Against the Grain

Ruth 3:1-11

Sermon Outline

A. Marry Who? (vs. 1-5):

1. **Said to Ruth** – Naomi continuously addressed a lingering issue that is important to Ruth’s future (1:11-13; Titus 2:3).
   a) Ruth had given up the possibility of remarriage in order to care for the aging Naomi, but now marriage suddenly again became a possibility. It was customary for Hebrew parents to arrange marriages for their children (Jud. 14:1–10). To find a home is literally to “find rest” (cf. Ruth 1:9), to be settled and secure in a home with a husband.\[1\]

2. **Seek** – Naomi said that Ruth needs to be in a state of mind about seeking a husband. Ruth’s focus is all on Naomi’s survival (1:16-18) because Naomi was old (1:13).

3. **Security** – Naomi, being old cannot work in the fields, wanted Ruth to be able to rest since Ruth had to work so hard (2:7, 17 – sitting in the house for a while; 2:9 – when you are thirsty – hot in the fields) to keep both Naomi and herself surviving.
   a) As a single woman Ruth is always going to work this way and as a Moabites she is always going to be an outsider struggling to make ends meet, exposed to possible abuse (2:8-10, 15-16).

4. **Well; acceptable, pleasant** – Naomi wanted for Ruth to continuously experience a life more pleasant and prosperous.

5. **Now** – Naomi is demanding a response to the issue.

6. **Kingsman redeemer** – Boaz was someone who was next in line to redeem Ruth from being without a husband and childless (therefore having no lineage or be in the same place as Naomi when she is old).
   a) The kinsman, of course, had to be willing and able to redeem. Ruth followed the custom of the day and presented her case to Boaz: if he was to redeem her deceased husband’s estate, he must also marry Ruth, the widow. Men often slept at the threshing floor to protect the grain. “Spread your skirt over your handmaid” (v. 9) was Ruth’s legal claim to Boaz, asking him to be the kinsman-redeemer and claim her as his wife. Certainly, it took faith and courage for her to take this step. Boaz rejoiced that this younger woman did not reject him because of his age,

and he promised to fulfill the duty of a kinsman the next day. Note that he did not send her away empty-handed[2][2]

7. **Behold** – This needs to be there attention from this point forward.

8. **Wash** – Ruth had not too long ago come from the fields, so she needed to be completely focused on being cleaned up to meet Boaz.

9. **Anointed** – Ruth needed to use oils to create a good smell.
   a) The perfume mentioned here consisted of scented oils that would have been commonly used at celebrations and other festive occasions. The scents were usually derived from imported plants. [3][3]

10. **Put on your best clothes** – Men are visual, so Naomi is helping her become more attractive since the only time Boaz saw her was in the fields (work clothes). (1 Peter 3:3-6)

11. **Go down to** – Ruth needed to be completely focused on initiating an agenda that God has put in place for her.

12. **Do not make yourself known** – Naomi did not want Boaz to continuously be able to distinguish from all who were there who see was immediately.
   a) That she came at night was also a means of protecting Boaz from embarrassment in case he decided not to exercise his duty as a close relative. [4][4]

13. **Finished** – Naomi did not want Ruth to interrupt Boaz until he was completely finished with all that he needed to do including eating and drinking.
   a) The breezes blew away the unwanted, lighter components (cf. Hos. 13:3), allowing the heavier grains to fall to the ground. The process would be repeated until the grains were relatively free from the plant stalks. The breezes usually came up in the mid-afternoon and died out about sunset; it is possible that Naomi’s reference to Boaz winnowing at night (3:2) accommodates the festivities that normally followed a successful harvest and winnowing. [5][5]

14. **It shall be** – Ruth need to be set for action with no intent of stopping.

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15. **He lies** – Boaz lying down was a state of completion from all that he had to do. It is also an expectation that he would be continuous exhaustion and therefore very much in need of rest.

   a) The farmer usually remained all night in harvest-time on the threshing-floor, not only for the protection of his valuable grain, but for the winnowing. (from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft)

16. **Shall go** – Ruth was to be completely focused, when the prescribed time arrives, to be set on going directly to Boaz.

