

Appreciating God's People

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Ruth 3:1-18
December 15, 2019

So three Sundays ago was the last time we were in the Book of Ruth and at that time I told you about a man named William Cooper. William Cooper, he was a man that God saved when he was reading the Bible in a mental hospital after he tried to kill himself. So he writes a song called, *God Moves in a Mysterious Way*. And it's true, if you're a Christian, you know that the way that God works in our lives is often mysterious. We don't know what's going on. We don't know why things are happening the way they are, but we know, we believe God's word, and so we believe that He is working. He's doing something, whether it's good times or hard times. And from the pen of a man who suffered with depression for most of his life, he writes these words, "Deep and unfathomable minds of never-failing skill." God has so much skill that you can't get to the bottom of how much skill that He has. He says that "He treasures up His bright designs, and then He works His sovereign will." That God has designs. He has plans for every Christian and that He works those plans in incomprehensible ways and with an incomprehensible amount of skill to accomplish exactly what He wants accomplished in your life and mind. And then, this is what we've seen in the main characters of this Book, Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi and it's the same thing we're going to see today. And the third line of this song goes like this, "You fearful saints, fresh courage takes. As you look out and you see things that are fearful and wonder, God, where are you?" The song says, "Fresh courage take, the clouds you so much dread." The storm clouds that you're seeing on the horizon of your life. He says, "These clouds, are big with mercy and shall break with blessings on your head." That's what we're going to see today. Blessings flood and break over the heads of the people in Ruth 3.

So, since it's been a couple weeks, or maybe if you weren't here for Ruth 2 or all of them, let's just take a step back and remember or let me give a refresher about Ruth, the Book of Ruth. So this book is written about 3000 years ago, but like I said in my prayer, it is important for you and I to know the truths that are in this book for today. So if you're taking notes, let's start with point #1) ***Ruth Recap. This is the Ruth recap.***

So what has happened in chapters 1 and 2 to get us to chapter 3? Ruth is the work of a literary genius, and I wish I could show you all the intricate details because it's fascinating. He has created an almost perfect story. It's been called the greatest love story ever written. Some say, It makes *Romeo and Juliet* look like a trashy romance novel, you find in a used bookstore. The events took place around 1100 BC. And well it means this is not a story. This is not fiction. This book is history. This book is about people as real as you and me and events that really happened. This is the time of the Judges, a real time where it says that God's people did what was ever right in their own eyes, meaning they did whatever they wanted to do instead of what God wanted them to do. Which means that the Book of Judges is full of disobedience and idle worship and pride, rape, adultery, lying, human sacrifice, heresy, chaos and civil war. Ruth though, is about people who are faithful in an incredibly wickedly unfaithful time, which might be a little parallel to our day. So may we be faithful and almost equally, I would say even more so worse times in our lives today. Now let's think through chapters 1 and 2. The book begins with a family and they're not finding any food to eat. It's a famine. There's no food. They're in the city of

Bethlehem, the House of Bread and there's no bread, and so they're in trouble. So this family, a father and a mom and two sons, they decide they're going to go from Bethlehem and they're going to walk about 80 miles in the desert over to Moab. This is not a good idea, this is foolish. This is an 80-mile walk, 100 mile walk to a place with different people, no family and friends, different values. They don't have the Word of God and they worship a different god, a demon god named Chemoch. Out of community, they're out of Bible teaching for 10 years, all for money and comfort, which many people still sacrifice and do today. Money, comfort, don't worry about church. Don't worry about that stuff. They give their sons to two idol worshipers in and marriage, and then it fast forwards and it just says all three men died. So now there's three widows in a culture with no community college, where you could just go to school and get some skills and then enter the workforce. No, they are meant for either destitution or prostitution in that culture. They're in trouble. They've got to do something fast. Naomi hears, hey, the famine is over in Bethlehem. They've got bread now, so I'm going home. And the two daughters-in-law, because Naomi is this incredible mother-in-law, they're like, we're going to sacrifice our family and we're going to follow you and so they do. One of them decides, ah, I'm not going to follow you anymore. I'm going to go back. But Ruth says, I'm going to follow you. Where you go, I'm going to go. Your God will be my God. Your people will be my people. I'm going to give my life to Yahweh, the God of Israel and they're going to bury me next to you. That's how committed I am to you. That's crazy. So they arrive in Bethlehem. Look at chapter 1. They arrive in Bethlehem. The people are like, wow, is that Naomi? What's going on there? But Naomi is a senior into cranky pants. That's what we call our kiddos, when they're cranky, our two girls. She's not happy.

