

Invoking His Name. Being Still. And The Kinsman Redeemer!

Last time we looked at chapter 3:1-9 of the book of Ruth under the heading, 'A Proposal Of Marriage'. Firstly we saw how much God had changed Naomi's heart. From being that angry and bitter woman who blamed Him for everything, and thought only of herself and her losses, to someone who is now thinking of Ruth and her future. "My daughter, shall I not try to find a home for you where you will be well provided for?" She didn't want Ruth to be living with her mother in law for the rest of her life. So she came up with a plan, which at first glance appeared to be all about manipulation and seduction.

And it was a real leap of faith for Ruth, which also came at great risk to her reputation and her life! She must get all made up and dressed up and go out at night. A foreigner in a strange country where, for a young woman, it was dangerous enough to go out to work each day during the light. But what Naomi was now suggesting had far greater risk! But though new to the faith, v5 "she will do whatever Naomi says." Yes she trusted in God as well as Naomi. She would go to the threshing floor concealing herself till the festivities had died down. And when she saw where Boaz was lying and sure that she wouldn't be seen, she went and "uncovered his feet and laid down" near to him. At the far side of the grain pile. Where she must now wait!

And I said that oftentimes it is hard to wait. When circumstances and people are squeezing you. And the difficulty is the uncertainty of it all. There are times when we feel we have it all worked out and then the bottom falls out of our world, somehow. But God says, trust in Me and all will be well.

Then Boaz awakens and Ruth proposes marriage. V9 "Spread the corner of your garment over me since you are a kinsman Redeemer." Then against what Naomi had instructed, Ruth does not wait for Boaz to assume what's going on here, she was not after a 'roll in the hay' and didn't want him to think so. This was about the God given responsibility of Boaz as a near kinsman to Ruth's late husband Mahlon Naomi's son! The question: was he willing to pay off all the debts, resume the land and acquire Ruth as his wife?

So we pick up the narrative in verses 10-14. 'Invoking His Name. Being Still, And The Kinsman Redeemer!'

But first a reminder, that to take Ruth as a wife also came at great risk. Remember, she is a Moabitess. She is from that despised and hated nation with which Israel had been at enmity for hundreds of years. This was certainly not for someone who thought too much of what society cared. This was going to be a social and a political faux pas. A big mistake socially at least! And if you remember Boaz's words to Ruth in chapter 2:12 "May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord the God of Israel under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

As I explained last time, there is a parallel in the symbolism here in the words "spread the corner of your garment over me." What it means is "spread your wings over me." And also as I explained last time that the words from v1 "should I not try to find a home for you," literally means 'should I not try to find rest for you?' So Ruth is asking if Boaz would extend the safety and rest of God to her, as he had formerly prayed down upon her head some 8 weeks before? Would he take her under his wings, as God had taken her under His? What was he willing to do?

Brothers and sisters, what I want us to notice here is that yet again the man of God invokes His Name! In praise. In hope, (acknowledging Him) and that this was indeed what God wanted him to do. "The Lord bless you my daughter." And what I love about this, as I have said before is that it reminds us also, to invoke and acknowledge the Name of Jesus in our everyday life. Because when we do this, we challenge and confront those nonbelieving family, friends and perishing world around us!

You know as Christians one of our greatest desires and hopes, should be to bring the Name of Jesus into play when given Providence by Him, into our everyday conversations with non-believers. Romans 10:14-15 "How can they then call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without somebody preaching to them. As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of him who brings good news."

Can you see that there are lots of ways to preach? Noah preached for 120 years. In 2 Peter 2:5, Peter speaks of Noah as "a preacher of righteousness." But we never read of any of his sermons, and why? Because there weren't any. His preaching was through the labour of his hands. Yes he invoked the Name of God for 120 years every day when he went out to build a massive boat because of flood was coming. And in a place hundreds of kilometres from the danger of floods in a world, where it had never even rained before!

I often pray for Providence from God to declare who I am as a Christian, and why? Because with the invoking of the Name of Jesus, people are forced into being confronted with the truth, that they have been created to be in relationship with God through Him. So it is clear who we are. Yes to in effect "preach Christ," to the unsaved world, should be one of our greatest desires in serving our King. It doesn't need to be a 30 minute sermon; in God it can just be the seed of a few words! 'It's a great day', people say. 'Thank the Lord', we reply. 'Wonderful for the rain', people say. 'Praise God for his Providence', we say. We praise the hand of the creator and give glory to Him not His creation. "In the beginning God created" (Genesis 1:1).

