

Sermon outline and notes © Dr. Stephen Felker
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18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834
Sunday, December 17, 2017

Ruth 3:1-18 “Claiming the Provision of Redemption”
(Read vv. 1-11)

Intro. So far I have preached two messages from Ruth, and we have been learning about the development of a beautiful love story. It begins on a rather sad note in chapter one. Naomi lost her husband and two sons in death. Ruth lost her husband. The only bright spot of the first chapter is the wonderful decision of Ruth to leave her homeland of Moab and go with Naomi to Israel, and become a believer in the Lord God.

In chapter 2 the story brightens. God begins to bless Ruth for her trust in Him and her care for Naomi. In His providence she meets Boaz, a wealthy relative who falls in love with her. With his help and her hard work, her poverty is turned into an abundance of food. Naomi and Ruth have returned to Bethlehem, which means “house of bread,” and surely they have found it to be so. God indeed provides for those who trust in Him.

But even though things were going pretty well for Ruth, she was still a widow with no land, no family of her own except for her mother-in-law, and a very uncertain, and somewhat fearful future. So in chapter 3 we come to the turning point of the story. Ruth has come to Bethlehem, and she not only finds bread there, but in Bethlehem she will find a redeemer, someone who will save her from an uncertain, fearful future, and meet her every need.

Just as God provided a redeemer for Ruth, even so God promised to provide a Redeemer for His people Israel, even for us Gentiles as well. The prophet Micah told Israel that they were to look unto Bethlehem for their Redeemer. In Micah 5:2 we read, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.” From the typology of Ruth, we will see an illustration of the fact that Jesus, born in Bethlehem, has become our Redeemer. That is what the Christmas story is about.

So we are going to go back some 1,100 years before the birth of Jesus and learn about a love story that took place in that same little town of Bethlehem. We are going to see how Ruth finds and claims her redeemer in Bethlehem. And from her experience, I will show you how you can experience redemption through Jesus Christ. First of all, let’s see:

I. THE INITIAL STEPS NEEDED TO CLAIM YOUR REDEEMER

In order for Ruth to be redeemed, she needs some preparation. In the steps that Ruth takes, we see the steps we must take if we want to enter into a relationship with the Lord. There needs to be some spiritual preparation before we are going to trust in Jesus Christ as our Redeemer. We see that illustrated in this third chapter.

A. You Need Someone to Encourage You to Accept Your Redeemer –Do you realize that most people will not trust in Jesus as their Redeemer unless someone tells them about Jesus, and encourages them to claim the provisions of redemption? We see this illustrated here.

Naomi comes back into prominence in this part of the story. She came back to Bethlehem bitter, but God is changing her bitterness into blessing. Now it was obvious that Ruth was not claiming the provisions of redemption, and so Naomi takes over. Ruth was probably modest and

she realized that as a Moabite, she would not be wanted by most Israelite men. But Naomi wants Ruth to have the opportunity to remarry, and claim her beau—her *Boaz* that is. So in vv. 1-2 she tells Ruth of God’s plan for a redeemer, and encourages her to claim Boaz as her redeemer. There she says to Ruth, “My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.” She reminds Ruth that Boaz is a kinsman who had an obligation under Mosaic Law to marry the widow of Mahlon. Naomi is going to suggest that it is time for Ruth to remind Boaz of his obligations as a kinsman!

So here again, we come across a reference to the law of the kinsman-redeemer. In case you were not here last week, let me bring everyone up to date on this law. The law had at least three objectives: First, to protect womanhood. In those days a widow needed protection. Secondly, to protect land rights. The nearest of kin had to be the one to marry her in order to make it possible to retain or restore the title of the property in the family. Thirdly, to raise up a child to a deceased husband who did not have a son. All three provisions applied to Ruth.

In the case of Ruth, she’s a widow without any children, and the property which belonged to her husband has been lost because she and Naomi are poverty stricken. She has a perfect right to claim Boaz since he is a near kinsman. And so Naomi in effect says to her, “You’ve got to let this man know that you want him as a kinsman redeemer.”

