

Ruth 3 – Redemption for the needy

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Main Point – Redemption for the needy outsiders– for Ruth and for Us.

When you think of famous movie **Marriage Proposals**, which comes to mind?

(**SLIDE**)Scarlett and Rhett in Gone with the Wind?

Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, in Pride and Prejudice?

Richard Gere and Julia Roberts in Pretty Woman?-----

Maybe another.-----

In our culture it's often involved the man getting down on one knee, as it did for me.

But in the story today, it's a bit more like this.(**SLIDE**)-----

For in our story, the woman boldly makes the first move.-----

Ruth needs a particular man to marry and redeem her.

But we also need a redeemer.

So we'll think about Ruth ch3, but also the Redeemer we need.

For without a Redeemer, Ruth and Naomi will be stuck in poverty.

And without a redeemer we will be chained to spiritual poverty, sin & death.-----

We all need a redeemer, someone to set us free.-----

We're looking at this fantastic short story called Ruth.(**SLIDE**)

And remember what's happened so far – Elimelech likely failed to trust God to provide for his family during a famine.

So he n' his wife Naomi and 2 boys moved to Moab.

Elimelech and Naomi's 2 boys died there.-----

Naomi returned home to Bethlehem, with her daughter-in-law Ruth;

Who courageously committed to stick with Ruth until death, and worship her God.---

And last week we saw Ruth's bitterness begin to shift to thankfulness and hope.

Why?---- Because of Boaz's extraordinary generosity and kindness.

Naomi was excited not only by the pile of grain Ruth brought home, but the fact that God providentially led Ruth to meet Boaz, a relative, a family-redeemer.-----

But the wheat and barley harvests started and finished, and Ruth remains husbandless and childless.

So what we see now is, **The Plan, Naomi's Plan, first point.(SLIDE)**

Naomi says in **v1**, 'My daughter, shouldn't I find rest for you so you'll be taken care of? And isn't Boaz our relative?

A suitable and eligible bachelor shall we say.-----

Remember Naomi's prayer back in **1v9**, that God would provide rest for her daughters' in-law, in the house of a new husband.

Well, that's what Naomi wants to progress and take action-on now.

She knows God is sovereign, she believes God is Almighty, but notice that doesn't mean Naomi sits back passively, waiting for a man to come knocking on their door.

She takes action.

She wants Ruth to find rest, peace; provision and protection with a new husband.

And in our individualistic society that might shock you.

In our society many think, "I don't need anyone".

But notice how Ruth's rest is grounded in dependence.-----

We don't like to be dependent, but for single or widowed women in that culture, life was very difficult.

And Ruth was a vulnerable woman, a childless foreigner; and family would mean protection and provision for her.-----

And by God's grace, that's what husbands still ought to do for their wives – take responsibility for protection and provision.-----

God providing for us, through our spouse.

God can provide for you through your spouse – and if you're married I pray that's your experience.-----

Last week we saw Boaz's kindness and he highlighted Ruth's loving-kindness to Naomi. But here we see Naomi changing, & proactively showing kindness to Ruth here, in this plan.- She knows Boaz will be winnowing the barley on the threshing floor, separating the husks from the grain, by throwing it up in the wind.-----

Somehow she knows he'll be sleeping at work too.-----

And look at what Naomi tells Ruth to do, **v3**.

Put on perfume and nice clothes.

For when you're seeking a spouse it's helpful to smell nice and look nice.-----

Then she's to notice where Boaz goes down to sleep, and 'go in and uncover his feet and lie down', and he'll know what to do.

Lie at his feet under the edge of his blanket or robe.-----

This is a bold plan – for it requires trusting that Boaz will not treat Ruth as Moabite trash.-----

The plan is for Ruth to communicate, 'Marry me', not sleep with me.

This sounds a very strange marriage proposal to us I'm sure; weird.-----

But clearly, Naomi was sure Boaz would understand this as a marriage proposal.-----

A passage that helps us is **Ezek 16.(SLIDE)**

God describes his people once being like a despised and rejected baby, cast into a field, left naked n' vulnerable; and no one cared.

But the Lord protected and nurtured her.

And when at a marriageable age,(**SLIDE**) the Lord covered her nakedness with the edge of his garment.

Which you see means he committed himself to her in marriage covenant.-----

There God makes the first move and "pops the question" so-to-speak

And that's Naomi's plan for Ruth here.-----

It's what Ruth says she will do, **v5**, and what she does.-----

Next point, the Redeemer and the Proposal.(SLIDE)

Ruth goes and does everything her mother in-law told her to do.

Going and laying at a man's feet while he sleeps takes courage.(**SLIDE**)

For Ruth risks rejection, and shame.

He could take advantage of her or label her a harlot.

While there is potential for sin and abuse, Ruth really puts herself out-there, trusting in his integrity, and the Lord no doubt.-----

Boaz wakes and is shocked to find a woman at his feet.

Presumably in the darkness he can't see who it is.

And Ruth says, **v9**, 'I am Ruth your servant, take me under your wing, for you are a family-redeemer'.

