

## Ruth 2:8-13 COME !

Last time we looked at v1-11 of chapter 2 of the book of Ruth under the heading 'The Power Of a Noble Character.' In v1, the narrator sets the scene, and I explained that of Boaz, "the man of standing," Ruth knew nothing. From v2-3 we learned that Ruth's newly found faith in the God of the Bible, had both hands and feet. V2. "Let me go." V3 "So she went out." Yes these words from Ruth to Naomi added up to 'I love you mum'.

So on the one hand we had Boaz "the man of standing," the respected man the man of position, while on the other hand we had "Ruth the Moabitess." She was not just from the wrong part of town; she was from the wrong part of the world!

Yet as I explained, Ruth had written upon her heart the things which the Bible speaks of love: Selflessness! Yes real love, the kind that acts. James 2:17 "Faith without deeds is dead." So while Naomi is not only downcast but also angry and bitter at God for her current circumstances, (which in reality are all of her husband's and her own making) Ruth shows her love by going out the door and putting up her hand for backbreaking work, to put food upon the table. She puts her faith into practise, by going out the door and putting herself in danger. While also trusting in God!

Psalms 139:2 "you know when I sit and when I rise, you perceive my fault thoughts from afar." Yes we are intimately known by God! So this young woman's newly found faith shows us the way. She was a Proverbs 31:10 "woman of noble character." Though she be of a low, even a despised position, news of her "noble character," her godly character, had filled Bethlehem! V11 "I have been told all about what you have done for your mother in law."

And finally I explained how this "noble character" had her step out in faith in the sovereignty and Providence of God. Proverbs 16:9 "In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps." V3 "as it turned out"; V4 "just then Boaz arrived." Not chance meetings because God leaves no thing to chance. But the faith of this young woman actively seeking God's Providence and guidance from his hand. So not only her "noble character" (which was expressed so clearly in her hard work, to provide for her mother-in-law) but more importantly, the Lord had gone out before her!

We pick up the text in Ruth 2:8-13: 'COME!'

So after this glowing testimony to Boaz by his foreman in v6-7, which is simply confirmation of all of the things which have filled Bethlehem and have come to Boaz's attention, he now approaches the young woman himself in v8. Notice what he says to her, "my daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls."

In Matthew 6:31-32 we read. "So do not worry, saying, what shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."

Now brothers and sisters, I want us to understand that in response to her and Naomi circumstances, that Matthew 6:31-32 is not what Ruth is doing here. Rather, she is doing what Jesus goes on to say in v33 of Matthew 6: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God" and in doing so, "all the rest" meaning God's provision is being poured out upon her! Can you see that she is not sitting at home worrying and fretting about things, she "is seeking God's Kingdom" by her obedience, as I explained last time, by actively pursuing God's Providence as she steps out the door in faith!

As we also saw last time from Psalm 135:6: "My soul waits for the Lord more than watchman wait for the morning." Waiting on the Lord is not about doing nothing. If it was, we would just all buy Lotto tickets and wait for God to make our numbers come up. And we'd never have to work, or rely upon God ever again! No that's not how He works. He calls us to look to Him every day for all things. And He provides for us through the labours of our hands as we actively seek His provision and guidance through those labours!

Can you see? Ruth has gone out looking for work and "the Lord's determining," (Proverbs 16:9), has guided her to Boaz's field and is now sending him to her. As he too now looks with favour upon her godly character! Beloved, if we've have children or grandchildren, and we want to guide them in the ways of looking for a marriage partner, we need to show them the examples of Ruth and Boaz. Because one overflows with this godly Berean-like character, while the other, (who also is of that same character) is drawn by God toward it!

Yes Proverbs 31:10 "A wife, (or a husband) of noble character who can find? They are worth far more than rubies." And Proverbs 31:30 "Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting but a woman, (or a man) who fears the Lord is to be praised." All of those disgusting shows on TV today which bring all of the so-called beautiful people together as they play on the lusts of the participants and of the viewers, are an abomination in the sight of God. They're all about the flesh. The viewing of it and the lusting after it. The bachelor, the bachelorette, and all the rest of those immoral perverse programmes! Yes they are an abomination in the sight of God as they make such a mockery of his holy institution of marriage!