Look at 1:20, "Do not call me Naomi." That means pleasant. "Call me Mara for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me." I'm a cranky old woman, bitter. "I went away full and the Lord has brought me back empty. He's disciplined me. Look, "Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me." So she takes a step back and she says, 'All the hard times in my life are the result of God's discipline on my life, or foolish sinful decisions that my husband made.' And then, but in 1:8-9 she says to her daughters-in-law, "May God bless you and be kind to you and give you husbands. May he work in your life." So whether good or bad, Naomi knows that God is at work. She has this foundation that God is sovereign, in control of everything, both good times and bad.

This couldn't be more clear in chapter 2, as chapter 2 begins with a man named Boaz. He's a relative of Naomi's dead husband, which is going to be key. It says there in 2:1, "He's a worthy man." Speaks of his character, his influence in the community. Probably it speaks to the fact that he's wealthy too. So he's a godly successful man who owns the field that 2:3 says Ruth, "Just happened to go working in his field." She's depending on an ancient form of welfare, where landowners didn't harvest the edges of their field and whatever fell to the ground, they had to leave there, so that the poor could come and harvest what they left and they could pick up what was dropped and they would have food. So she's going to go do that. Ruth and Naomi, it means they're going to eat. They're going to be okay. They're going to have food. She's determined to make sure her mother-in-law's taken care of, and she is. But this was backbreaking work. This was hard. This wasn't easy. This was out in the hot sun, dirty sweaty work, but Ruth doesn't care. It doesn't matter to her. And wouldn't she know who shows up at his own field as Ruth is in there, Boaz, the relative, Ruth doesn't know is a relative, but really needs to be a relative but she doesn't know that yet. You know that because you read 2:1. She doesn't know that because she's not the author. So then what happens is, he's like, I've heard about you and because I've heard

about your character, I'm going to be super kind to you and generous. And so he just showers her with blessing. And what that means is that she and Naomi are not destitute anymore. They're not going to starve to death. They're going to eat. They're going to survive. Everything's going to be okay. His generosity is so over the top, that he gives her somewhere between 25 and 50 times the normal worker's rations for a day. So look at 2:17, "So she gleaned in the field until evening and she beat out what was gleaned. And it was about an ephah of barley." And ephah is somewhere between 30 and 50 pounds of barley. So it's not just, oh, you've got enough to eat for the day. You're set for a long time. You're set for weeks. They're not going to die. They're not going to starve to death. Boaz is an extension of God's compassion and protection for needy people. Then, Ruth has all this barley, all this grain and she shows up, mother-in-law. Naomi, she sees this massive amount, this 40 pounds, let's say, of grain. Naomi, look at verse 20, she sees right through the physical, right to the spiritual and goes, no, there's something more going on here. Verse 20, she sees this and then she says, "May he be blessed by the Lord." The one who's done this to you. Notice, "Whose kindness." That's the Lord's kindness. "Whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead." Translation, she's saying, God hasn't abandoned us. All these hard times doesn't mean that he's kicked us to the curb and we're done. No, he's causing all things to work together for good, because he's with us. He loves us.

This brings us then to chapter 3. Chapter 2 ends about two to three months before chapter 3 begins. So there's this two-to-three-month period in between, where six days a week, Ruth is out there working, sweaty, hot sun, getting more food in order to take to her mother-in-law and make sure that everyone's okay. As we enter chapter 3, there's a conversation going on. The harvest is over. Naomi and Ruth are talking and it just starts with a question. So let's call this section point **#2) the Risky Resolution. Risky Resolution.** Yeah, you'll see. This has got some issues.

So what I'm going to do is, I'm going to try to tell the entire story of chapter 3. And then at the very end, I'm going to give us some application for, so how can we take all of this and apply this to our lives? The events of chapter 3, listen, take place between sunset and sunrise in one day. And it starts with the problem, and the problem is this. Naomi's probably 30 to 50 years older than Ruth. Now we're like, oh, what's the big deal? Well in our culture, that might not be a big deal. In that culture, Naomi dies, Ruth is in trouble. She has no covering. She has no help. She's got nothing. She will go back to being destitute, may have to go back to Moab. She's in trouble. Naomi loves her. We saw this in chapter 1. There's deep affection for each other. She wants what's best for Ruth. So look at verse 1, Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, 'My daughter, should I not seek rest for you? That it may be well with you?' Translation, honey, you need a man. That's what that means, you need a man. That's what the word rest in verse one refers to. You can see this in 1:9. It refers to having the stability and security that comes from being married to a good husband. Naomi knows that she is Ruth's only security in Bethlehem. Without her, she's going back to Moab. She's in trouble, back to destitution. She's done. With a good husband, look at verse 1, the end. Things, verse 1, "Will go well with you." You'll be okay. You'll be protected and cared for everything. You'll be fine. So she's going to resolve this problem. Naomi has a plan. Verse 2, "Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were?" So you've been following these young women and as they drop things for you, you pick it up and we get food. And this is great, but he's, the boss is our relative. And we read that and go, well, what's the big deal! This is critical for this entire book right here. I'm going to go into more of it next week but he's, what's called a redeemer. The redeemer was a family member, a brother, uncle, cousin, maybe a larger extended family member, who could come in to help when other family members were in trouble, and that's Boaz. So Naomi and Ruth, in trouble. Boaz, he could

