and to remain hidden until after Boaz had finished eating and drinking and had fallen asleep.

After he had fallen asleep she was to go over to Boaz, pull back the blanket or the garment that was covering his feet, lie down near him, and then wait for his instructions.

Again, many people wrongly interpret this as sexual advancement.

But to interpret the text like this is inconsistent with everything that has been revealed to the readers about these characters.

We've seen that Naomi is a woman who cares deeply for Ruth and longs to see her cared for – not despised and rejected:

*(1:8; Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. 3:1 One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must*

*find a home[a] for you, where you will be well provided for.).*

The reader knows that Ruth is a woman of great character:

*(2:11-12) Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. **12** May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.*

We see that Boaz is a noble man who is godly in character (**2:1, 13**).

To interpret these instructions as sexual advancements would be inconsistent with all that has been revealed to us about these characters up to this point.

Still, this was a risky proposal – for in the same way that many readers have misunderstood the instructions given to Ruth, so might her actions have been misunderstood by Boaz.

So when Ruth answered Naomi, “All that you say I will do” she was consenting to obedience that could be very costly.

## **So what were Naomi’s instructions all about? What was the purpose?**

These are great questions to which we will discover the answers in the following verses. (**verses 5-10**).

*5 “I will do whatever you say,” Ruth answered. 6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do. 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. 8 In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet! 9 “Who are you?” he asked. “I am your servant Ruth,” she said. “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer[b] of our family.” 10 “The LORD bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor.*

Ruth followed Naomi's instructions exactly. Then the text revealed that at midnight Boaz "*was startled and turned over.*" The Hebrew word for that is translated 'startled' also means 'to tremble,' which in this context may actually be the better understanding.

With his feet uncovered and exposed to the cool night-time breezes there is a strong likelihood that Boaz had a chill that went through his body and which caused him 'to tremble' and wake up.

Then noticing that the blanket or garment which had been covering his feet was no longer there he would have turned over to find the blanket or garment so that he might once again cover his feet with it.

But in turning over to find the blanket/garment Boaz was surprised to discover something else – a woman!

Not knowing who it was, Boaz asked. And Ruth answered his question by saying, "*I am Ruth.*" Then she continued, "*Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.*"

Here is where the significance of removing the blanket/garment from Boaz's feet lies! Removing the

blanket/garment from Boaz's feet served a very practical purpose – it served as a means by which to wake Boaz up (his feet were exposed to the cool air, he got a chill, and he woke up). It also serves a very symbolic purpose.

She asked Boaz to do more than just spread the blanket/garment out over his own feet again; Ruth was asking Boaz to take responsibility for her by marrying her and redeeming her.

In having washed herself, anointed herself, and changed out of her widows garments she would have communicated that her time of mourning was over and laying next to Boaz's feet asking him to spread his blanket/garment over her, she would have been asking him to carry out the work of a redeemer (something he would not have initiated while she was still mourning the loss of her husband and wearing widow's garments).

The question is, "How will Boaz respond to this particular proposal?"

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- Will he misunderstand the proposal as a sexual advancement and try to have sexual relations with her?
- Will he misunderstand the proposal as a sexual advancement and turn her away?
- Or will he understand the proposal for what it is and carry out his duty?

The outcome that Naomi and Ruth were hoping for seemed to be the least likely to happen given the context.

But by God's providence Boaz understood the proposal as it was intended to be understood and responded positively.

*"And he said, 'May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. 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. And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. 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 morning” (verses 10-13).*

Ruth’s proposal made an incredible impression on Boaz. In his earlier dialogue with her, he expressed how her loving-kindness towards Naomi (demonstrated in her abandonment of her own father and mother and country to care for and look after Naomi) had made an incredible impression on him (*see 2:11-12*).

But the loving-kindness she had demonstrated towards him in this proposal had made an even bigger impression. Ruth could have sought another individual out to marry – perhaps someone who was younger, or better looking, or even more wealthy than Boaz. But she had chosen not to – she had chosen to come to him.

So Boaz instructed her not to fear, but rather to rest assured that he would do all that she had asked.

While it was true that Ruth was a Moabite by birth, she had committed her life to following after Yahweh (Israel’s God) (*see 1:16*) and it was evident that she possessed a noble character like his own (i.e. *“for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman”* - Ruth

had been described the same way that Boaz had been in **2:1**).

There would be no shame for Boaz in redeeming Ruth, for her allegiance to God and her noble character far outweighed her birth heritage.

Boaz did reveal one significant set back to Ruth in these verses though. Boaz revealed to Ruth that while he was a redeemer, there was another relative who was a closer relative and redeemer. And according to Israelite law this closer relative should be given the first opportunity to redeem Naomi's land and to take Ruth as a wife. So Boaz instructed Ruth to remain near to him for the night. It was too dangerous to send her back into the city in the middle of the night on her own. So she was to stay near to him, where he could serve as her protection, and then in the morning Boaz would make sure that Ruth was redeemed.

Whether it was the closer redeemer, or himself, Ruth would not have to wait any longer – she would be redeemed by the morning.

Chapter 3 ends this way: *“So she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, ‘Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.’ And he said, ‘Bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out.’ So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. Then she went into the city. And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, ‘How did you fare, my daughter?’ 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.’” 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’” (verses 14-18).*

Boaz sent Ruth back just before dawn – just before the light began to break. What had taken place that night between the two of them could have easily been mistaken by others who would wrongly assume that they had been engaging in sexual activity.

So to maintain both of their reputations Boaz sought to send Ruth back before anyone would have seen her. But Boaz did not send Ruth back empty-handed.