By the way young ladies, it doesn’t hurt to drop hints that you like a fellow! If the guy you like is shy, you especially need to help him out! I know. I was one of those guys!

Cheryl and I had a mutual friend at church, Bobby Staley. He came to me one day and suggested that I ought to ask Cheryl out for a date. I don’t think Cheryl put him up to it, but he did let me know that Cheryl would likely accept my invitation to a date! Well, you know the outcome of that encounter!

Now let’s move on to the next step:

B. Prepare Yourself for Your Redeemer – In v.3 Naomi suggests that Ruth take three initial steps to prepare herself for her redeemer. Pay attention ladies. Naomi gives some sound advice on how to capture a man’s attention. Your outward appearance will *get* his attention, but your character will *keep* a good man interested. So Ruth needs to prepare herself for this important meeting with Boaz. Actually, Ruth illustrates four steps that we need to take to prepare ourselves to become pleasing and acceptable to God:

1. Have an Obedient Attitude - I like what we read in v.5. Ruth says, “I will do everything you say.” She is going to do just what her mother-in-law suggests. Ruth did not have to follow this plan. It was an aggressive marriage proposal. She could have said “Naomi, that’s the most ridiculous plan I’ve ever heard.” But she didn’t. She was not only a hearer of the Word, but she was a doer. This fit her virtuous character (v.11).

Even so, the Bible teaches that the gospel must not only be believed, but also obeyed (2 Thess. 1:8, 1 Peter 4:17). James says in his epistle that we need the kind of faith that works (James 2:14-26).

2. Become Spiritually Cleaned Up. Ruth is instructed in v.3 to wash herself. Back in the old days, taking a bath every day was just not done. Ruth had been working hard in the fields for weeks. And so I’m sure she needed a bath! Actually, Naomi was telling Ruth to act like a bride preparing for her wedding (Ezek. 16:9-13).

You don’t have to get all cleaned up in order to *come* to Jesus, but you do have to repent of your sins and let Him clean you up once you are saved by Him. As Titus 3:5 says, you need “the

washing of regeneration (new birth).” And if we want to enter into a deeper relationship with our Lord, we must “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). We need to get rid of anything in our lives that makes us dirty.

3. You Need an Anointing from God – Naomi also told Ruth in v.3, “anoint yourself.” She probably got some perfumed olive oil and rubbed it on her face and neck and made her face shine in the moonlight! I suppose the name of the perfume was something like “Midnight in Moab!”

Many of you know that oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. You need the anointing of the Holy Spirit. That is just what we have in Christ. All believers have received the anointing of the Spirit (Rom. 8:9; 1 John 2:20, 27). He teaches us (1 Jn. 2:27). He fills us with power for sanctification and for service. He helps us to pray (Rom. 8:26; Eph. 2:18). Are you relying upon the Holy Spirit each day to help you live a life pleasing to God? Do we try to witness for Christ without asking the Spirit to help us? (Acts 1:8).

4. Put on Some Different Clothes – Ruth may have still been wearing a widow’s garment. If so, Naomi was advising her to put away that garment and wear the type garment that would show that she is now available for marriage. Ruth probably didn’t have a large wardrobe, but even poor people would typically have one special garment for festive occasions like marriage. If Boaz fell in love with Ruth when she was wearing poor widow’s garments, just think of how his heart is going to pound when he sees her in a pretty dress! The way to a man’s heart is first through his eyes.

In Scripture, clothing carries a spiritual meaning. Isa. 64:6 says that our own righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of God. You can’t keep wearing the filthy rags of sin and self-righteousness. You need to take off those dirty rags, and turn to Jesus who can clothe you with new garments of righteousness. You see, when we believe in Christ, His righteousness becomes our righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). We can only come to God in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, for we are “accepted in the beloved” (Eph. 1:6, KJV).

II. LET JESUS KNOW THAT YOU CHOOSE HIM AS YOUR REDEEMER

We can tell from chapter 2 that Boaz is interested in becoming Ruth’s redeemer. But we see from v.10 of our text the Boaz assumes that Ruth would not be interested in an older man such as he. He wants to redeem her, but is waiting on Ruth to let him know that she wants him to become her redeemer. It seems that it was the custom that the widow was to be the one to claim her redeemer.