be a redeemer. 2:1 says, notice 2:1. It says that Boaz, "Is a relative of her husband, a worthy man of the Clan of Elimelech." Elimelech was Naomi's husband. So he's part of the extended family, which means he could help us. He can help us. Harvest time is over. Look at verse 2. So she says, "See, he's winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor." Now I don't know if that's like, hey, look out the window. There he is. You see him? I don't know. Or maybe she just knows that's where he is going to be. Whatever it is, she says, "He's winnowing tonight." Anyone used that word this week? Winnow. Yeah, me neither. So what is that? Well, in growing culture, you've harvested all your grain, your barley, your wheat. You've got all of that in these big piles. And so what you would do is, you'd go to a threshing floor, this hard, packed dirt, maybe a rock out cropping on a hill, and you would take your piles and you'd take a big hammer and you just hit them, over and over again. And what you're doing is you're trying to take the barley and the wheat and separate it from the stalks and the husk around it. You're trying to separate all of that. Okay, that's called threshing. And then what you would do is you'd take a big pitchfork after you've done that for a while and you'd throw it up in the air. And as you'd throw it up in the air, the wind would come by and all the heavy stuff, all the grain would just fall straight down, but all the other stuff would blow away in the wind. And that's how you would separate the wheat and the barley from the stuff that you can't eat. Well, that's what he's going to be doing. So here's her plan. You're ready for this? Here we go. Secluded place outside the city. They're going to be able to talk privately.

So verse 3. Here's my plan, "Ruth, wash therefore and anoint yourself. Put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he is 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." So at this point, we need to call a timeout, right? Moms, dads, is this what you're going to say to your daughter someday when she needs to get married? Right? No, I'm not saying that to my girls. You want to get married? Okay, here's how. Take a look at Ruth, right? Clean up, dress up, crawl into a guy's tent that you're interested in. Wait until he's had a good meal and he is falling asleep, and then uncover his feet, lay down next to him. And when he wakes up, say to him, what do you want to do now? Probably not a good idea, right?

Listen, this is descriptive, not prescriptive. Do you know what that means? Descriptive means, it's just describing what happened. Prescriptive is describing what should happen. This is not prescriptive. This is not what should happen, but this is what Naomi said to do. So the question is, well, what in the world is she doing? This doesn't seem wise at all. If you walk through verse 3 and 4, she's telling Ruth, hey, I'm going to give you some tips to get a favorable outcome, if you follow my directions. See, think about it. For two to three months, Boaz has only seen her as dirty and stinky. She says, So take a bath. Put on something that smells nice and put your cloak on. Now that word cloak in verse 3, is not fancy. So if you have a translation that says, "And put on your best clothes," that's not what a cloak is. A cloak is like a walking rug. It's going to be cold out there, so you need to be warm, it's something that men and women wore cloaks. So this is just a generic piece of clothing. So what I want you to see ... Oh also, Naomi might be saying this to Ruth, Ruth, you've been wearing the clothing of a widow for a long time now. And so, now's the time to take that off and now's the time to show that you are available for marriage. So, what I want you to see is what's not here. She didn't get all gussied up. She's not wearing jewelry. Her hair's not braided contrary to many just trite scholars at this point. I mean, I would highly recommend you not doing this, but you can get books and read about this Book of Ruth here. And you will read, "scholar after scholar", saying, 'Naomi's acting like a pimp and she is pimping

out Ruth, in order to do a strip-tease with Boaz, so that she uses her feminine wiles in order to grab him as a husband.' That's what people say about this. It could not be any more opposite of this passage. Right? But that's what they say. I think that assessment says more about the "scholars," than it does about Naomi and Ruth here.