Well it seems, that this also is Boaz's way. "The Lord bless you my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier." And as he invokes the Name of the Lord here and calls Ruth "my daughter" he reassures her that there is no missed message on his part. He understands that an illicit encounter is the furthest thing from her mind. That is not what he has come to know of her or expect from her, as we will see! "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier," he says.

And this is no small statement when we think about it. He is actually saying that "this kindness," which she is now showing to him is greater than when she left everything behind, family, friends, home, country and gods, to support and confront Naomi. But what does he mean? How is what she is doing here so amazing? What's in these actions of Ruth that Boaz is seeing? Well may I suggest, that in clinging to Naomi, Ruth was committing to her all that she had as a daughter to give. But in the offering of herself to Boaz, she was giving him everything of herself! Genesis 2:24 "For this reason a man (or woman may I add) will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife (or husband) and the two will become one flesh."

Yes, she was offering her whole being to him before God. And he understood it. Listen to his words: "The Lord bless you my daughter, this kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier. You have not run after the younger men whether rich or poor" can you see? Boaz is just blown away. Ruth a beautiful young woman, (though she had no social standing, she's in the prime of her life) while he's an older man. He might have hoped, he most likely was attracted to the beauty of her

character, and yet he certainly wasn't expecting this! Perhaps he'd even given up on finding the right woman, we don't know. But there is no doubt, that he is surprised and overjoyed, at the prospect of having this wonderful young woman, God willing, to spend the rest of his life with as his wife!

Listen to the way he continues to speak tenderly and reassuringly to her. "And now my daughter do not be afraid. I will do for you all you ask." But this "man of standing," this man of God, is not still single because just anyone will do. No the woman he must marry must be a Proverbs 31 woman!

You know, it is very interesting that in the Hebrew Bible, Proverbs is placed just before Ruth. And therefore Proverbs 31:10-31 is the last thing which is read before Ruth is opened. And what the commentators suggest is that the writer of Proverbs may well have had Ruth in mind when he penned those words. V31 of Proverbs 31 says "Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate."

"The city gate" was that place where the movers and shakers would congregate. It's where all of the legal transactions took place and where also those looking for wise counsel would come. Well the writer of the Proverb is speaking of the woman's reputation, (her character and her deeds as in effect preceding her) yes as thou all of those traits of who she is are crying out in praise as a testimony to her. Even as a godly example of an upright woman.

And of course, that is of what Boaz now speaks! "And now my daughter, do not be afraid. I will do all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character." Do not be worried or concerned about what I think of you, in this less than ideal situation. The substance of who you are, (your work ethic, your devotion to your mother in law, how you have turned your back on your whole world even your gods, to now bow down to the living God of Israel) all of those things are well known and have been so since the first day you came to work in my fields. So be at peace, your reputation is beyond reproach!

As I've said throughout this series brothers and sisters, good character, noble character, overcomes great prejudice. In John 10:37-38 we read "But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father. Again they tried to seize him but he escaped their grasp." Yes, even Jesus said if you don't believe Me believe what you see with your own eyes. These things declare who I Am. They are the evidences of My authority and My substance. They testify that not only am I from God but also that I Am God! Yes it's an old saying but a good one, talks cheap!

Dear friends, it is good and important to do as Boaz does which is to declare who we are with our lips, but equally as important and perhaps even more so, to declare who we are with our actions. As the saying goes, Don't tell me that you love me show me that you do. Boaz is saying Ruth, all of this stuff about you is clear and has been for some time. I will do for you all you ask. There is just one small problem. V12 "although it is true that I am near of kin, there is a kinsman Redeemer nearer than I."

Brothers and sisters, if you are anything like me when you get into these kinds of situations, (wretched man that I am) the first thing that comes into my head is, You're kidding. I've gone to all this trouble for nothing! Yes I'm ashamed to confess that I am so often living on the knife's edge as a Christian. I'm torn between faith and doubt. But it's not doubt in God, His existence and love etc, just doubts of, Is this what He wants me to do? How do I know? What do I do? Well I think four times now in this series, we have looked at Psalm 130:5 "I wait for the Lord my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope." And Psalm 46:10a "Be still and know that I am God," and an even better translation is as I have mentioned before "stop striving and know that I am God."

Before us in Ruth's situation we have a great example. You may have heard it put this way. We knock on doors and if the Lord opens them, we step through. Ruth has done everything that Naomi has instructed her to do, apart from one small deviation of the plan. She's knocked on Boaz's door, he's opened it but can't yet let her in. He'd like to, but the way is not yet clear. So again, she must wait. She must "be still." She must stop striving, and put her hope and trust in God and His Word!

