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Ruth – Sermon 4

Ruth 3

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Turn in your Bibles to the book of Ruth, chapter 3. I was standing back there during worship and I was thinking how I really like this church. I was looking around and thinking how there are several groups of people here. We usually don’t point out many things concerning individuals in the church or in a given service because we really want the church service to be about Jesus. We want that to be the focal point. But I was thinking how I know a lot of things that happened in people’s lives this week that need to be shared and that’s where our discipleship groups are super valuable. If you are not a part of one of those I encourage you to become a part of one. There is nothing super difficult about doing that. We meet in homes in smaller groups through the week and the goal of that is what some people would call “do life together,” share life together. I was sitting there behind Sarah Dunn who in the past couple of weeks has had a kid and got her first ever archery bow kill during deer season. Those are pretty exciting things to have happen in a person’s life. I thought, those are both really great, you know. Then, I saw that the Old Schoolers are in town and those guys are part of a program that’s just a semester long. We get to have them with us for part of the time. Then, I was seeing the Wildcat crazies sitting over there. And then we have this group of folks, these Yankees who come down here from Illinois, who have become like family to us, literally. There is a group of six couples that came down for the Marriage Conference and they always stay over and join us at Red Oak on a Sunday night. I really feel like they’re an extended wing of our church family up there in the upper Midwest. It’s just neat to see God’s people.

But I also know that when this many people get together that there is a lot of junk going on in people’s lives. A lot of people are hurting and a lot of people are questioning, a lot of people are wondering, a lot of people are confused. There are people in our church who for five or six decades, or three or four decades, are still trying to get answers to things that happened to you when you were a kid, maybe. Then, for some of you there are fresh, open wounds in your life from abandonment, or neglect, of whatever, you know. Maybe there’s something difficult at your job or at work. I think about people in our body of believers who have gone through difficult medical things this year, hard times, and difficult trials. We’re just a group of really broken people with messy stories and lives, and we come together and worship together on Sunday. Church should not be a sterile experience. I feel like so many churches that I’ve been a part of or that I’ve visited, there’s sort of this behavior modification and you appropriate yourself to come into that thing and you act a certain way for that hour and then you can go do whatever you want to do the rest of the day. But man, we come together to hit pause on life, and study God’s Word together, and sing those songs. That last song, I want that at my funeral; somebody make a note of that, that *Abide With Me* song. That’s a glory-going song. Just to worship together, it’s good to be in the house of the Lord. There’s a scripture that says, “It’s good to be in the house of the Lord,” and there’s another one that says, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let’s go to the house of the Lord.’” I feel like for a lot of people that going to church on Sunday is a chore. I want it to be that this is a place where people come to share in life together. So, I felt like the Lord would have me to share that. I’m really proud of the job that Brayden and Courtney are doing with our youth. They’re doing a phenomenal job. I just feel like we’re in a good place right now and it’s exciting to be a part of this church body.

But, tonight we’re diving into Ruth 3, and we will be introducing to you at the end of the service tonight what our next sermon series is going to be. We will be rolling into that two weeks from tonight. I believe we will finish up Ruth tonight and next week. We could go one more week but I think we will wrap it up next week.

So, tonight, we’re in Ruth 3. I’ll read this portion of the story. Actually, let’s just walk through it together beginning in verse 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?”

Let’s hit pause here for a second. In review there has been, from where we left off last week at the end of chapter 2, a pretty long period of time. We are going to see that it’s harvest season and remember that the story started at the beginning of harvest season and this would have been a six or eight week period of time. So, you have sort of a block of time here and I think that’s important for us to understand for a couple of reasons. One is, if we went back and reviewed the story, where we left the story off there seemed to be this new ray or gleam of hope for this woman, Ruth, and her mother-in-law, Naomi. There was this man, Boaz, who had come on the scene and maybe now their fortune was going to change. Then, it was like nothing happens for eight weeks.