What is Naomi doing? Men, verse 4, slept at the threshing floor, right? There's a big pile of their profits and it's just out in the open. So you slept there to make sure that thieves didn't take it and animals didn't eat it. And so that's what he's doing. So she tells her, notice verse 4. She says, "Observe the place where he lies." Translation, you don't want to do this with the wrong guy. Why? Because uncovering his feet is a marriage proposal. That's what that is. Now you take a step back. This is incredibly risky, right? Naomi wants them to talk privately. Something that would be impossible in the daytime. But what if someone sees them talking on the threshing floor in the middle of the night? That is risqué, right there. Even a hint of inappropriate behavior would ruin their reputations. So this is risky, but it gets worse. What if he rejects her? Well, at least it's private. So no one's going to know her reputation is safe rather than the shame that would happen in public. But it's also risky because what if Boaz sees this as an invitation to a good time? She's going to be out there all by herself, nobody to protect her. What if he sees it as an invitation and he's not flattered by it. He's actually angry, because he's a godly man. So he rejects her, mocks her and says, I thought you were the real deal, but you're awful. Get out of here and destroys her reputation. What if that happens? What if this. What if he sees it for what it is, a marriage proposal, but he's like, I'm not interested. Sorry, get out of here. Mocks her. I mean after all, think about it. He is wealthy, influential, well respected. She is destitute, forges all day for food and lives with her bitter mother-in-law. I mean, I don't think anybody on Match or eHarmony is going to look at that profile and go, what a catch, give me that one. Naomi, this is your plan. This is awful. This is the worst plan ever. This has like a four in one chance of failure, utter failure.

Look at verse 5, And she replied, "All that you say I will do." The plan is risky, provocative, risqué. There's a ton hanging in the balance and Ruth is just unfazed. No questions. She doesn't seek any reason. She raises no objections. She just trusts Naomi and she does exactly what Naomi tells her to do. Look at verse 6, "So she went down to the threshing floor." Probably, the city's up on the hills. Actually it is. I've been to Bethlehem. "And goes down into the hills, where the threshing floor is and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her. 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," like a ninja, "And uncovered his feet and laid down."

So, let's call verses 6 to 15, point #3) ***The Ridiculous Response***. We could actually call it the ridiculous request and ***The Ridiculous Response***, because nothing in this section is normal. It is all ridiculous. Now, everything Naomi predicted happens exactly as she said. Everything she told Ruth to do, Ruth does exactly as she said. Notice verse 7, it says that, "His heart was merry." This does not mean he was drunk. What this means is two things. First, it means that he's been enjoying the fruit of his labor. That he's got all of the profits from all of the grain that they've winnowed. And he's probably had dinner with his guys and it's been a great night and his belly is full. And he is laying down, he's looking at the stars, enjoying the good life. Then second, it's also a clue from the author that, wait a minute. What Naomi said is going to happen. It looks like it's going in that good direction. The favorable condition is being met. He had a good day, his belly's full, smile on his face. And notice where he fell asleep. It says, "At the end of the heap of grain." This was likely at the end of the threshing floor. Why is that important? Because it was in

the middle. There might be other people around, but at the very end where nobody else is, that's perfect for the privacy that Ruth and Boaz need for this conversation. So this is perfect. Everything is working, could not be any more perfect. And we don't know how much time passes, but he's asleep. He's so asleep that when Ruth comes over, takes the cloak or whatever off his feet and lays down next to him, he doesn't even wake up. Now look at verse 8, "At midnight." So sometime later, "The man was startled and turned over." The text doesn't say what startled him. Maybe I don't know about you, when you got the air conditioning going and your feet are hanging out, that wakes me up all the time, right? So maybe that's what's happening. It's cold and his feet are hanging out. He's like, oh, it's kind of cold. He rolls over to look at his feet and he's like, Whoa! Actually look at the text. This is so cool. The author kind of puts us into his head. Verse 8, "He turns over and behold, a woman lay at his feet." What in the world's going on here, right? We experience this moment through Boaz's eyes. It's so cool and how does he respond? How's he going to respond? Verse 9, "Who are you?" It's dark. She's clean, so he doesn't recognize her maybe. I don't know. Verse 9, She answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant for you are a redeemer." In verse 4, Naomi says to Ruth, "Wait for him to tell you what to do." And what does Ruth do? She just tells him what to do, right? That's what's going on here. She says, "I'm your servant." You see that? She says it twice. The translation, I'm weak. I'm vulnerable. I need protection. She's emphasizing this. I really need protection, "You are a redeemer". You are supposed to care for and protect a needy in your family like me. I'm needy and I'm needy for a husband, so marry me. This is ridiculous, right? Think about it. He's a man, she's a woman. He's much older, she's younger. He's rich, she's poor. He's a Jew, she's a Moabite. He's the boss, she's a volunteer at his place of employment. Oh and by the way, she proposes marriage. Now come on. There's only one thing more ridiculous than this request and it is Boaz's response. In verse 10, And he said, "May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter." This is a miracle. The original audience would've been reading this and chuckling with unbelief. They're like, no way that he just did this. There's no way he accepts her right now. Then though, after the chuckle, they breathe the sigh relief. Why? Because maybe Naomi's crazy plan is going to work.

