

GM // onliners // newbies

If you have a Bible we'll be reading from Ruth 3:1-6 today.

Ruth 3:1-6

- 1** Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? **2** Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. **3** 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. **4** 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.” **5** And she replied, “All that you say I will do.”
- 6** So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her.

We see an unpopular part of what it means to live out Real Love: **Submission.**

And the title of this sermon is Real Love Submits ...

Submission gets a bad wrap ... b/c we've distorted it.

Christians have used it to clobber women into a slavish submissiveness to husbands ...

Where it looks less like a loving relationship and more like a King reigning over his lowly serfs.

That isn't the Bible's vision of submission.

That's the sinful distortion and demeaning version of submission.

But submission done God's way is a beautiful thing.

And this isn't a sermon to wives.

This is a sermon to everyone ...

Because submission is what God created us for ...

And the seeming paradox ... is that being a submitted person opens yourself to a life of freedom ...

But it also is an essential ingredient of Real Love.

The Christian understanding of personhood is based on the tenet that we are created in God's image. [God made us like him.]

And God is love.

And he is love because he isn't just an isolated person ...

The Christian God is three persons, yet one God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

To understand submission we have to start there.

Jesse, are you saying there is a submissiveness in the Godhead.

Yes, I am.

It is a joyful, willing submissiveness.

We see this most clearly in the Gospels.

Jesus repeatedly said that he always did what the Father told him to do.

The Father would give to his Son Jesus whatever he asked.

The Holy Spirit worked, applied, and brought to bear all the Father and Son purposed to do.

The idea behind submission isn't a groverling to an evil authority.

Submission ... as God designed is beautiful when rooted in a relationship of love.

It's a willingness to "go along with" and "help meet the desires" of those you love and trust.

But submission is always going to be a challenge for us b/c we live in a broken sinful world.

But Real Love doesn't call us to retreat from submission b/c of that ...

Instead it restores us into a life of submission.

And this is what we see in Ruth's response to Naomi's commands.

Ruth isn't a little kid. She's been married and widowed.

She is a full grown woman.

To really appreciate what's happening here we need to get into what exactly Naomi is asking of Ruth.

What we read doesn't seem like that big of a deal.

It sounds like ... "Ruth take a shower so you don't stink."

"Go to where Boaz is sleeping ... pull his blankie over his feet and lie down."

"At some point he'll wake up and give you some instructions."

If this was some kind of mating dance ... it's pretty weird, even for ancient standards.

Surely there were better ways to get Boaz' attention.

As strange as Naomi's plan is, it's still seems pretty safe for Ruth.

But actually it is anything but that!

Naomi is telling her to do something risky and potentially very costly to Ruth.

Ruth knows this ... but still she obeys.

That's submission ...

Submission Means Obeying Even When It's Hard To Do

Ruth has a lot to lose here.

As a foreigner she's worked hard to prove her character in this new town.

She's built relational equity by the way she's served and worked hard for Naomi.

She now has a good reputation.

But Naomi is asking her to risk it all by going down to the threshing floor after dark.

See, the during the harvest season most of the laborers, and all the gleaning ladies would go home at the end of the day.

But some of the men would stay at the threshing floor and winnow the heads of grain which separated the chaff [worthless part] from the good stuff.

This was done in the late evening, possibly even into the dark.

Afterward, the men would finish the day with food and drink.
[it was the barley harvest.] [probably an IPA]

It was during this time, once the men were tired and tipsy, that "ladies of the night" would come to the threshing floor.

This didn't happen everywhere, but it was quite common.
Even in Israel.

Naomi knows this.

Still she sends out Ruth like a “lady of the night.”

If this goes bad Ruth will lose all her credibility and good standing in Bethlehem. [reputation shot]

There may be a lot to gain for Ruth and Naomi ... if it goes well...

But there is a lot to lose as well.

I like how Naomi pitches it to Ruth ...

“My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?”

That is what we call “buttering someone up.”

Naomi is laying it on thick b/c she knows what she's about to demand of Ruth.

And Ruth doesn't give any objections.

She hears Naomi's plan and obeys every detail.

Naomi isn't putting herself out there.

She is putting Ruth in a vulnerable position.

**Ruth had every right to tell her where to stick that idea.
:)**

But she doesn't.

She fully gives herself over to Naomi and her plan.

That's the essence of submitting to someone.

Submission Means Giving Up Power And Becoming Vulnerable

We live in a world that celebrates power and doesn't reward vulnerability.