Do you ever feel like that? You’re, “I know that God’s going to come through,” but then you feel like you’re in this long holding pattern. “When’s it going to happen? When’s this thing going to happen?” A lot of times, I feel like in life we spend a lot of time waiting. Have you ever heard that saying, “Hurry up and wait”? It’s when you’re getting some government documents or something like that and it feels like you have to rush, rush, rush, but then you’ve got to wait, wait, wait. I feel like that’s the way God deals with us sometimes and those seasons of waiting are very good for us because that’s when God is teaching us really important biblical characteristics that He wants to be evident in our lives—like patience and deeper faith and trust that God’s in control.

So, the backdrop to the story is that this woman, Ruth, and her mother-in-law, Naomi, have traveled from a distant land called Moab, where Naomi was a sojourner. She was an immigrant and an alien in that land but now she’s come back home to Bethlehem, her hometown, and has come home as a widow with her widowed daughter-in-law, who has also been widowed. So, Naomi has lost her husband and both of her sons, and one of her daughters-in-law has pledged her life to Naomi. She went with Naomi and they’ve come home after ten years of being away and they’ve come home really desperate. Then, we’ve been introduced to this man named Boaz, who we saw last week was a worthy man, a noble man, and he’s a strong man of character who is a protector and a provider. So, there’s this hope in the story. Finally, the one who has been hurt is going to be protected. The one who has been abandoned or abused is going to be provided for. There’s going to be shelter and this new uptick in the story and then they just wait—nothing happens. So, you need to slow the story down to realize that. There has been a couple of months here where nothing has happened.

What’s been going on for these couple of months? Every morning, Ruth gets up super early and she goes to work. Some of you grew up and you had to work at an early age. I can remember that I only ever remember working from the youngest age. I remember having to work in seventh grade on Christmas vacation from school. I spent all those days with an uncle in the construction industry. I didn’t know what I was doing and it was just grunt work. I was making five dollars a day. I remember another guy, a sub-contractor on the job. Young people, I didn’t grow up in the depression. Five dollars a day was cheap even in the eighties, okay? It’s not like, “Oh, yeah, that’s back when five dollars was worth five hundred.” No, it wasn’t. It was maybe worth about ten dollars today. I was working and he was giving me five dollars a day. My dad was cool with it. My dad said, “Son, it’s like you’re getting an education. You’re getting on-the-job training and you should have to be paying for this.” But I remember this sub-contractor asks me, “How much do y’all get paid?” Hourly labor workers talk about what you’re making, which is usually not very healthy. It’s not good to do. I told this guy, “I’m doing good.” I had done the math and in eleven days of work on Christmas vacation I was going to make fifty-five dollars and there was a new Zebco bait-casting reel that cost fifty-three dollars at Rose’s department store in Waynesville. I was going to buy it. I was excited. So, this dude said, “You’re getting ripped off. That’s like slave labor. They have laws against that.” “Laws?!” That was the first time in my life that I got introduced to rights. I’ve got rights as a worker. I remember, I went and told my dad, “I’ve got rights. I should make more than five dollars an hour.” He said, “Shut up. You’ve got to go to work tomorrow.” So, I made fifty-five bucks and bought a bait-casting reel and was pleased with it. But one of the things I remember is that all of my buddies would sleep in. Any time we didn’t have school they would sleep in but I was getting up earlier on the days I didn’t have school. At five o’clock, I was getting up and going to work. So, some of us came up and you know what it’s like to only ever work.

Ruth is in that pattern of life. All she knows is just work to survive. I remember when we were living in Uganda. We were there for several months and I remember two jobs that I saw people doing and I thought, “What a horrible, difficult way to eke out a living.” One was that there was a lot adjacent to the little compound we were staying in there in Uganda. There were rock piles and people were out there with hammers, sitting Indian-style, and they were busting up rock with hammers to make gravel. That was their rock quarry and it was all being done by hand. This was in in 2014, not 1814. That is how they were making gravel. Then, I remember that right up the road, when we would walk to the market, there was a man who was making brick. He was doing the same thing. By hand, he was making brick. He was digging clay, mixing straw, and making brick. So, for some people in some cultures all they know is work. We live in a little bit of a different environment where even if you’re working a minimum wage job or something like that, there are laws that provide and protect. But for Ruth, all she knew was get up and go to work.