Let me remind you of something, if you were here, that I said a couple times ago that in chapter 1,2,3,4 and all of the chapters, whenever there is something that is just ridiculous, miraculous, that is just not normal, what the author is doing in Ruth is he is saying, 'God is at work at this point.' Because these kinds of things just don't happen. I mean, look at verse 10, "You have made this last kindness greater than the first and that you've not gone after young men, whether poor or rich." What in the world does that mean? How is what just happened, kindness? How is this little converse, this marriage proposal, kindness. And how is this kindness greater than the first kindness, which was, by the way, when she left Moab with her mother-in-law to make sure that her mother-in-law would be protected for the rest of her life. How is this more kind than that? I'll tell you how. It's kinder because she's sacrificing her happiness. Boaz is amazed because he says there, "You could have gone after younger men. You could have gone after them for love. You could have gone after them for money and protection. You could have gone after younger men, but you came after me, old man." Why is that important? Notice what she says, "You are a redeemer." This is so critical. What Ruth is saying is this, 'I'm going to sacrifice my happiness to make sure that Naomi is taken care of, even the happiness of marriage. I will marry someone who's older than me. I will marry somebody who is who's that much different than me, so that Naomi can be cared for.' That's why he sees this. He understands this as the supreme act of loyalty. She will even sacrifice marital happiness, so she thinks, in order to protect her mother-

in-law. He's old, not the most eligible bachelor in Bethlehem, but once again, Naomi is Ruth's priority.

So what is he going to do? Verse 11, "Now my daughter, do not fear." And everybody reading goes, 'Ah, yes.' Doesn't have to worry how he is going to respond. They don't have to worry anymore. "Do not be afraid. I will do for you all that you ask." Why? Why are you going to do this? This doesn't make any sense. Again, this is so upside down. Why? Notice what he says, "I'm going to do this because all my fellow townsmen know, you are a worthy woman." I'm not doing this because I have to. I'm not doing this because I'm forced to by some law. I'm doing this because of your character. I will do this because you are a godly woman. That is just remarkable. Boaz has become the answer to his own prayer. Look at 2:12. Boaz is amazed at the kindness that Ruth shows Naomi. And in verse 12 he says, chapter 2, "The Lord repay you for what you have done." Here's this blessing. The Lord repay you for this kindness you showed her. "And a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, whose wings you've come to take refuge." In 3:11, he becomes the answer to his own prayer. And at this moment we are all set up to read and they lived happily ever after, until verse 12. "Now it is true that I am a redeemer." Yay. "Yet, there is a redeemer nearer than I." You're just raised up, drop off the cliff. Oh no, right?

There's a relative closer, which means that here's the family unit that needs help and it was the closest family member that gets first dibs. And it's not just first dibs on marrying Ruth, it's also first dibs on all of Elimelech's property. That's the idea here. You don't just marry Ruth. You get all of Elimelech's property and Ruth. And so he is like there's another guy and in this moment, I picture Kevin Costner as Boaz and I picture Danny DeVito is the other guy. And I'm like, oh no, Ruth is going to get married but now she doesn't know who. Right? Boaz though, he's not going to be shady. He's going to follow the rules. Look at verse 13, "Remain tonight and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good." Everyone reads this is like this is God's little love story, and I'm like, dude, if he loves her, why would he say that? Good. If he redeems you, good. I'm like, that just doesn't make sense, if he's in love with her. No, he's sacrificing and I'll say more about that in a second. "Let him do it." You'll be protected. You'll be cared for. You'll have a stable life, you and Naomi. Everything will be fine, thank God. "But if he's not willing to redeem you then," and he makes this solemn oath, "As the Lord lives, I will redeem you." Ruth just lie down until the morning. Why? Because the city gates are likely closed at this time. It's probably too dangerous at night for a young woman to be walking around in the middle of the night, and also to protect their reputations. What if someone saw her leaving? It would destroy their reputation. It would probably also make things really hard in negotiations with this other redeemer. He could just keep upping the ante, hey, I know what you guys did last night. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, give me more, give me more. He makes this huge binding oath. And did you see the words in verse 13, "In the morning?" Did you see that? You know what that means? It means that Boaz isn't going to wait for, Oh, I'll get to that in a week. There's a lot going on at my job. I got all this barley stuff and I got to ... He's, I'm going to take care of this today. Right now. I'm not going to wait any longer.

