

GM // onliners / newbies

If you have Bible [Ruth 3:7]...

If you're new ... our series in Ruth is titled Real Love ...

It's a story that shows us what Real Love ... God-like love looks like in real life.

[prev. sermons available on app/online]

We are now at the climactic part of the story.

Ruth is going to Boaz in a way that could end very well or very poorly.

Let's read what happens.

Ruth 3:7-18

7 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 and uncovered his feet and lay down. 8 At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! 9 He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer." 10 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. 11 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. 12 And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. 13 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 the morning.”

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.” 15 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. 16 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, 17 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.’” 18 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.”

A Man ... a woman ... alone at night ... stars ... night breeze ... he's feeling merry [**“Can you feel the love tonight?” :)**]

We're all too familiar with this setup...

We think we know where it's headed.

While this scene does have some erotic tension and romantic overtures ... it never goes any further.

B/C they aren't controlled by their desires ...

They are controlled by Real Love which places commitment before desire.

Today's sermon is titled "Real Love Commits".

Real Love never leads to shallow relationships.

B/C Real Love's goal is deep intimacy (oneness).

But in order to have deep intimacy you must also have deep commitment.

When you follow the path of Real Love you become both deeply intimate (deeply interconnected) with people, but also deeply committed...

It's never one without the other.

And commitment is absolutely imperative to have b/c that is the environment where intimacy is safely experienced and cultivated.

It's worth pointing out that Real Love goes beyond the romantic and sexual.

Which is why you can be single and have a meaningful fulfilling life.

Intimacy isn't an act of intertwined bodies ...

Real Love's intimacy intertwines souls. [knitting of hearts]

It requires what we talked about last week ... being submitted to one another.

Opening our hearts to another person ...

Being vulnerable and presenting ourselves as we truly are.

That is intimacy.

That is why in the Bible it says David and Jonathan's friendship surpassed the love of a woman.

It wasn't sexual ... it was deeply intimate. [lit. hearts knit]

And that is how our relationship with God is meant to be ...

Deeply intimate. [We are IN Christ; He dwells IN us ... oneness]

Here is the problem we face in this fallen world with our sinful nature ...

We desire intimacy; but we fear it too.

And this fear drives us to create illusions of intimacy.

We try to get it without the risk that comes with vulnerability and commitment.

And so we end up with Counterfeit Love.

And our “hookup culture” and social media offer a counterfeit intimacy and counterfeit friendship w/o any commitment.

Our culture has normalized relating to each other without commitment and vulnerability.

STORY:

Know someone who followed someone whose posts that were admirable, honest, vulnerable.

[Facebook friends]

**They were in similar stages of life and challenges.
Learning from each other's wisdom.**

Praying for each other.

All great until they met in person ... and my friend found out this other person was not at all like their digital manifestation.

Our culture is constantly pulling us away from the environments of real commitment ... [marriage / church]

There is no commitment except to yourself.

And that type of commitment is shallow and small.

It is no bigger than the little space you occupy.

But Real Love calls us into a greater type of commitment.

Real Love Commits To Something Greater Than Ourselves

It's hard to see that in this passage at first, b/c it seems like Ruth is creeping around trying to land a husband.

She's smelling good ... looking good.

She waits until Boaz is happy and possibly a little tipsy from having too much to drink.

We can look at all this and think Ruth's taking advantage.

She's a gold-digger going after the old rich guy.

"I know what she's committed to ... living in a big house, jewelry, driving a nice camel."

But this isn't her plan. It's Naomi's.

And it's risky business.

Still Ruth submits and obeys her mother-in-law.

So there she is ... at night ... Boaz is out.

She pulls his blanket or sleeping garment over his feet and lays down.

(most likely she is perpendicular to his feet).

She waits and waits. I'm sure the time is slowly crawling by.

So far she has followed Naomi's instructions to the "letter".
But then she calls an audible...

Ruth 3:8-9

8 At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! 9 He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer."

Naomi said to listen and let Boaz tell her what to do.
But Ruth is bold and brave.

When Boaz stirs from the cold and wakes up ... he doesn't know it's Ruth ... it's too dark.

And so he asks the obvious question. "Who are you?"

Ruth doesn't say ... "I'm Ruth ... tell me what to do!"

She says, "I am Ruth, your servant." [actually maidservant = eligible for marriage (hint hint)]

And if that wasn't suggestive enough ... she eliminates all pretense when she says, "Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer."

This sentence in Hebrew is a double-entendre.

Because that Hebrew phrase can imply “spread your wings”

...

But ... It can also be interpreted as the idiom “Spread your garment” which elsewhere in scripture always meant “marriage.”

Clearly, Ruth is saying “marry me!”