17. **Uncover; Make known** – Since they wore sandals in those days to take the covering off his feet would mean that his feet are complete exposed.

   a) Touching and holding his feet was an act of submission. This was a daring and dramatic action that would call for a decision on his part to be her protector—and, likely, her husband.\[^{6}\]

18. **Lie down** – Ruth was to completely lie down next to him.

   a) Similar to מראית is the word מראות, “the region of one’s head” (Gen 28:11, 18). Hence מראית means “legs, the region of the legs” (cf. Campbell, 121; contra Hubbard, 121 n. 30). As Dan 10:6 shows, it refers to a larger region of the body than the feet, in the same way that רגו can mean “leg, lower leg,” as well as “foot” (cf. 1 Sam 17:6; Deut 28:57). Consequently, Naomi most probably means that Ruth should uncover the lower half of Boaz’s body and lie down there close beside him, not simply “at his feet” as is often understood (e.g., Morris, 286; Hubbard, 121), so that “both lie beside one another as husband and wife” (Zenger, 67).\[^{7}\]

19. **He will tell you** – Boaz was going to completely relay to Ruth explicitly what will take place. Naomi was confident this would work. She had done her research on Boaz.

20. **Shall do** – Boaz will take over and continuously work tirelessly and ethically to faithfully do what is necessary for Ruth to be his wife.

21. **Said** – Ruth kept the commitment she made to Naomi when she first decided to stay with Naomi (1:16-18).

22. **I will do** – Ruth committed to faithfully obligate herself to do exactly as Naomi directed her to do. Ruth still had to decide to follow Naomi’s advice.

**B. An Unusual Hook-up (vs. 6-9):**

1. **Went down** – This phrase carries the connotation of humbling oneself to accomplish a strategic purpose. Ruth may not have been completely comfortable with doing this but she maintained her commitment to Naomi and did what she told her to do. The imperfect can expose that Ruth was going down with the mindset to stay at this until it works.

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2. **Did according** – Ruth focused on continuously executing everything as Naomi told her to do.

3. **Command** – Ruth did not take Naomi’s directions as a suggestion but as a command. Maybe it needed to be a command for Ruth to obey.

4. **Heart** – Boaz emotionally was in a good place after a great harvest and great time on the threshing floor.

5. **Merry, pleasant** – Boaz had a great harvest, lots to eat and drink, blessed by God and committed to be pleasing and benevolent towards God.

6. **Heart was merry** – It is best to find a man in his strength not his weakness. Same with Isaac; his father was ready to hand over leadership. Even though he mourned his mother’s death it was three years after her death. By the length of time he mourned he was probably very close to Sarah which means that if another woman came at that time he would not have been able to be totally emotionally involved (Genesis 24:62-67).

7. **He went** – It seems like after all his hard work, also after eating and drinking, all he could continuously think about was resting.

8. **Lie down at the end of the heap** – Boaz was set to rest but ready to protect his harvest.
   
   a) **Boaz probably slept upon a mat or skin; Ruth lay crosswise at his feet-a position in which Eastern servants frequently sleep in the same chamber or tent with their master; and if they want a covering, custom allows them that benefit from part of the covering on their master’s bed.** (from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft).

9. **And it happened** – Ruth was carefully continuously watching what Boaz was doing and where he was going to lie down. As soon as he lay down Ruth was on the move in the middle of the night.

10. **The man was startled** – Boaz was afraid when he discovered someone lying next to him. Remember he was there to protect his harvest so to him it could be anyone. He was startled to the point of trembling fear.

11. **Bent forward** – Boaz was in the state of continuously getting up to see who was next to him.

12. **Behold** – Boaz recognized it was a woman right away and she got his full attention.

13. **Said** – Boaz continually demanded a response from the woman next to him. Boaz is so excited he cannot stop saying what he is saying.

14. **She answered** - Ruth persistently answered Boaz; probably recognizing how afraid he was.