Then, take a look at verse 14, "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." So she's up before anyone can recognize her. Before she returns home, he tells her, don't tell anyone verse 15. And then he says, "Bring the garment you were wearing and hold it out." So she's got this big parka thing. He's like, hold this thing out. And he gives her six scoops, I

think six hand scoops of barley. I don't think it was more than that, because verse 14 says what, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." So if she's walking around the city with like 80 pounds of barley on her back, it'd be like kind of obvious that she went to the threshing floor. She didn't grow that in her garden. And so she's got to conceal that. So he does that. He says that he puts it on her. He's like, Okay, let me get that for you, help you with that. Get it. Okay, good, and then she goes. And then 3:16 is the last little section and chapter 3 ends where it begins, with a conversation between Naomi and Ruth. Look of verse 16, "And when she came to her mother-in-law she said, 'How did you fare my daughter?'"

Let's call this last section, ***The Restful Reliance. The Restful Reliance.*** Imagine you're Naomi. You got this crazy, risky, provocative plan. Your like, go ahead, go take care of that. She loves her, so she doesn't hate her. So she cares about her deeply. This plan is risky. It's not like Ruth could have texted her, hey, everything went great. See in a minute. It's not happening. So maybe Naomi is tossing and turning and pacing, who knows? And then she asks Ruth, this funny question. The ESV says, verse 16, "How did you fare?" But the original that the Hebrew says is identical to verse 9, "Who are you?" So she comes in the house or HUD or wherever they live and she says, "Who are you?" Is it too dark in there? What's going on?

I don't think that's what it is. I think what Naomi's saying to her is, has your identity changed? Are you someone's fiancé now? Ruth responds, verse 16, "Then she told her all that the man had done for her." She summarizes what we know from the account saying, and then she adds something that we don't know saying, this here's what Boaz says to her, "These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'You must not go back empty handed to your mother-in-law.'" These words recall part of a conversation as she was leaving and they are loaded with meaning, and I want you to see this.

So see that word in verse 17, "Empty handed?" Turn to 1:21. I read this to you earlier. Naomi is showing up. She's going into the city of Bethlehem and everyone's like, oh, who's this? There's a buzz going on. Naomi's home. She's cranky. And so she says in verse 21, "I went away full." I had a husband and sons and everything was great. "I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back." What? "Empty," same word. I don't know whether Boaz knew that she said this in 1:21 or not, but God knew. And so what's happening here? What we're seeing is that Naomi has come full circle. The story starts and she's full. Eventually she says, "I'm empty." And now in chapter 3 with Boaz's character, she's all the way back to full again. She's not empty anymore. The barley is more than an act of generosity. When you read it, it's like, oh, he's so generous. This is not generosity. You know what this is? This is a down payment. He's saying, I'm giving you this barley as a token and pledge that I'm coming back to redeem you and Ruth. He is making a promise with this barley. And this barley, barley is a significant part of this book and I want you to see this too. So look at 1:22. You're still in chapter 1, notice how the chapter ends. 1:22, "And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest." Well, that's interesting. Look at the end of 2:23, "So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the," what? "Barley and wheat harvests." Huh. And now chapter 3 ends with this six measures of barley. What's happening here? Barley is more than just, in this book, it's more than just a grain that you smash and you turn into bread. Barley is evidence that God is showing his grace to Naomi. In chapter 1, they show up when? Destitute, starving, just as the harvest is starting and they're going to be able to eat. That's grace. Chapter 2, they get this massive amount of barley and look at 2:20. "Naomi says, May he be blessed by the Lord whose kindness is not forsaken the dead or the living." She sees through the barley and goes, No, there's more here to this. This

is proof that God is with us. He's faithful, and then chapter 3, Chapter 3, this is more than a gift. This is God saying to her, you can trust me. I'm in this. I'm with you. God may not have been mentioned much in chapter 3, but it doesn't mean He wasn't moving.