However, she is also implying something else ...

B/C her words do mean “Spread your wings.”

Which is a reference to Boaz’ own words from a previous conversation.

Ruth 2:12

“The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!”

This is their first conversation ... Boaz is praising Ruth and at the same time praying that God would reward her for her *hesed love*.

But now ... Ruth is saying it to Boaz.

Ruth is implying that Boaz is God's answer to his own prayer.

Ruth sees a greater purpose: God's purpose and plan.

She is recognizing that they are being caught up in a greater story that involves them, but is bigger than both of them.

God's involved in this.

At the end of V9 she gives the reason for her marriage proposal ...

And it isn't "You've got lips ... I've got lips ... Times 'a wastin'."

It isn't "I'm lonely ... you're lonely."

Ruth 3:9b

"...for you are a redeemer."

Next week we will unpack what all that means.

But for now it is sufficient to say that this is another significant proof of Ruth's commitment to Naomi.

Hubbard's commentary on Ruth puts it beautifully ...

“Naomi’s instructions intended simply to obtain a husband for Ruth--a concern of the older widow throughout the book. By invoking the *gō’ēl* (redeemer) custom on her own initiative, however, Ruth subordinated her own happiness to the family duty of providing Naomi an heir. In demonstrating remarkable initiative and defiance of custom, she not only embodied the Israelite ideal of *hesed* but also, if successful, set herself up to be the true bringer of salvation in this story.” - Robert L. Hubbard Jr.

Invoking the kinsman-redeemer custom was meant to be the redeemer’s initiative.

But Ruth defies that part of the custom.

She’s says, “Marry me ... b/c you're our redeemer.”

What Hubbard is getting at is that Ruth is doubling down on *hesed* (Real Love) yet again.

She is committing herself to Boaz and to Naomi.

Ruth isn’t just looking out for her own happiness here.

That is why Real Love is counter-culture to Counterfeit Love.

Counterfeit Love puts you first ...

Real Love Is Committed To Benefiting Others

During basketball season our coach would run us two miles before and after practice in the 100 degree SoCal heat.

[Parched throat, swollen tongue ... desperate for water!]

Our school had 1 drinking fountain.

When we finished our final two miles ... everyone would queue up to drink at that fountain.

It was everyman for himself.

And when it was your turn you didn't care who was behind you ... you were getting your fill!

Ruth is putting Naomi in front of her in the drinking-fountain line.

... and Ruth is thirsty!

Still, she is so committed to Naomi.

And Boaz recognizes this and calls it out for what it is...

Ruth 3:10

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."

Boaz is praising Ruth again.

He's saying, "Your first kindness to come and live with Naomi here in Bethlehem was amazing."

"But this last kindness (lit. *hesed*) is even greater!"

"You didn't take the easy road to happiness. Instead you committed to something better ... a higher purpose."

Real Love Commits to Holiness Above Happiness

Does God want us to be happy? Absolutely ...

But he cares about our holiness over our happiness.

B/C he knows that true happiness is tied to holiness.

Jesus didn't die on the cross so we can spend our life in the pursuit of happiness...

That's our culture's Counterfeit Love narrative.

Jesus died to make us holy; and calls us to pursue holiness.

And for good reason.

The story of Ruth shows us what can happen when people are committed to holiness.

One of the marks of holiness is being sacrificial ... living for the sake of others.

Another mark of holiness is obeying God and keeping his commands.

And this path of holiness calls us to commit to that without compromise.

Boaz exemplifies this ...

He's excited about Ruth's proposal of marriage.

Ruth 3:11

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.

Ruth was supposed to follow Boaz' instructions.

But Boaz is joyfully willing to do all that Ruth asked.

He's all in! He's excited!

He's smitten.

As much as he's ready to commit to Ruth and be the family's redeemer ...

He's committed even more to obeying God's rules.

He knows there is an obstacle to making Ruth's and his dreams realized.

Ruth 3:12

12 And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. 13 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 the morning.”

If you live to pursue happiness instead of holiness, you think Boaz is a moron.

“Forget those arbitrary out-of-date rules and customs!”

“Doesn’t God want you to be happy?”

But Boaz is committed to Real Love ... and Real Love doesn’t take shortcuts.

Real Love doesn’t compromise obedience to God for personal benefit.

That’s what we do when we have sex outside of marriage.

It doesn’t matter how committed you say you are to each other ...

Everyone might say that’s suppressive and archaic.

But it’s skirting God’s rules and his holiness for your personal benefit.

Furthermore, it doesn’t build a foundation of committed Real Love for that relationship.

It builds a foundation of compromising Counterfeit Love.

The same thing is true when we tell a little lie, cheat on a test or our taxes ...

It's compromising holiness instead of committing to obeying God.