It's not easy, it's never easy, and especially if you are someone like me. Shamefully, I find it very hard to let go of the reins. It's that knife's edge which I spoke of before. And you know, this can become a sinful thing. Because it can lead, us to not simply having doubt in oneself, but actually having doubt in God. His Intentions. His Goodness and His Love for us! Matthew 6:33-34 "But seek ye first his Kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Again if you're anything like me, these words need to be written on every wall in your house. "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." And in Luke 12:25-26 Jesus puts it this way: "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?" And the meaning of the words is this: Who of you can add one single step to the whole of your life's journey by all of your worrying? And in all of your worrying about all of your troubles and trials throughout the year. By it all, have you changed any of it? And as with me, if you're honest with yourself of course the answer is no. And most likely, all your worrying has made things even worse!

Psalm 55:22 "Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you, he will never let the righteous fall." In the situation in which Ruth finds herself, how easy it would have been to be carried away with anxiety and doubt. But as we've just read in Psalm 55, Boaz in effect says trust me, and trust in God! V13 "stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to redeem, good, let him redeem. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it." So what is he saying? It is my great desire to marry you Ruth and I will do all that I can to make it happen. But it is in God's hands. So she must again wait. Yes she must wait in the scary uncertainty of it all. And for her this is massive. She knows Boaz by reputation and also through his kindnesses to her personally. She knows him to be a gentle and generous man. And most importantly, she knows him to be a man that abides in the Word of God! Though there be a fair age difference between them he is a good match for her. They are indeed "equally yoked" as Paul put it in 2 Corinthians.

Surely there must have been what ifs, running through her mind. Don't you think? She's put herself out there, what if this other man is horrible? She's risked everything for Boaz. She hadn't gone as Boaz put it and "run after the younger men whether rich or poor," no. She has sought to do the upright and honourable thing. But what if this other man is short, fat, old, and horrible? It's a scary thing to place our lives in someone else's hand isn't it. Again it's that scary uncertainty, that not knowing. But whose hands better to place our lives in Beloved, than those of the God of the entire universe. We call it faith!

And Ruth does so here. He tells her to stay close to him through the night so she doesn't have to travel home at that hour. And he also explains that for the sake of propriety and her reputation, that she had better go before anyone knows that she's been there! Yet again we can see what a good match they were. The selfless caring godly man, the selfless caring godly young woman. And v15 is awesome. As Boaz shows his commitment to her, he doesn't want her to go home empty handed, which we will deal with next time. But what I'd like us to consider as I close this morning are two things. Firstly, as the commentator points out, both Ruth and Boaz were willing to put everything on

the line in their practical responses of faith. Yes they were willing to risk all, by physically and socially, in their demonstrations of real faith in this God, in whom we claim, to trust.

So the question for each of us then is surely: What am I prepared to wager? Because can you see? In their demonstration of faith they have boldly declared who they are, and in whom they had invested their eternal future. Yes, both were prepared to risk not only their physical wellbeing, but also their social and reputational character for the sake of not only Naomi, but of course ultimately also for God! Ruth was prepared to put herself even daily at risk. Not for personal gain or foolhardiness, but for the love of her mother-in-law and her newfound faith in God.

The question is: Are we prepared to do the same? Beloved do we, and will we, declare Jesus when it comes at a cost, or even at great risk? Brothers and sisters do we care more about what friends, family, society and even authorities think? Then we do that which does our Saviour? Paul said, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel." So for whom are we prepared to be ashamed?

And the second thing I'd like us to consider this morning is the idea of "the kinsman Redeemer" who was nearer than Boaz. Because we too have a "kinsman Redeemer." We have a One who was prepared to acquire all of our debt of past, present and future sin. Yes like this other unknown man, to us, Jesus is our "Nearest of kin." But unlike this other man who remains nameless because he will be "unwilling to redeem," to buy back, at just the right time Jesus reveals Himself to us and says, Child, you are mind. I am willing. And of course He did that at the Cross!

Dear friends, we must continue to remember to see Jesus in the symbolism in this book because that is who all of these things are pointing us toward! The hymn that we sing 'There is a Redeemer Jesus God's Own Son, precious Lamb of God Messiah, Holy One. Thank you O my Father for giving us your Son and leaving your Spirit till, the work on earth is done!' Yes there is a Redeemer. And nearest of kin. And He is willing, and His Name is Jesus! John 20:31 "But these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. Praise God.

Let's pray!