We’ve been learning a lot about this woman’s character. So, when she met that guy, Boaz, remember that guy last week? We learned what that man was like. He seems to be a really solid dude but at this point in the story I think that Ruth has to be questioning, “Maybe Boaz is not going to be for me who I thought he was going to be.” He’s provided her with some employment but the harvest season is coming to an end, which means that the employment is coming to an end. It’s destabilizing. When you’re about to go through change in life and you have something coming up and you know that something is about to end and there’s going to be a new start, it can be very destabilizing. It can create doubt and it can create fear. So, Ruth is coming up on a season of life like that.

What we are going to see in tonight’s text is that Boaz is the real deal. Many of you have lived your Christian life just waiting for someone to live out the true Christian faith in an authentic way because you’ve seen enough hypocrisy or you’ve been let down and failed enough by people who call themselves Christians or who had a pastoral or a priestly role. You grew up in a church that had a priest, or you grew up in a church where there was a pastor, or maybe you haven’t had any church experience but many people in our body of believers have been hurt at some point in their lives by Christians. And one of the things that encourages us and fuels a fire in us is when we see someone who is the real deal, doesn’t it? It fires you up. It gives you hope, and an excitement, and encouragement.

Boaz is the real deal. It doesn’t say this but I wonder if Ruth is like, “There was that one day when he gave me all that grain. He brought me up to the table and served me food. But now, there’s been this sort of lull and a couple of months have gone by and nothing has happened.” That’s where we are in the story. So, Naomi is going to take matters into her own hands a little bit. This is a little bit of a spoiler alert—if you read ahead there is some scandalous stuff that seems to be taking place. Has anybody read ahead? You’re going, “Whoo-hoo! What is going on here?” So, we are going to wade through this and try to give some good context for what’s going on. This is a really interesting story that should have provoked some questions in your mind when you read it this week. So, Naomi is going to sort of take matters into her own hands.

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?”

She’s saying, “Let me help you now because you need something permanent. You need something long-term. You need someone to provide for you. You need a more stable situation. I appreciate that you pledged yourself to me,” and you have this really beautiful thing happening in this relationship between Naomi and Ruth where each unselfishly cares more for the other. It’s a really beautiful picture, a really powerful picture. So, she says,

“Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.”

It’s come to the end of the harvest and she says, “Okay, here’s the deal. We’ve got to figure out a plan going forward. The harvest is over and now we’re winnowing the barley and preparing it for market. Now, you’re going to lose this job. We’ve got to come up with a plan and Boaz is our best plan. He has now been your employer for a couple of months and he’s a relative, which puts him in a biological position to be able to redeem you.” We learned about that a couple of weeks ago. “He could actually bring you into a relationship and provide more than just job stability for you. He could provide much more than that, so we need to go after that.” Naomi is a woman of action and she’s wanting to make something happen.

Verse 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. 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.”

Let’s hit pause here and talk about what’s happening. It’s a little bit confusing. Anybody? Good, it’s not just me. Let me paraphrase or reword what just happened. Naomi says to Ruth, “Okay, here’s the deal. You’ve been working for this guy and here’s what I want you to do. I want you to bathe, and shave your legs, and shave your armpits. I want you to use that little strip on your nose that pulls the blackheads off. I want you to pluck your eyebrows and do a mani-pedi. Let’s go all out. I want you to look your best. I want you to put on perfume and anoint yourself.” There’s a lot of terminology here that’s deeper than just what we get in English. It’s the idea of anointing herself. She’s saying, “I want you to get yourself ready. Put on clean clothes, not your beat up Carhartt’s. I want you to look good and go to the threshing floor.”