In 1 John 2 we read "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life." And before this in v15 of 1 John 2 we read "do not love the world or anything in the world, if anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him." Yes such things make a mockery of God's institution of marriage brothers and sisters, and we should have nothing to do with them! "Don't entertain the devil the" scriptures say. And also, "resist the devil and he will flee from you." Beloved, by viewing such things, we give them the approval of our lusts. No, if we want to point our children and grandchildren in the right direction in choosing a marriage partner, we need to guide and direct them to those, (who like Ruth and Boaz) reflect that character which has been placed within their hearts by God. And is also reflected in what they do and say! Anything else is simply sending them down the road of heartache and ruin.

The Bible tells us to not be unequally yoked in marriage. So be of like faith and mind. Well if there were ever two who were truly "equally yoked" it was Ruth and Boaz! Again, having heard of the character and life of the young Moabite woman, how she left everything, (not for fame and fortune but for hardship and uncertainty out of love for Naomi) yes he'd heard about her, now he had seen with his own eyes Ruth's devotion. He's now spiritually drawn toward her godliness. And listen to how he addresses her and how God provides for her and Naomi, through the kindness and generosity of Boaz.

"My daughter" he says. You know, I don't think we can even begin to imagine how sweet these words must have sounded in Ruth ears. Even when she had so committed herself to go with Naomi to Jerusalem, there were no words of appreciation and kindness, it was simply more of a begrudging acceptance for her mother-in-law. And then when they arrived a day or two before, it was made very clear that she was an outsider. One who didn't belong. But now, the older man speaks to her as he would his own daughter. Even having that same kind and tenderness and concern for her safety. "My daughter, listen to me."

You know, as I was preparing this message it struck me just how unexpected this must have been for Ruth. What a blessing it must have been. This is clearly what Jesus spoke of in Mark 10:28-30 about leaving all behind to follow him. That wherever we go, we will find family in Christ. Brothers and sisters of His Kingdom. With them come hardships and persecutions and yet nonetheless, God's blessing of family as it were, wherever we go!

"My daughter listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here," and why? Because the danger was all too real. As I mentioned last time, she would have been considered fair game by anyone who found her and was up to no good. She had no protection as an outsider. But now, she has in effect come under the roof and influence of this "man of standing." What did Jesus say? Matthew 11:28-29: "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls." Yes what a blessing and relief it must have been to have this important man speak to her in this way. "Stay here with my servant girls. Watch the fields where the men are harvesting and follow along after the girls." So he is giving her clear instruction about where and when to work. But also in this, is tremendous assurance that she knows she's welcome, and blessing of blessings she doesn't have to go looking anywhere else for the rest of the harvest season.

And look next at what he says: "I've told the men not to touch you." And again why? As I mentioned before, there was danger everywhere for this young woman, and that danger was all too real! But Boaz wants her to know that he is watching over her. So much so that even when she gets thirsty there is as much fresh water as she needs to drink. "And the men won't touch her," even though they are the ones who drew the water up from the well.

Again, Can you imagine? This must have been so overwhelming to the young woman who was a nobody. A stranger. Even a Moabite in this land of Israel! I'm sure that if she could have she would have jumped up and given him a big hug. But of course she didn't. She conducts herself in the culturally acceptable way. V10 "At this she bowed with her face to the ground."

You know brothers and sisters, it's very sad in this day and age self-assuredness and putting yourself out there, (for want of a better description) that modesty and humility as admirable qualities, have really fallen by the wayside. And in many ways, are even non-existent today. Particularly in the young! And please don't misunderstand what I'm about to say. But there is something which is extremely beautiful in a godly, modest, and humble young woman. The kind of woman which you'd like your son or grandson to meet. Yes they are old fashioned qualities and in many ways, qualities which have been all but lost today. And yet extremely admirable and beautiful in an old fashioned way, dare I say, a biblical way. And this is what keeps leaping out at us from the pages of the book of Ruth! "At this she bowed with her face to the ground. She exclaimed why have I found such favour in your eyes that you notice me, a foreigner?" It's as though she were saying, 'Are you really talking to me? Why me Sir out of all of the girls who are working in your fields?'

Well the answer, as we've already seen, is that a noble character is very powerful! "Boaz replied I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you didn't know before." The testimony of a humble willing spirit has gone before her. Like the voices of the Old Town crier 'hear ye oh hear ye, behold, this is Ruth. A woman of unquestionable dignity.'