And in our lives, we don't see these. Most of us, we don't see the miraculous, the clouds parting and, oh, I need to pay my bills, and suddenly, a \$1,000 just shows up. Whoa, where'd that come from out of nowhere? That's not what we see. But what, we see is what we see here. It's little things like a few scoops of barley that say to us, I'm here. I'm with you. Don't be afraid. Don't be discouraged. You can trust me and let me show you, in very tangible, real ways. Ruth has fulfilled her role for caring for Naomi. She got Boaz to marry her. And so verse 17, these are the last words of Ruth in this book. And verse 18 are the last words of Naomi and they're an expression of confidence that God is at work in their situation. Look at verse 18 of chapter three. "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.'" That little phrase there, "How the matter turns out," describes what happens when you throw dice. You don't know what it's going to do until the matter turns out and then you see, okay, that was a score. Flip a coin. That's what she's saying. She says, hey, there's nothing more we can do now. It's out of our hands. So just rest and see what Boaz, but really let's see what God is going to do, and that's what happens. The storm clouds of desolation are gone. The blessing is now breaking on their heads. Naomi trust that Boaz is going to take care of this. Everything is good. Ruth is going to be married soon, but is it going to be Kevin Costner? Is it going to be Danny DeVito? And that's for next week.

So that's Chapter 3 but what's the point. What's the point of all that? Why is this in the Bible for you and me? I think the reason is, that you and I need to Appreciate God's People. Appreciate God's People. Why do I say that? Throughout the Bible, especially the first seven books of the Old Testament, God is taking lemons and making lemonade. You know that, right? You read these early chapters of the Bible and it's like sin after sin after sin. All these people that God's working through, they're liars and they're fornicators. It's just awful, and God's just sitting there going, here we go again, turning a lemon into lemonade. Taking what you meant for evil and turning it into good.

He does that all throughout Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, but not Ruth. He doesn't have to do it in Ruth, right? Why? Because these people are godly. These people follow God. They're faithful. I think the author wants us to marvel at two things. One is this miraculous provision of God. He's compassionate. He cares for the vulnerable, but how does He do that? He does it through godly people. He does it through people who follow Him, who do what He says, who express His character. His character coming through their lives. The word repeated over and over again in the Book of Ruth is the word, kindness. There's not a word in English that translates this word well. And so you follow this word throughout the Bible and it's translated kindness, but it's translated compassion, mercy, grace, love, faithfulness, loyalty. There's all these different ways to translate, because there's no one English word that captures this Hebrew word. But I want you to think about it for our characters so far.

Think about Naomi. Chapter 3 begins and she's thinking about Ruth, things aren't going to be good for her. I need to find her a husband. I got a plan and that entire plan as risky as it was, was to bless Ruth and to help her. That's kindness. Think about Ruth, 3:10. Boaz says, hey, it was kind of you to leave your homeland and follow your mother-in-law. It was kind of you to come to this threshing floor and propose marriage to me, so that you could be a blessing to your mother-in-law and protect her. Everything that Ruth does, everything she does in this book,

there's not one thing that she does in this book that is not an expression of kindness, this word. And that's why she's called a worthy woman, which is the same adjective used of Boaz. Aside from how he treats his workers, think about this kindness to this destitute, poor, starving widow. People would just push her aside because she's a foreigner. She worships other gods that could pull us away from the true God, but yet he's not just kind to her, he's excessively generous with her. And then there's chapter 3.

Then you'll see next week in chapter 4, he's willing to have a child with Ruth, so that the name of her dead husband could continue and not die. Everything this guy does is not for his own personal gain, but for others. Do you know why that is? Because in this book, the most kind person and Ruth is not any of those three, the most kind person in this book is God. Amen. Three times he's called kind. 1:8, "Naomi praise that, "May God deal kindly with you as you have dealt kindly with my husband and my sons." 1:20, Naomi recognizes that Boaz's generosity is not only a reflection of his kindness, but his God's kindness coming through him, so that they don't starve to death. And now chapter 3, that kindness is being extended beyond food, to now giving both of these destitute widows an overall life of stability and security. What we're seeing in all of these miraculous, ridiculous, unheard-of responses is actually God's kindness coming through the godly character of these three. And this word redeemer used for Boaz is also used for God.