Now, here’s what’s significant about the threshing floor. Do you guys ever watch old western movies? At the end of the cattle drive—there’s a movie that I love that’s an old western, called *Open Range*. It has my favorite actor, Robert Duvall, in it. That dude is awesome. I think preachers aren’t supposed to talk about movies a lot in sermons but *Open Range* is a good movie. They are doing a cattle drive, alright? At the end of a cattle drive they would have gone a couple of thousand miles with their cows and then they come into the town and all the cowboys get paid and what do they do? They shoot out the lights. They’re running the streets—pow, pow, pow—and they’re in the saloon, and they’re looking for girlfriends, and they’re having a big time. So, it’s a time of celebration. Everyone is getting paid. So, probably in somewhat of a toned-down way but not too dissimilar, harvest time was a celebration time where, “Finally, we’re going to get paid. Finally, all of our labor is going to be rewarded,” especially in a culture where there had been a ten-year drought and now there’s a harvest. “We are all going to get to take part in the harvest.” So, this place called the threshing floor was a place where they would prepare the grain for the final sale for it to go to market. What happens is that there would be a big celebration that would involve food, and drink, and eating, and drinking.

Now, this is where I don’t know what to make of Naomi. Okay? I’ll say this—I said spoiler alert—I don’t think that in the story that Boaz and Ruth do anything that is not totally God-honoring. But I can’t figure out, and I’ve read a bunch of commentaries, exactly what Naomi is up to here. Because, basically, here’s what she says. Let’s put in in modern context, okay? Can we put it in modern context? Okay. Everybody is camping on the wagon train[[1]](#footnote-1) in Andrews. If you don’t know what the wagon train is in Andrews, it’s a big camp out where there is lots of eating and drinking, or lots of drinking and drinking. So, “I want you to go down there and I want you to go into so-and-so’s tent. But I want you to smell good, look good, and I want you to dress yourself nice and really look presentable. I want you to look your best. I want you to look like you’re wanting to turn the heads of these men. I want you to go into his tent and I want you to crawl into his sleeping bag and cuddle up to him and say, ‘What do you want me to do?’” Does that seem like a bad idea? Does it seem like a bad idea to tell your daughter to do that? That’s what it seems like is happening. But there are definitely some cultural things going on that we don’t totally understand. Like, when she says, “Spread your wings,” that’s a strong biblical reference to the idea that God is the provider and the protector of Israel and she is asking him in a biblical context to provide and protect, to cover her and to protect her. She’s saying, “I want this to last beyond the harvest season and I’m submitting and putting myself under your care.” Now, when she pulls back the blankets there is a lot of debate over whether this was sexual, and here’s where the debate comes from. This is where we want you to be good hearers of the Word and we want you to be good listeners when you hear a sermon and when you hear the Word of God taught, but when it says, “uncover him,” and where it says in verse 7 that “she came softly and uncovered his feet,” some references in Scripture, using that same Hebrew word, seem to refer to the lower extremities, from the waist down. There seems to be some sexual connotation or innuendo but the word is also used at times to refer to the legs below the thighs, with a very distinct wording that includes nothing of the private area. Okay? So, in the context there is no reason for us to believe that this is sexual. Also, at this point, have we found Ruth to be a godly woman? Yes. At this point in the story, has Boaz shown himself to be a godly man? Yeah, we’ve seen that. It doesn’t mean that they couldn’t make a mistake but there is not enough in the context of the Scripture and the wording that’s used at all for us to think that this is a reference to a sexual encounter. There seems to be something more spiritual and more in meaning in terms of the big picture. So, she pulls the covers back and she puts her head on his rump or something.

I’m a side-sleeper. Anybody a side-sleeper? I would be a belly sleeper but it makes my back hurt so I had to learn to sleep on my side. Here’s what happens. If you’re a man, you sleep hot. I sleep hot. Do you know what I’m saying? The window’s open when it’s twenty-five degrees outside and the blanket’s coming off. If you’re a woman, your blood stops flowing when you go to bed. I don’t know what happens to you but your blood stops flowing. It completely stops. In fact, sometimes I’m not sure if you’re alive. You go into some sort of static state of existence. It doesn’t matter what the temperature is but women will put on more sweaters and more blankets. Oftentimes, in church, I can tell that the men just want the fans to go and the thermostat to go down but all the women are already doing this. We’re trying to serve you, ladies. We’re trying to honor you, you know? So, I’m sleeping hot like this.