Or spread the edge or **wing** of your garment over me, for you are a kinsman redeemer.-----

Last week in **ch2v12**, Boaz had said Ruth had come under the Lord's wings for protection.

And amazingly, we see Boaz being asked to extend his wing of care to Ruth in a marriage covenant.-----

It's like Boaz is asked to be the answer to his own prayer.-----

If you've ever prayed for God's blessing and provision for someone, I wonder if you've ever been the answer to your own prayer?-----

And thinking about the language of **family-redeemer**; remember from last week and our **Deut 25** reading, a widow could have a near-relative to her deceased husband marry her to provide children for the family line.

Ruth is asking Boaz to marry her to provide heirs for her n' Naomi, and the family.---

Naomi's plan n' Ruth's courage pays off.

Boaz is pleased not put off by Ruth's assertiveness, and asks God to bless her.-----

And for a third chapter in a row we see that word **kindness**, covenant-keeping loving-kindness, being repeated in **v10**.

Even more than coming back with Naomi, n' working hard to feed Naomi, Ruth has shown kindness in this marriage request.

Kindness to provide for Naomi & Elimelech's family.

Boaz highlights she's not put herself first, not sought a young man with good looks or lots of cash.

But a man who'll provide heirs and security for the family, even when it meant marrying an older man.-----

Again, that's like the woman of **Proverbs 31** – she fears the Lord, she is kind, hardworking and puts her family before herself.

Both Ruth and Boaz embody kindness that flows from a fear of the Lord, an awe-filled trust-in and commitment to the Lord, and to putting others first.-----

And isn't that other-person focused kindness a great basis for a happy marriage?---

Boaz assures Ruth, Do not fear; I will do for you all that you've asked.-----

This is the **Promise from the Redeemer**.

Boaz is motivated by love not the law here.

By 'love' I mean servant-hearted sacrifice for the good of others love, not romantic love.

Because Boaz could've been racist n' rejected Ruth as a Moabite.

He could have decided from Deut 23 (v3-6) that God didn't want him to marry a Moabite; though Ruth's genuine conversion has altered her status.

Still, she is an outsider.

And how did **Jesus respond to outsiders?**-----

In **Luke 5.30(SLIDE)** Jesus was rebuked by the religious leaders for eating with and accepting, tax collectors and sinners – unworthy outsiders.-----

I wonder how you look at people who are different from you?

Whether because of their upbringing, their race or culture, or cos they wear a hijab head-scarf?-----

How do you view immigrants and refugees?-----

Jesus ate with the outsiders, he welcomed them.

Should we be any different?-----

Coming back to Ruth 3 and **v11**, Boaz says, everyone knows you're a woman of moral worth, and he is happy to marry her.

He promises, that if the closer relative to Naomi, wont marry n' redeem you, I will.

Look at **v13**, it's his promise and vow before the Lord.-----

And this creates suspense in the story and a hurdle in Naomi & Ruth's plan.----

But see how Boaz has Ruth's best interests in mind.

Even asking her to be careful that people don't see her when she leaves, to protect her reputation.

They weren't sleeping together before marriage.-----

Now **redeeming** someone is reclaiming them, or setting them free, by the payment of a price. Naomi and Ruth needed to be bought-back from destitution n' poverty, from losing their land, and childlessness.

They needed someone to free them and provide for them.-----

For from **Leviticus 25(SLIDE)** we learn that redeeming was a responsibility but not an obligation.[v23ff; 46ff]

And there was a hierarchy of response - the closer relatives were asked first.

And it was a great sacrifice.

You may remember Judah's son Onan in **Genesis 38**, he was happy to sleep with Tamar, but refused to let her get pregnant.

As the offspring would not truly belong to him.-----

But Boaz lavishes loving-kindness on Ruth, even when it's costly.

Cos marrying her will mean their firstborn son, really belongs in Naomi's family.-----

What does it look like for you to show love and kindness even when it's costly?-----

If you're married, Are you lavishing love on your spouse, even when they don't deserve it?---

Maybe it'll be seen in you(**SLIDE**) being patient, kind, not arrogant, rude or self-seeking, not irritable, and keeping no record of wrongs-**1Cor 13**.-----

Is there someone in your family, or an outsider, whom you could provide help for, even when it really costs you?-----

Gal 6.10(SLIDE) says we should 'work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith', fellow Christians.-----

And if we don't provide for our own family, we're worse than an unbeliever (**1Tim5.8**).-----

Is there something there for you to act on?-----

Next brief point, is the Provision of the Redeemer.(SLIDE)

Ruth gets up to go, and Boaz yet again provides her with plenty of barley.

We're not sure how much it is, but it's a clear sign of his commitment.----

As he's provides Ruth n' Naomi with food, he'll keep his promise to see Ruth provided with a family-redeemer.-----

His words in **v17** are interesting, Don't go back to your mother in-law empty-handed'

Remember in ch1 Naomi said she left Bethlehem full and came back empty.

Now she is starting to be full again.-----

Boaz wants Ruth to find rest in his promise of provision.-----

And Naomi knows that Boaz 'wont rest unless he resolves this today'.