15. **So spread** – Ruth expected Boaz to be completely complicit in his response towards all that she had done.
a) Ruth deliberately used the same word that Boaz used in reference to God in 2:12. Though she spoke here of the edge of the garment of Boaz, she was clearly asking him for protection and security in the same way that Boaz spoke of Ruth seeking God's protection.\(^8\)

b) Ruth’s request is an idiom for marriage. The phrase “corner of your garment” is (kānāp), which applies to either a wing or the edge of a garment. The phrase is the same as applies to marriage when God later described his marriage to Israel (Ezek. 16:8). The imagery brings to mind Boaz’s own blessing of coming under the Lord’s wing for protection (2:12). Ruth explains that the invitation is important because he is her kinsman-redeemer. Boaz appears to understand the request as no more than a marriage proposal.\(^9\)

16. Your maid – Ruth had surrendered herself to be Boaz’s maid. In order words she is not his wife as yet and she is still someone who worked in his fields, but he is our kinsman redeemer. Ruth was ready to take things forward without begetting where things are.

C. Two Strangers In Love Forever (vs. 10-11):

1. May you be blessed – Boaz wishes God’s favor on Ruth because what she was doing was a gift of goodwill towards him.

2. Shown – What Ruth has done was truly good, an act that was pleasing in the sight of the Lord. It was another demonstration of her righteous character.

3. Kindness – Ruth demonstrated steadfast loyalty to the law God provided for his people. She proved to be a strong woman.

4. Kindness – Kindness can also mean checed love. By obeying God’s law Ruth set herself aside to God demonstrating her love for Him and Boaz.

5. Better than the first – Boaz viewed Ruth’s action as even better than taking care of Naomi. Ruth’s reputation in the community (1:11-12) was so strong she could have chosen a younger man and be accepted.

   a) Boaz is obviously not a withered old man (he is still able to put in a full day’s work in the fields with his young workers and then stay at the threshing floor all night), and he is obviously not a poor man (he is characterized as a “man of standing” in 2:1, and he owns land and servants). He recognizes, however, that if Ruth would have married for status (“young man”) or love (“poor”) or money (“rich”), she could have gone elsewhere. Boaz himself may qualify on these counts, but he intentionally deflects the attention from the object of this “search” to the seeker.\(^{10}\)


6. **Fear** – To Boaz, even though Ruth showed strength and courage, she was still afraid of all that was taking place. She was so afraid she was in a state of terror.

7. **I will do** - Boaz said that he was ethically obligated to faithfully, with a deep commitment, toil at taking care of all that needs to be done to make this work.

8. **Ask; said** – Even though Boaz definitely wants this to work it is still something he has to respond to. She does not get him because she wants him. He still needs to engage, and the process still needs to be followed.

   a) The Hebrew phrase literally translates “all the gate of my people.” It is a metonymy to the organization of ancient towns—all the people passed through the gate to work out in the fields, and at least in the case of Bethlehem, the well was near the gate (2 Sam. 23:15–16); hence, the phrase alludes to all the people. See sidebar on “Ancient City Gates” at 4:1–2.11

9. **Know, teach** – Everyone in the city has experience the kind of person Ruth is (2:5-6). Her reputation was very good.

10. **Know, teach** – Boaz spoke more to Ruth’s character (1:11-12) than her looks because it takes character to make a relationship work (Christ and the church – Ephesians 5:32).

11. **Virtuous woman, Strength** – Boaz was convinced that Ruth was a woman who was steadfast in executing her convictions and therefore displayed strength and great character.

12. **Virtuous woman, Strength** – Because of the uniqueness of her character she proves to be priceless person, even rare.

13. **Virtuous woman, Strength** – It is character that makes a relationship work.

   a) Prov. 13:10 – It corresponds to 1:1-7 as it describes a “woman who fears the Lord”. Such a wife is almost a personification of wisdom. Like wisdom, she is “worth far more than rubies” (v. 10; 3:15; 8:11), and he who finds her “receives favor from the Lord” (8:35; 18:22).

   b) Prov. 12:4 – “her husband’s crown.”

4. **I will do** - Ruth and Boaz commitment to God establishes true love (4:13).

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