So Isaiah 41:14, Yahweh is, "Your Redeemer who helps you." See the connection there? He's your Redeemer, but He helps. Isaiah 52:9, "The one who has redeemed Jerusalem is the one who comforted his people." He's the Redeemer and He comforts. He brings grace and help and compassion. Isaiah 54:8, "Yahweh your Redeemer will have compassion on you." This shows the closeness of His relationship with His people. He treats His people as if we were His family. I mean, we do call him Father for a reason, right? And Jesus in Hebrews 2:11, you know what he's called in Hebrews 2:11? He's called, our Brother. Christian, in the kindness of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz, we see reflections of the kindness of God, that is ultimately expressed in Christ. Galatians 3:13 says, "Redeemed us from the curse of the law, by becoming a curse for us." He didn't redeem us from starvation. He didn't redeem us from destitution. He redeemed us from hell, rescues us from hell. He saw the need and He ran to the need. But even more than that, Galatians 4:5 says, Jesus "Redeems those who are under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." Christian, you have been adopted into God's family, so He really does treat you like family because you are family. You call God Father, but think about that. Who else calls God Father in the Bible? Oh, Jesus. You know why that's important? Because you get to call Father, you get to call God Father. You get to use the same title for God that Jesus uses for God. Jesus takes his relationship with God and He shares it with you. So you don't call Him stepfather. You don't call Him something less than the same thing Jesus calls Him, because you get the same relationship that He has. That's what it means to be saved. If you're not sure that you have that, this is not just, Oh, I don't get to go to hell. This means that the God of the universe is your Father and protects you and redeems you and cares for you and is compassionate towards you, now and for the rest of your life.

There's really every reason for everyone in Ruth, not to be kind to one other. Think, I mean, it's not a stretch for Ruth to go, Yeah, I'm going to go home. I'm not going to go with you there. It's really not a stretch for Boaz to go, Man, you stink. Good to know you. My life's pretty good. I don't need all of these. My life is taken care of here. No. No, not at all. These people, God's kindness comes out of them and in that, they become admirable. So in the same way, let's be a Church of Naomi's, who put what's best for others above what's best for us, whether that's where

we live or go to school or our jobs, our families, our Church. Man, let's be a Church full of Boazes, who are kind to the women that we work with and who work for us. Who create a sense of security for the women that we interact with, whether those women are at our jobs, at our school, in our families, like Boaz was kind of Ruth and Naomi, part of his family. Kind to our closest relationship, our wives. If you were here for the Men's Conference, you heard Dr. Montoya. He did a whole sermon on the kindness of Boaz, saying things like, "Be compassionate to your wives like Boaz, generous with your wives. Protect them, honor them. Be sensitive toward them. Be respectful to them, just like Boaz was to Ruth. Not mean, not harsh, not stingy, not abusive in any way, not disrespectful, but loving her, nourishing her, cherishing her." Single ladies, don't settle for anything less than a kind man. Anything less. Ladies let's be a Church of Ruth's, who are kind and loyal and selfless and hardworking and God fearing.

To close, did you know that the Jewish Bible is organized differently than our Bibles? Did you know that? We've got our Bibles and Ruth is the eighth book of the Bible and it comes after Judges and before First Samuel, but in the Jewish Bible is different than that. The Jewish Bible, it comes after the Book of Proverbs. And that's interesting. And the reason it's interesting is because what Ruth 3:11 says. Go back to 3:11. The last words, Boaz says to Ruth, "You are a worthy woman." That phrase is only used three times in the Old Testament, Proverbs 12:4 and Proverbs 31:10. Proverbs 31:10 says this, "A worthy wife, an excellent wife who can find? She's far more precious than jewels." Well, Boaz found one. I guess, technically she found him, right? But you know. Proverbs 31 gives the description. She gives the profile of the excellent wife. She's the woman to be. She's the wife to pray for. Then Ruth, right after Proverbs 31, is the picture. She's the portrait. She's the living example of the Proverbs 31 woman. If you read Proverbs 31 and compare it to Ruth, you see a constant amount of crossovers between the two. Like the Proverbs 31 woman, she's trustworthy, hardworking takes care of her family selflessly. She's compassionate, strong, wise and kind. People see her at the gates. The people in the community go, she is incredible, just like they did. Just like we saw Boaz say about Ruth. Just be a church full of people that look like the kinds of people the Bible encourages us to admire. People like Boaz, Ruth and Naomi. Because when we do that, it's not like, oh I got to muster this up. Okay, get going. No, when we do this, it's Galatians 2:20, right? It's, "No longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." What happens is, He shines His kindness. He shines His love out from us to other people, so that people walk around and they're like, that is an unheard of ridiculous, miraculous kind of way that you treat each other. Just like the way that these people treated each other. There must be something different. Tell me what it is. What did Jesus say? "People will know us," by what? "Our love for one another." Let's pray-