So, it seems like Boaz maybe is covered up against the cool of the night, and this would have been April or May, and she just pulls that back and lays herself against him. He wakes up and he’s a little bit confused, “What’s going on?” Now, it says that when he had eaten and drunk he laid down. I think he is extremely relaxed. I think he probably had a little bit of lip tingle going on when he laid down. He’s like, “I’m just going to rest. It’s going to be cozy and I’m going to sleep.” A full belly signifies God’s bounty. Having your belly full when you live in a culture where you don’t get three meals a day is a big deal. So, his belly is full. He’s had food and he’s had drink that was alcoholic. That’s reality. His belly is full and he has laid down. I don’t think he was a slobbering drunk but y’all know what I’m talking about. It’s Thanksgiving Day. You settle down at night, and you curl up, and it’s a good sleep, isn’t it? It’s a good feeling. Life is good. I think he’s just had a good day and he lays down. He goes into a deep sleep and he wakes up and here’s this girl. She smells good and she looks really nice. Do you think that was a difficult situation? Yeah, I’d say it was, because what does she say to him? “Tell me what to do.” This story is getting really interesting. Let’s keep going.

Verse 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.”

“You’ve got a reputation. You’re a blue collar worker who comes from Moab.” Moab has a reputation and in only two months you’ve destroyed that reputation and brought something very powerful and beautiful to that reputation. People know that you’re a worthy woman. They know that you love the Lord. They know that you’re a hard worker. They know that you love your mother-in-law. They know that you take care of others. They know that you care more about people around you.”

“And now it is true that I am a redeemer.”

He’s saying, “I’m qualified to marry you. I’m in the family line, so I could marry you and bring you into the inheritance of your dead husband.” Now, I want you to think about this. What Boaz is doing is he is willing to say, “I will marry you and bring you into a relationship,” where according to the marriage line in the redeemer story if Boaz and Ruth had a son, that son would take the inheritance of Elimelech. Remember Elimelech? The man was married to Naomi and died. So, basically, in other words, if you haven’t been here for the rest of the story, this is a very unselfish act. It’s a very sacrificial act for him to even imply this. Then, he says,

“Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I.”

There is a relative that’s closer than I am that could marry you.

“Remain tonight….”

Verses 13-14 are very significant.

“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.” So she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another.

It was that first gray light.

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.”

It was early in the morning and he had her stay with him all night. Why would he do that? Let’s think about it. I wrote down five things that Boaz could have done in response to this situation.

First, he could have taken advantage of her for his own sexual gratification. He could have taken advantage of her for his own sexual gratification. He could have easily done that. You’re talking about a culture where women have no rights. And, more so, she has no rights because she’s an immigrant from Moab. He’s got her in a very difficult situation that she couldn’t really get herself out of. He could have done that.

Second, he could have humiliated her, degraded her, and sent her away. He could have embarrassed her, spoken harshly to her, and said, “You’re a Moabite. This is totally inappropriate. I am a godly man. Go away. What are you doing?” He could have degraded and humiliated her.

Number three, he could have had her punished according to Israelite law, as a prostitute. But we’ve already seen in his actions that Boaz goes beyond the law and showers her with grace earlier in the story, so he’s more about grace and the spirit of the law than he is about the legal letter of the law. Because, according to the law he could have had her stoned as a prostitute.

Number four, he could have been gentle and kind to her but sent her away. He could have said, “You know what? Listen, sweetheart, I’m old enough to be your daddy. You’re a sweet girl and a hard worker and if I was twenty years younger maybe there could be something. But this is not really appropriate, this is not fitting. I’m flattered and I appreciate what you’re doing, but no. You need to go back home.” He could have done that. That would have been embarrassing to her but he could have been kind. But he would have sent her away—listen—he would have sent her away in the most dangerous part of the night. The reality is that people are drinking, people are partying, people are having a good time, and it wouldn’t have been safe for her. You have hired hands running around and people are shooting out the lights. He could have sent her on her way and that wouldn’t have been safe. So, what does he do?