Our culture reinforces a narrative that says Real Love is for the foolish ... B/C Real love requires you to be vulnerable.

It seduces us with the promise that power is the way to live safe and secure.

Power is the pathway to getting everything you want.

I remember a Seinfeld episode where the whole premise was about "getting the upper hand in the relationship."

George Castanza had it ... then lost it ... and then spent the whole episode trying to get it back.

While power gives you the illusion of control, security and safety ... it is devastating for relationships.

B/C Real Love demands vulnerability.

True love ... God-like love requires us to open our hearts to someone else.

The heart represents the most real part of who we are.

And Real Love says to have a Real Relationship you must expose your heart to another person.

Dr. Dan Allender, a Christian counselor writes about this in his book *The Healing Path*

He talks about the danger of opening the heart:

**“Embracing a person...requires openness. Our arms must reach out to the other, which requires a position of vulnerability. To be open, extended, and reaching out is to be easy prey to one who might do us harm... As a consequence, we open our arms and hearts to few. And when those few hurt us, we close down and refuse to open our arms wide to others. In that soil--in that cynicism and suspiciousness--paranoia begins to grow.”
- Dan B. Allender**

Real Love compels us to take off our armor and let people into the most authentic parts of who we are.

That feels scary and dangerous.

But it is what we were created for.

The Bible opens with a man and a woman who were “naked and unashamed.”

Adam & Eve lived in the vulnerability of real love.

They kept nothing back ... they hid nothing from each other.

But when they sinned ... something changed.

Something stood between them.

There was an unseeable gap that couldn't be seen, but was physically manifest in the way they covered themselves with fig leaves.

“I'm not letting you see my most vulnerable & sensitive parts anymore.”

“I don't trust you anymore.”

They felt safe behind the fig leaves.

And this is what we do with our hearts as we walk in this broken sinful world.

We learn that people are unsafe. They hurt us and let us down.

So we learn how to keep our hearts safe and locked up.

We don't let people in to real “us”.

But isn't that smart? Isn't it wise?

To a degree it is.

You shouldn't give strangers access to your heart.

Proverbs says we should guard our heart with all vigilance.

That is the pain that we learn through our teenage years and our twenties.

Our desire for identity and intimacy pushes us into unwise risks.

We open our hearts fully to friends and romantic endeavors that end up wounding us deeply.

You can be foolish with your heart by opening it too much too soon.

But you can also be foolish with it by being so overprotective that you never open it to anyone.

As C.S. Lewis put it ...

“There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket – safe, dark, motionless, airless – it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations [anxious troubles] of love is Hell.” C.S. Lewis

That is the trouble of Real Love.

At some point it calls you to risk.

It calls you to be vulnerable ... to give up power.

It hands over control to someone else and says, “I trust you and I’ll do what you ask.”

Submission requires you to be vulnerable.

But here's the thing about submission... it absolutely matters, "Who It Is."

God doesn't demand you submit to everyone and everything.

He doesn't demand that you submit to evil or Satan.

Real Love Submits To The Good And Trustworthy

Ruth loves and trusts and believes in the God of Israel.

She's knows he is *hesed* love and full of goodness.

She knows that is also what Naomi believes and Boaz believes.

So, she isn't blindly submitting.

She is submitting because these two people are good and trustworthy b/c of the God they worship.

She knows you become like the one you worship.

If your god is sneaky and selfish and cruel ... you will reflect that.

And that isn't worthy of your submission.

Hundreds of years after Ruth, Israel would have a King named Ahab.

He was evil and worshipped demon gods that demanded worship that was evil.

Elijah was God's prophet to Israel during that time.

He did not live in submission to Ahab; he lived submitted to God.

But exceptions like that don't give us an excuse to live a life where we are submitted to no one.

If you live submitted to God he will lead you into relationships that are worthy of your submission.

That is essential to His redemption plan for everyone.

He doesn't save us into isolated silos.

He saves us into his church ... his body.

He knits us into it.

His church is a people radically changed and being renewed.

That is the context where we practice submission.

Because it is the community created by God's Real Love and is being cultivated by God's Real Love.

And so we walk according to God's Real Love.

Look at what Ephesians 5 says about the church...

Ephesians 5:1-2

**Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2
And walk in love[hese], as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

It then goes on to talk about what walking in love looks like...

All the things we should and shouldn't do.

And then it ends this way ...

Ephesians 5:21

21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

The passage starts with the command to walk in love and ends with a call to submit to each other.

That is what a loving church looks like.

But we should consider what that looks like practically.