Even so, Jesus wants to be your Redeemer, your Savior, but He waits upon you to ask Him to become your Savior. He says in Rev. 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him....” John 1:12 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”

So let’s pick up with the story. Now that Ruth is all prepared for this important meeting with Boaz, she is ready to go now and make her intentions known. Now under this unusual law, Ruth follows an unusual way to let Boaz know that she wants him to redeem her. Note:

A. How Ruth Let Boaz Know of Her Choice – Now in vv.3-4, Naomi said to Ruth, “...go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and

you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down.” Now there was nothing wrong with what she is being instructed to do. Harvesting and threshing were cooperative enterprises. The men of a village would take turns using the threshing floor, which was usually a raised platform outside the village and often on a hill where it could catch the afternoon and evening breeze. Boaz was not alone in a barn. He was at the outdoor “threshing floor.”¹ You see, the men would deposit the sheaves on the threshing floor (Micah 4:12) and then separate the grain from the stalks by having oxen walk on it (Deut. 25:4) or by beating the stalks (see Ruth 2:17). Then the people took a winnowing fork and threw the grain up into the air so that the chaff would be blown away (Hos. 13:3) and the good grain would come down on the threshing floor. The grain would then be heaped up to be carried away for marketing or storage the next morning. They also held a great religious feast in the evening to celebrate and thank God for the harvest. It was a big social event. Furthermore, the men of the community stayed at the threshing floor overnight to protect the harvest. They would sleep with their heads toward the heap of grain (see v.7). The grain itself could be a bed and their legs would stick out like spokes around the circular threshing floor. So you see, this was a public place, as clearly implied in v.14. It was not a case where Boaz and Ruth would be off sleeping together in some private place. There was nothing wrong with what she was doing here. Note also that according to vv.8 & 14 she slept at his feet, not by his side.² Both Boaz and Ruth act honorably and with integrity in this entire book. They serve as an example to us in that regard.

On the other hand young ladies, I don’t suggest that you follow Ruth’s method of making your choice of a husband known! I think your intentions would be misinterpreted!

B. The Importance of Revealing this Choice - From what I can tell, it was the widow’s job to claim her redeemer. That is exactly what she does in v.9. After she reveals who she is, she says to Boaz, “Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative.” The word translated “wing” can also refer to the extremity of a garment.³ The fact that in v.4 Ruth was to “uncover his feet” and lie down, presumably using part of the end of his robe as cover, that supports the idea of “take me under your garment.”⁴ In fact, the HCSB translates it, “Spread your cloak over me....” The same Hebrew words translated “take...under your wing” are found in Ezekiel 16:8 where God says to Israel, “When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing [KJV-skirt] over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine.” Ruth had come under the wings of the Lord God (Ruth 2:12); and now she would be under the wings of Boaz, or under his protection and provision as her husband. So basically, she said to Boaz, “It’s time to get married. Perform your duty to me.”

What an illustration this is of our relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus has done all that needs to be done to provide your redemption. He left heaven and was born in Bethlehem. He became our kinsman. He died on the cross to save you from your sin, paying the price of your redemption (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Rev. 5:9). It is now your responsibility to claim and accept Jesus as your Redeemer. Have you really claimed Jesus Christ as your Redeemer and Savior? Just like Boaz, Jesus is ready and willing to save you and redeem you, but

¹ See use of the word in 2 Sam. 24:18, 1 Kings 22:10, where it clearly refers to an outdoor place for threshing grain.

² K. Lawson Younger, Jr. disagrees. He believes she slept by his side. Evidently he believed that uncovering his feet was just a symbolic gesture. Yet v.8b clearly says, “a woman was lying at his feet.”

³ Num. 15:38; Deut. 22:12; 1 Sam. 15:27; 24:4-5, 11; Jer. 2:34; Ezek. 5:3; Zech. 8:23.

⁴ This may even be a veiled reference to the sexual union of marriage, based on the use of the word in Deut. 22:30; 27:20.