Ruth & Naomi, their family and their land will be redeemed.-----

Naomi trusts he is a man of his word, a man of integrity.-----

The chapter started with Naomi wanting to find Ruth rest, the home, protection n' provision of a husband.

And the chapter finishes with Naomi being confident that Boaz will provide that.-----

We'll finish the story next week.

But we come to my last point, Redemption for us.-----

Ruth and Naomi needed a redeemer, and so do we.

In our day and time that wont be a widow marrying an in-law.

We all need a bigger n' better and longer-lasting redeemer than that.

And Scripture makes clear that Jesus Christ is our redeemer.-----

Remember, being redeemed is about being freed or bought back by the payment of a price.

And what is it we get freed from when we turn from sin and trust in Christ?-----

1 Pet 1 says(SLIDE) we get freed from an empty way of life.

Eph 1 says, it's from our trespasses, our sins.

And **Gal 3** says it's from the curse of the law.

And remember the curse from Gen 3, is the punishment for sin - death.-----

Jesus frees us from an empty and meaningless life, he frees us from the power of sin, and penalty of sin, eternal separation from God.-----

And **How** does he do this?-----

Not by paying lots of money, but by his blood.

That is his life given as a sacrifice, his blood poured out to death.----

Jesus died for unworthy needy outsiders like us, who were without God and without hope in the world.-----

We get forgiveness because Jesus died in our place.

We get true and eternal purpose because Jesus gave his precious blood.

We get included in God's family because God's son died for us.

We get freedom, and eternal life, because Jesus died our death.-----[Mk10.45]

Has Jesus redeemed you?-----

Have you turned your back on being boss of your own life, and trusted in Jesus?

Do you have him as your Saviour and Lord?-----

Redemption is not a big dry, theological word.

The story of Ruth shows us how it's personal.

Jesus died for me.-----

I hope you can say that, and you know the freedom and peace & rest Jesus gives.---
Ruth chapter 3 finishes with Ruth n' Naomi waiting to find out if they will be redeemed, and who their redeemer will be.

We don't need to wait.

Our redeemer has come, and he's ready, willing and able to free us from our own sinful nature, and an eternity in hell.

And one day our bodies will get redeemed from death and decay.(Rom 8.23)

Jesus gives us the freedom we need and long for deep down.-----

Gabriele Kuby says in her book, *The Global Sexual Revolution*,(**SLIDE**)

Modern and post-modern man have emancipated [freed] themselves – from God, from nature, from family, from tradition – woman from man, children from parents, and individuals from themselves as man or woman. They stand naked, restrained by nothing and defined by nothing other than their own wishes, desires and drives. They think they are free to self-actualise [to discover and be their true selves], and do you notice that, in their vulnerability and lack of inhibitions, they are more malleable than ever before'.

That's the culture children & teenagers are living in and growing up in.-----

Or as Tim Keller says in his book, *Making Sense of God*,(SLIDE)

Freedom is sometimes said to be the only unconditional good in our society, the only one we really need... everyone should be free to live as they desire, as long as they don't harm anyone else.---- Of course what is 'harm' remains undefined.

Freedom can be freedom from something –barriers or constraints – or freedom 'for' something - using our freedom to live in a particular way.

Everyone lives for something.

If we are living for Olympic gold, or for a successful career, or for our art or politics, or for a spouse, there are limits on our choices, things we can't do.

(**SLIDE**)Like the 66 year old who loves fatty foods, must choose to lose the lesser freedom – to eat foods he enjoys – to gain the greater freedom – long health & life.---

If we know we are created by God, and were created to know, serve and love God, if we try to live for anything else it only leads to slavery.-----

But when we begin to live for God and follow his will, we find that we are actually becoming what we were meant to be, realizing our original design.

(**SLIDE**)When a Christian grasps how Jesus saved us at infinite cost to himself, how he emptied himself of his glory and took on a humble form to serve our best interests, it creates a grateful joy that inwardly moves us to want to please, know and resemble him.

Our happiness gets put into his happiness, and serving him becomes our perfect liberation...

So we're freed to do what we most want to do... love our redeemer.-----

So brothers and sisters, if you know Jesus has redeemed you, use your freedom from the power and penalty of sin, to live his way, and flourish in that.-----

And I pray grateful joy and thankfulness springs from our hearts and lips.-----

Boaz was willing to be the Redeemer of Ruth n' Naomi who were in need.

But it started with Ruth making the first move in that marriage proposal.

With Christ he makes the first move.

And he was willing to give his life to redeem us.

And he did!-----

We were needy outsiders, separated from God, stuck in emptiness and sin, and slipping towards an eternal death.

And Jesus died to set us free.-----

And I can't think of better words to respond with than these, in this old hymn(**SLIDE**)

I will sing of my Redeemer,
And His wondrous love to me;
On the cruel cross He suffered,
From the curse to set me free.

Sing, oh, sing of my Redeemer,
With His blood He purchased me,
On the cross He sealed my pardon,
Paid the debt, and made me free.-----

Let's pray.