How do we know if we are doing that?

I want to give us 2 basic markers.

I'm sure there's more ... but I'm only clever enough to come up with 2.

And you're stuck with me. :)

Marker 1:

- You are a meaningful part of a church. [the real you is known & accessible / your invested in people's lives]

Marker 2:

- There is a person who is a spiritual authority in your life. [Someone who can speak into your life. You receive their counsel and correction. Someone that is

known and trusted in the church.] [TV pastor /
podcaster can't be your spiritual authority. / No access
to each other!]

The place where we flourish in the freedom of God's grace
and love is IN the church.

Real Love and submission requires INcarnation!!!

For some of us this is difficult to believe because the church
is the source of serious hurt.

Maybe you've opened your heart in the past and the church
mishandled and trampled on your vulnerability.

That's hard to recover from.

With any relational hurt, it's tempting to lock up our hearts
and let no one in again.

We want this church to be a place of God's love and grace
and kindness.

As much as we pursue that and desire it ...

I can't guarantee you that you won't experience hurt.

I love my wife more than anyone else on the planet.

I THINK she would say the same about me.

But as much as we love each other, sometimes we hurt each other.

So what keeps us from closing off our hearts and living for ourselves instead of submitting to each other in love?

We need God's help.

We need to know and submit to His perfect love.

Real Love Submits To The Perfect Love Of God

Submitting ourselves to the God's love means we have to open our arms to him and be vulnerable.

There is no other way.

But God showed us that he is worthy of our submission.

He is not a cruel, angry, vengeful God that will tear our hearts to shreds.

We are always looking for proof that God is good.

That's what Jesus' incarnation was about.

He came to show us the Father.

John 14:9

Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”**

Jesus is all the proof you and I need to believe that God is worth submitting to.

Is he good?

Was Jesus good? Yes

Is he kind?

Was Jesus kind? Yes

Is he loving?

Did Jesus love? Yes

Jesus loved us so much that he endured the shame and pain of the cross so we could be freed from sin to live with him.

Faith in Jesus ... living by faith ... is submitting to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as being true.

It's opening ourselves up to the source of real love and saying come into my life.

And that is why salvation in Christ is not just being saved from our sins ...

It is a life of submission to God.

Living by faith is trusting He is good, regardless of what he allows to happen in our lives.

I think we live partially submitted to God.

We submit to the historic truth of Jesus dying on the cross for our sins.

But we have a harder time with submitting to God the Holy Spirit in our everyday.

The idea of a God who fills us and is present all the time.

That's less comfortable b/c it means a life of submission to Him.

But the Holy Spirit is the very relationship where the Real Love of God moves from an unbreakable true historic reality in Jesus ...

It moves into our present reality ...

Real Love isn't an abstraction ... it's an experience.

The Holy Spirit brings that experience.

The more you pursue that relationship ... the more frequently you ask the Holy Spirit to fill you.

The more you learn to listen to him and learn where you CAN listen to him. [WORD & PRAYER]

The more we do that ... the more you and I give God access to our hearts.

And the more he will pour out his perfect Real Love into it.

But that does mean you lose something as well.

You will lose your independence to call your own shots.

You will lose being the highest authority in your life.

The Holy Spirit will call you into a life of greater submission, but how can he do otherwise?

Remember ... that is who God is ... a loving community of 3 ... who joyfully and willingly submit to one another in love and trust.

As we give up our rights to be submitted to the love and goodness of God ...

The more free we become.

Free from fear, insecurity.

Free to receive God's healing for our pain.

Free to never walk alone b/c we have Him and His church along side us.

Living submitted to God is a scary prospect.

But every step you take into more submission opens you up to a deeper experience of his Real Love.

BAND COME UP

RESPOND

I want to invite all of us to respond right now.

This is an opportunity to take a step into submitting yourself to God's love.

Maybe you've never done that. You've never believed ... but today your feeling that tug to open your to Him ... to risk.

I dare you to respond and open your arms and ask God to show you he's real.

And as you experience that amazing love for the first time ... give yourself over and submit to His love.

Acknowledge your sins and your need for salvation.

If you are a Christian ...

What step is the Holy Spirit calling you to take today?

Whatever you are holding on to ... let it go ... open your arms and trust Him.

EXAMINE

Give everyone a minute to listen and respond.

COMMUNION

This is the unshakeable evidence that God's love is worth submitting to.

As we take this in faith we are confessing to God and everyone here that I am continuing to trust and submit to him.

[Body Broken / Blood Shed]