He is waiting upon you to come to Him. He will not force you to be saved. It's your choice. Have you come to the feet of Jesus seeking salvation? If not, why not today?

Now what can you expect if you come to Jesus, and claim Him as your Redeemer? Well let's move to our next point and see:

III. THE READINESS OF JESUS TO REDEEM YOU

We see this illustrated in Boaz, the ancestor of Jesus. Jesus said in John 6:37, "...the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." We saw last week that Boaz seems willing to redeem Ruth because of his love for her, but for over 6 weeks now (2:23) he has been waiting for her to make her move. Perhaps he was getting a little down in the dumps, wondering if Ruth was ever going to choose him. But not for long.

Let's pick up with the story in v.8, "Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet." Boaz had fallen asleep near the threshing floor, and sometime during the night something startled him. It may have simply been that he felt something at his feet. And he woke up to find a woman at his feet.⁵ It was too dark for him to recognize who she was. So he said in v.9, "Who are you?" Then in the original Hebrew, Ruth says, "And you shall spread your wings over your handmaid, for you are a redeemer (*ga'al*)." Ruth is saying here, "It is time for us to get married!" She is making it clear that he should fulfill his duty as a near kinsman and redeem her. So Ruth has made known very clearly who she has chosen to be her redeemer. Now the question is, How will Boaz respond? Will he get upset and reject her and drive her away? Will he mock her for supposing that a poor Moabite woman would dare try to marry a wealthy Israelite man?

Notice the way Boaz responds illustrates how Jesus will respond when you choose Him to be your Redeemer:

A. He Will Rejoice over Your Decision – He says in v.10, "Blessed *are* you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness (*hesed*) at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich." Boaz becomes a shouting Baptist at a summer camp meeting! He loves Ruth and he is excited that she has chosen him!

Even so, the Bible teaches that the angels of heaven rejoice over each sinner that repents. But you know, I have an idea that Jesus Christ rejoices more than anyone when some soul comes to Him seeking salvation. He loves us, and wants to save us. Give you heart to Jesus, and you will bring joy to Him!

B. He Was Resolved to Accomplish Your Redemption – Once again, Boaz is a type of Jesus Christ. Boaz says in v.11, "I will do for you all that you request." Boaz immediately wants to claim her as his wife, because that's what he's been waiting to hear. If there is any way possible, he is determined to be her redeemer. In v.18 Naomi said, "...the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day." She expresses confidence that Boaz would not rest until he accomplished the redemption.

Like Boaz, Jesus was determined to bring about our redemption. He left heaven and lived among us. Though in Gethsemane His human nature resisted going to the cross, He was determined to do the will of God, and bring about our redemption. He went to the Cross, and died for you and

⁵ Now that is not the first time something like that has happened. **Adam** woke up and found that God had made a woman for him. **Jacob** woke up the morning after his wedding and found out that he had married the wrong girl!

for me. Redemption has been accomplished. In John 17:4 Jesus said, "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." That was the night before He was crucified. And just before He died, Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Jesus has accomplished our salvation. He has paid the redemption price.

Finally, let's see:

IV. THE BLESSINGS YOUR REDEEMER WILL GIVE

Once you choose Jesus as your Redeemer, and once He becomes your Redeemer, you will be able to enjoy many blessings. Two are illustrated in my text. First of all:

A. He Brings Peace and Rest to Your Soul - Notice in v.1 that Naomi calls marriage, "rest." The NKJV translates it "security," but the word everywhere else means "rest." How many of you married ladies have found marriage to be a rest? Actually, the "rest" is a reference to having a stable home, a place where you can "settle down."⁶ In fact, look back at 1:9, where Naomi uses the same Hebrew word, "The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband...." Life without a stable home is emphatically a life of unrest. Without marriage, Ruth would face poverty and a vulnerable life, with no settled place to live. That rest was to be found in Boaz.

Even so, through Jesus, we become His bride and we will have an eternal home in heaven. In John 14:2-3 Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." In Rev. 14:13 we see that heaven is a place where we may rest from our labors.⁷ Some people who have served in the military have had to move more than a dozen times. Ah, the day is coming when we will have an eternal home in heaven, and find eternal rest.