Number five is what he did do, how he did respond. He kept her there for security but guarded her purity and then sent her away as day was breaking so she could safely return home and at the same time not be seen as a woman of the night. He’s very strategic in the way that he’s taking care of her.

Now, it says that he told her, “Tomorrow morning I will get up and start the process of redeeming you.” What does that mean? In the process of marrying her, he’s saying, “Tomorrow, I’m going to marry you. I’m going to make it legal and I’m going to marry you.” This guy is ready to roll. It’s kind of hard to wrap your brain around.

So, we get down to verse 15 and he tells her to hold the garment out.

So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her.

The smallest count is that it would have been six scoops of barley that she is holding sort of like this. There are different ways to apply the measurement here. The heaviest would have been about a hundred eighty pounds, which doesn’t seem realistic. Most commentators think it was probably about forty or fifty pounds of grain. In fact, that makes sense because it says in verse 15 that he put it on her and then she went into the city, so he had to help lift it onto her shoulder or onto her back. Ever put on a backpack? The Old Schoolers are here. Somebody would help you get into it if it’s really heavy. I like to, if I’m packing out something I’ve taken with my bow or something like that and I’m three miles out, get that hundred pound pack and sit down and get into it like this and waddle like this and stand up. He’s loaded her down. Now, what’s the significance of that? That’s money, that’s wealth. He’s providing for her and she’s going to take this home to her mother. Naomi is not her biological mother but plays the role of mother. He’s already investing even into Naomi’s life and situation. It’s a really powerful act on his part.

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.

So, the plan has been carried out and I think it’s important to see what a great risk Ruth and Naomi have taken, especially Ruth. She’s so young in her faith but she’s showing us and displaying for us a willingness to trust in the provision of the Lord. That should inspire us. She has this willingness to trust in the provision of the Lord.

So, Boaz sends Ruth home with this enormous amount of grain. This represented not only financial stability but food for Naomi. So, she goes home, and goes to the door, and Naomi greets her, and in verse 16 she says, “How did you fare?” You can imagine that Ruth has been gone all night. Naomi sent her out of the house smelling good and looking good and she comes back at first light. So, Naomi says, “Well…., how’d it go?” This is what girls do, “How was the date? Tell me about it.” You know what ungodly dudes are talking about but godly guys are like, “They went on a date—whatever.” But girls are like, “Where’d you go? What did you do? What did he spend? What did he buy you? How was the food?”

Okay, time out. Single guys, here we go. For all you married folks, I want you to listen to this three minute lesson and life coaching for our single men. Can we do that, married folks? Okay. If you want to pursue a woman, you need a couple of things. You need a job. Boaz has a job. You need a job and then when you take her on that date you need to pay for the date. You need to pay for the date. Don’t ask her out until you save enough money to take her on a date and pay for it. Ladies, listen to me. If he’s not willing to pay for the date—now, there’s a point that the relationship will progress to where you meet up for coffee and go Dutch, but probably not, if it’s serious. Ladies, you are worth a dude paying for your Starbucks drink. You are worth a guy buying more than a value menu bacon junior cheeseburger from Wendy’s. You are more valuable than Krystals. Praise the Lord for Krystals, I love ‘em. I love Taco Bell. I love Bojangles fried chicken. If I’m really feeling spendy, I will roll right into Zaxby’s and get a wings and things; that’s a good ten dollars spent. But ladies, on the first date you are worth a statement. Okay? Men, save your money, work some side jobs, take her out right the first time around, and do it right.

So, Ruth shows up and Naomi’s like, “How’d it go?” and Ruth’s like, “Boom!,” and drops a couple thousand dollars’ worth of loot on the table. Naomi’s like, “Boom! The plan worked! Yes! I don’t know what’s happening next but we hit pay dirt right here.” Watch this—this is really cool because she says,

“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.’”