Beloved, true godliness will never go unnoticed. The other worldliness of it, will always testify to perishing mankind around us of the love of Jesus. And though what he has already said to her be overwhelming, Boaz` next words will blow her away: "May the Lord repay you for what you have

done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord.” Again dear friends how clear it is, by whose power did this man speak. As before when he greeted his men, so now again he invokes the Name of God! He could have said something like, ‘Don’t worry all will be well. From now on, I’m going to look after you both’, but he didn’t. Yes he could have rightly said this because that’s what’s happening but he didn’t. He didn’t do this at all. He could have easily placed himself at the centre of the story as the hero but that was not his intention. No, it was glory be to God! Because even as Ruth was a young woman of humility, Boaz, the man of importance “the man of standing,” he too was a man of dignity and humility. Though it be his field, he will also acknowledge that all things come from God. “May the Lord repay you for what you have done.” Dear Ruth, in sending you to me and me to you, you have come under the roof and the protection of God Almighty. Not only is Bethlehem full of your devotion and deeds, more importantly; the Lord knows them all. He knows them all full well!

Beloved, as Ian Duguid points out that, though this be a love story between Boaz and Ruth, ultimately, it is the love story of God for His people! This self-sacrificial love, cries out to us of Jesus. Because even as the great man Boaz, the man of importance condescends and reaches out to Ruth, (the woman of no standing by worldly measures) so too the Almighty God of the universe has condescended to mankind through His Son and reached out to us through Jesus death on that cross!

Friends, yes let us see the beauty of God bringing these two people together for His purposes but let us never lose sight, that ultimately, in the weaving together of these two lives will the Redeemer come! Look at the picture of Jesus as he continues. “The God of Israel under whose wings you have come to take refuge.” In Malachi chapter 4, speaking of the day of God’s judgement which is coming upon the world, and that “it will burn like a furnace” upon all evil doers and unrepentant sinners, it goes on to say in v2 “But for you who revere my Name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.” And this “sun of righteousness” has risen over Ruth. “Under whose wings you have come to take refuge.” Again what wonderful words these must have been to her. Someone has now told her that she too is now part of Israel, even the chosen people of God. She too has the Almighty who goes before her. Yes like that great bird of prey covering its chicks, Ruth now has someone who will fight for her and protect her. And show her even far greater kindness than Boaz ever could!

Yes surely we can see that this is what Jesus does for us. Like Ruth in Israel, we are strangers of no merit or worth before God. We can’t bring Him anything that He is in need for. No, when we are our worthless state He comes to us as we are brought under the refuge and forgiveness, of what He has done for us! ‘Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy Cross I cling’, we sing. And the wonderful thing about this account, is the tremendous reassurance that we can receive here. As we can see, that though at times we think that we ourselves and what we do is hidden from God, we are reminded again, that this is not, and can never be true. As we have been reminded from Psalm 139, that we are intimately known by God! “May the Lord repay you for what you have done.”

In Matthew 16:27 Jesus put it this way: “For the son of man is going to come in his father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he’s done.” Friends, we again see from Ruth’s example, that true Christianity is about doing in response to what has been done for us. Yes again, we too have come under the refuge of Jesus. We have come under the shadow of His wings. Yes like Ruth out of Moab, the cross of Jesus, has set us free. These are the things which she is hearing from Boaz now. That as she vowed before God that Naomi’s “people would be her people and Naomi’s God would be her God,” Well now she knows, that her words have been heard, as God has brought her to Himself. And her humble response: “May I continue to find favour in your eyes my lord,” she said. And notice the words, “you have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls.”

Yes brothers and sisters, what we need to see and understand is that this is what God has done for us through Jesus. We “have found favour” in His eyes. He has “spoken kindly” and he has given us comfort. This picture of Ruth as she falls before Boaz in gratitude and humility, should be the image which we carry of ourselves in our hearts, as we fall before the Cross and come to Jesus!

Friends like Ruth, we shouldn't think more highly of ourselves than we have a right to do. For it is also God, who has done all for us. And He calls us simply to Come. And he will pour out His goodness and mercy upon us. But like Ruth to the field of Boaz, we must come to Him. Standing, even for decades at the gate to the field, will do us no good. No unless we come to the field to glean we will go hungry. Yes Jesus says, “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.” Yes we need to Come to Him and cast our lives before Him in obedience and He will set us free!

Let's pray!