Then, after Naomi hears that Boaz has agreed to marry Ruth, she says to Ruth in v.18, "Sit still, my daughter." She was saying, "Ruth, you can just sit down there in the rocking chair and wait. From here on Boaz will be the man of action. You can rest in him. The work of redemption is going to be his work. There is nothing else for you to do." Ruth trusted Boaz, and so she was able to rest, leaving the whole matter in his hands.

Friend, it's wonderful to have a Savior in whom you can rest, and know that He's your Redeemer. We can rest in the finished work of Christ. Romans 5:1 says we can have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear friend, which are you trying to do? Are you resting in the finished work of Christ, or are you trying to earn your own salvation? Are you resting in Christ or are you running from Christ? In Matt. 11:28 says, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Eph. 2:9 says that salvation is "not of works." Until you are saved by Christ, you will not have rest for your souls. You will wear yourself out trying to find happiness, meaning, and purpose in life. You will go from one sinful experience to another. Nothing will satisfy for long. You will try this religion and the next. Rest for your soul is found only in Jesus.

We also need to "sit still" in our daily lives, putting our trust in God to work things out for our good (Romans 8:28). There are some circumstances in life that are out of our control. There's

⁶ The Hebrew word *manowach* is only used 7 times. It is used in Gen. 8:9, "But the dove found no resting place...." In Deut. 28:65 it is "resting place," in contrast with disobedient Israelites who would be scattered among the nations (cf. Lam. 1:3). In 1 Chron. 6:31 it refers to the resting place of the ark in the tabernacle, as opposed to be moved about from place to place. Thus, the NIV simply translates it as "home."

⁷ Contrast Rev. 14:11 where we read that unbelievers will have no rest in hell.

nothing we can do about it—except wait and trust God. Ps. 37:5 says, “Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it.” Jesus loves you. Just place your faith in your Redeemer. Php. 4:6-7 says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

B. He Provides for Our Every Need - Boaz was about to marry Ruth, and he didn't want his prospective bride gleaning in the fields like a poor laborer. So Boaz just loads her down with blessings of grain. We read in v.15, “Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it.’ And when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley, and laid it on her.” This gift was like the giving of an engagement ring, to show the seriousness of one's intentions to marry. And notice v.17 where he said to Ruth, “Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.” A man who sends a generous gift to his prospective mother-in-law is a wise man, and he is certainly a good choice for a husband! By the way, there can be little doubt that the writers use of the meant to reflect the reversal of Naomi's "emptiness" expressed in 1:21.

Again, Boaz is a picture of Jesus. Once you allow Christ to redeem you, He will give you all the spiritual food you need. He will nourish and satisfy your soul. Jesus said in John 6:35, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger...” Not only that, but He will meet your every physical need as well. Philippians 4:19 says, “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” We must want Him alone; for when we have Him, we also have all that He owns.

Conclusion: Ruth felt like she needed to get cleaned up to gain acceptance with Boaz. But I have good news. Jesus the Redeemer will accept you just as you are. But you should understand that even though you come to Jesus just as you are, He requires you to allow Him to clean up your life after you accept Him as your Redeemer. You must repent of your sins. And Titus 3:5 talks about the “washing of regeneration.” Ruth also anointed herself. Even so, Jesus will anoint you with the Holy Spirit the moment you believe in Him. Finally, Ruth put on a new garment. Even so, Jesus will clothe you with His righteousness. So will you choose Jesus to become your Redeemer? I made this decision over 40 years ago, and it was the best decision that God helped me to make!

Sources: Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (accessed from *Online Bible*, 1706-1721); Steve Jones (notes from his sermon on this text); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 2 (Pasadena: Thru The Bible Radio, 1982); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:30] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2017); H. D. M. Spence & Joseph S. Exell, ed., *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977); Dr. Jerry Vines (notes from his sermon on this text); Warren W. Wiersbe, “Be” *Series: Old Testament, Ruth* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1993); K. Lawson Younger, Jr., *The NIV Application Commentary: Judges/Ruth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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