Ladies, pay attention to how he treats his mother and how he treats your mother, because that’s important. It’s important. They don’t have to be BFFs but he needs to be kind to her. This is also a cultural thing where he’s investing in the family. So, he has sent food for Naomi and he’s a smart dude and is like, “Take your mama some gifts.” If he sends her a couple of roses then mama’s like, “He’s kissing up,” but if he sends her a couple thousand dollars in her favorite goods during the Great Depression then he’s winning her over. Smart guy.

She replied, “Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out…”

Now, listen, I think this is one of the best statements in the whole story.

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

She says, “I know Boaz. He’ll do this today. He’s a man of action. He will not rest. If he said he’s going to do it, he won’t rest until he does it.” We need men like that. We need men like that in the church. We need men like that when it comes to fulfilling marriage obligations, and raising kids, and running businesses, and hiring people, and teaching school, and working in the police department. We need men who are men of their word and who are going to be men of action. So, Boaz is like that. Ruth goes home, explains it all, and Naomi says he is a man of action.

Here’s what happens at this point. You can feel, again, another uptick in Ruth and Naomi’s spirits. They’re lifted because here’s what’s happening. Now, the end of their suffering is legitimately in sight. They’ve still sort of been suffering up to this point. They’ve had provision but they’re still living as poor immigrants and working in the fields. Now, they see an end to their suffering because this man has made a promise. He’s going to deliver.

The conclusion is this—the commitment that Ruth and Boaz began to display to one another is built on their individual character. Their commitment to each other is not built on love, or physical attraction, like, “He looks nice. She’s beautiful.” It’s built on their individual character. One of the things that jumps out in this relationship is Ruth’s character and Boaz’s character. That sort of drives them into this relationship. As one commentator points out, this is a much better foundation for a lasting relationship than mere physical attraction. There was a character match not an attraction match. The true and abiding love story is the one that this story points us to—it’s the Gospel story of Jesus and His love for us. It’s the story of a wayward and broken humanity and a King from a foreign land sitting on a foreign throne in the most comfortable kingdom; a King who would leave that throne in that kingdom and would come on the most daring of rescue missions to lay down His life and redeem His people from their bondage and slavery to sin, from their difficult situation and suffering in this world. Jesus, this King, is the ultimate Boaz. This is the story of the Gospel and it’s our hope in an even greater way than the hope we’ve seen restored to Ruth and Naomi through the actions and character of Boaz.

If you don’t know this Jesus, our prayer at Red Oak is that you would put your faith and trust in Him and confess that He’s Lord and He’s Savior. If Boaz would provide for Ruth, Jesus will provide for us so much more. That’s ultimately what this story is about. Boaz is pointing us to Christ, and as Boaz is rescuing these women, particularly Ruth, out of her bondage, and slavery, and difficulty, so has Jesus offered us a way out of our sin, and slavery, and bondage to that sin. It’s a story about the Gospel. I hope it encourages you and if you don’t know Jesus there is nothing we would love more than to talk to you about it, pray with you, and help you understand the Gospel, and help you see how He is the ultimate Boaz. Amen?

So, I’ll pray and we’ll sing together.

Lord, I love you and I thank you for this story and I thank you for the example that we see in Boaz. What an incredible man he is and what a powerful testimony he displays. We see in Ruth what an incredible person she is and what a powerful testimony she displays. Both of them act in faith, and selflessness, and even as we have watched over the course of the story the heart of Naomi turns and her faith grows and her confidence is put in you. Lord, I pray that we would learn from it and I thank you that in this story we can learn much about who you are as our Savior and our Lord, and I thank you for that. I thank you for our church where folks really care about each other, where we can come together on a Sunday night, get a cup of coffee, listen to the Word of God, encourage one another, sing praise to you, and focus our mission on engaging this world and reaching people with the Gospel, and raising godly children, and telling our neighbors about Jesus, and doing the work and ministry that you’ve called us to. I pray that we would be faithful to do that this week. We love you and we sing these songs to you because you’re worthy. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

1. As of 2016, the Western North Carolina Wagon Train, based out of Andrews, NC, is 63 years old and the longest running wagon train in the country. (<http://www.wncwagontrainnc.com/history-and-mission.html> - 10/25/19) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)