We will be confronted with rules that we won't like.

Often that is our excuse to bend it or break it.

But if your god can't tell you "No" you aren't serving the God of the Bible.

You've made up a god who serves you.

And that god is just an idol of your heart, not the Savior of the world.

Boaz didn't have to like the rule of "closest of kin gets first right of refusal."

Still he honors it.

Being faithfully committed in the little things sets you up to be faithfully committed when it's costly.

Real Love is committed to doing the small and insignificant things well.

That is why Boaz sends Ruth out early in the morning when it's still dark with her shawl full of grain.

Ruth 3:14-15

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." 15 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.

Her staying doesn't put them into further temptation ... it is all about protecting this moment from being misinterpreted by others.

If she was to be seen coming in and going out quickly ... it could be interpreted as the typical "lady of the night" rendezvous.

But with her going out pre-dawn with a shawl full of grain ...

The likely interpretation, should she have been seen, would be that she labored long into the night to bring home more food.

And since nothing illicit happened between Boaz and Ruth it is not deceptive.

It is Boaz committed to guarding Ruth's reputation and character from any kind of accusation.

But such is Boaz' commitment to Ruth.

He wants to make sure people continue to see her as she truly is!

He doesn't lay a hand on her ... or take advantage of the situation.

He honors her and protects her purity.

He gives up a few hours of precious sleep to send her off safely.

He never gets tired of loving Ruth.

Real Love Is A Commitment That Never Quits

Ruth never quits on loving Naomi.

Boaz never quits on loving Ruth.

When Ruth returns to Naomi ...

Naomi immediately sees Boaz' measure of commitment.

Ruth 3:16-18

16 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, 17 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.’” 18 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.”

Naomi discerns the meaning of the gift and Boaz words, ‘You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’

She is confident in Boaz’ commitment.

So she concludes ...

“...the man will not rest but will settle the matter today.”

Naomi is not only confident in Boaz’ *hesed*.

She is confident in God’s *hesed*.

When Naomi heard the words, “You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law...”

It connects to the beginning of the story when she first returns from Moab to Bethlehem and says,

“I went away, and the Lord has brought me back empty.”

This gift of grain is God filling her emptiness through Boaz.
There will be no more food shortage ... only fullness.

But there is even more hope.

B/C Naomi didn't just come back poor ...

She also came back childless.

That was a significant part of her emptiness.

But scholars have pointed out that there is another interpretation of the grain ... it hints at Naomi's childless reality.

The grain not only signified a filling of the stomach; it also signified seed to fill the womb.

The lack of an heir for Elimelech, Naomi's dead husband, received new hope.

But Naomi is past the age of bearing children.

How will that tension be resolved?

We'll find out next week!

What we need to take away from our passage today is that Real Love is a committed love that never compromises and never quits.

Ruth and Boaz are a great example of Real Love's commitment ...

But Jesus raised it to the next level.

It is one thing to be committed to those you love; it is another to be committed to your enemies.

That is why Jesus' love is the greatest example of commitment.

He loved us while we were still sinners ...

He didn't commit to the easy route of ruling the world that Satan offered. [Power without sacrifice]

Instead He came under the law, kept the law, and fulfilled the law to save us and bring us into his eternal relationship of love.

He never compromised holiness ... he was faithfully committed to it all the way through.

He did this b/c you and I fail at being committed.

We need his grace, mercy, forgiveness.

He gives it to us through faith in Him.

We live in all that goodness through that same faith.

We are like Ruth and Naomi, confidently waiting for Jesus our Redeemer to return for us.

We have that confidence b/c Jesus gave us a gift until He returns...

It's his gift of grain ... a downpayment promising us our waiting is not in vain...

That gift is the Holy Spirit, God himself, to indwell and encourage and empower us until He returns.

And so we live ... waiting in a confident hope that our Savior will not rest until he settles the matter of the fullness of our redemption.

BAND COME UP

NOT A CHRISTIAN:

- It is appointed once for a man to die ... and then he faces judgment before a holy God.
- Deep down we all know we aren't holy.
- We fall short ... we pursue our happiness above God's holiness.
- You need the rescue of a redeemer.
- This holiness only comes from Jesus ... through faith in Jesus. [repent / believe]

CHRISTIAN:

- Why did God have you here today?
- Why did he put this passage in his written word that reveals who he is?
- Where / How is he calling you to respond?

EXAMINE

Take a moment to listen to God and respond.

He is inviting you into his grace to grow and change.

Not a place of judgment and condemnation.

COMMUNION

This reminds us of Jesus' commitment to obeying the Father, and to saving us.

His commitment cost him everything for our sake.

That is Real Love.

[Body broken / blood shed]