The author told the reader that he measured out and gave her six measures of barley. We can't know for sure just how much that is, but the amount is not the significant part.

We find out three sentences later that those six measures of barley were for Naomi. **Why did Boaz send Naomi six measures of barley?** That's a great question. The best guess is that not only did Boaz want Ruth to rest assured in his promise to redeem her immediately, he wanted Naomi to rest assured in his promise as well. At this time in history it was customary for the groom-to-be to pay a "bride price" at the time of their betrothal. The 'bride price' wasn't a "purchase price" (as if women could be bought and sold), but rather it was a promise and a pledge to prepare for the wedding and to continue to honor the bride-to-be until they were united in marriage.

Boaz must not have brought any money out to the threshing floor with him, so he used what he had (i.e. grain) at the time (he didn't have time to offer a monetary 'bride price' later, as his intention was to have Ruth redeemed within a few hours) to send a good-faith promise to Naomi (Ruth's legal guardian), that he was going to see to it that Ruth was redeemed right away.

This seemed to be how Naomi understood the gift of grain and so she told Ruth to sit tight. Boaz was a man on a mission and she was confident that redemption would come that very day.

In chapter 2 of Ruth we had reason for hope – we were introduced to a worthy man who was noble in character and who (because he was a relative of Elimelech) was a redeemer for Naomi and Ruth.

We saw him act in amazing loving-kindness, compassion, and generosity towards Ruth, who was both a widow and a foreigner.

But at the end of chapter 2 – despite our introduction to this good redeemer – Ruth and Naomi were still in need of redemption.

Yes, they had been supplied with food and yes, Ruth had been provided a safe place to continuously glean, but the major problem at the end of chapter 1 wasn't a food or a gleaning problem – it was a redemption problem.

So at the end of chapter 2, having been introduced to a good redeemer, the question that was still looming was, **“Why hasn’t redemption taken place?”** And what we begin to learn in chapter 3 is that **redemption requires more than just a good redeemer – it requires the right response from the one in need of redemption.**

In chapter 1 the need was made known. In chapter 2 a capable redeemer was introduced. But chapter 3 began with 4 important instructions from Naomi that I want us to look at:

- (1) Ruth had to remove all that was holding her back**
- (2) She had to go request redemption from her redeemer.**

Ruth had to wash herself, anoint herself, and remove her widow’s garments, as those things were keeping her from being able to come to Boaz for redemption.

Then she had to make the request – she had to ask her redeemer to spread his garment over her (in other words, she had to ask him to take her under his wing where her identity, her security, and her hope would be found in him).

When Ruth did those things we saw that Boaz (her redeemer) (1) praised her for calling on him and then (2) assured her that she would not have to wait for redemption any longer. He would make sure that she had been redeemed by the end of the day!

So how do we look at chapter 3 in light of our own lives? Now that we've worked our way through the chapter and seen how it advanced the story, let's go back and see how chapter 3 can speak to our own situation.

**Without a redeemer, Ruth had no real “rest”** - she lacked any sense of security and hope that only a redeemer would provide for her. That's why we saw Naomi feeling such a strong responsibility to help Ruth find “rest” in verse 1.

And like Ruth,

**(3) Without a redeemer in our lives we too will be left without real “rest”** – we too are going to lack any sense of eternal security and hope.

There are so many people today who are secretly wondering if they have done enough good deeds to

out-weigh their bad deeds, or if they have kept the 10 commandments well enough for God to let them into heaven when they die.

Others are constantly looking and searching for that which will satisfy their souls. They spend massive amounts of time, energy, and money hoping that some relationship, or some sport, or some beverage, or some video game will be able to really provide the soul satisfaction that they are looking for.

And while at first those things might seem to produce a temporary satisfaction, the satisfaction eventually fades away and they are left searching again for that thing which will bring ultimate satisfaction.

Ruth had to recognize that Boaz was the redeemer that God had placed into her life and she had to go to him.

**(4) Like Ruth, we have to recognize that Jesus is the redeemer that God has placed in our lives and we have to go to him!**

Before Ruth could go to Boaz though she had to shed the things that were keeping them apart. Her widow's

garments communicated to Boaz that she was not ready for redemption.

She was still mourning her deceased husband and Boaz couldn't redeem her until she was ready to put that behind her and identify herself with a new husband.

We are like Ruth in this way too.

***Many of us are holding onto garbage that is communicating to Jesus that we are not ready for redemption.***

Some of us have had a bad experience that we are holding onto and which is keeping us from coming to Jesus;

***When we are holding onto those things it makes it impossible for us to come to our redeemer and genuinely make a request for redemption.***

The Bible teaches us that we have to repent. Repent means to turn from something. In light of the illustration we have in Ruth, it's shedding those things that we are holding onto and laying them aside.

It's saying "I'm not going to let that bad experience keep me from real rest in my redeemer," and taking that bad experience off so that we refuse to carry it around any longer.

It's taking that sin (the pornography, the immoral relationship, the materialism, and the self-centeredness) and saying, "These things aren't providing real rest for my soul. While they seem to satisfy for a moment, they always leave me feeling empty later."

And then laying the faith that you had placed in those things aside so that you can find your rest in Jesus.

When we have repented of our sin and laid aside our faith in those things that cannot satisfy our souls, then we can come to Jesus and ask Him to spread His wings over us.

We do that by believing that His completed work of death, burial, and resurrection was completely sufficient for our salvation.

We believe that He served as our substitute and that though He did not deserve to die, He died to pay the penalty for my sin.