

[Read Text]

Remember how we ended last week. Ruth comes back home and tells Naomi who had shown her kindness. When Naomi realized who it was, her demeanor changed entirely. For the first time, she is filled with hope.

What we need to see from this text this morning is how our faith must be active in accordance with the Word of God.

1. Naomi displayed her faith by taking the initiative based on God's Word:

- Naomi, with renewed hope, develops a plan.
- She is looking for a way to find Ruth some relief from her work. (v. 1)
 - Ruth had been out of hope for a future, a husband, or children. Now, the woman who had no hope is suddenly filled with an abundance of hope. **Good theology is a cure for our worst of problems.**
- She develops a plan and on the surface the plan looks sneaky and subtle, and in a certain way it is. But, don't miss this: the plan is based on the clear imperative of God's Word.
- Why? Well, look at v. 2: "Is not Boaz our relative?" We see it also referenced in 2:20: "The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers."
- **The kinsman-redeemer:** There are two facets to this from which Naomi is drawing.
 - In Old Testament times it was vital that a man's family name should be preserved. If he died without an heir, steps were to be taken to make sure that he had an heir who would carry on the family name and inherit the family property. (Deut. 25: 5-10)
 - Also relevant are the provisions of God's law for what was to happen when an Israelite family fell on hard times and sold their land. In such circumstances, the nearest male relative, called the kinsman-redeemer, was to redeem—to buy back—the land for his poor relatives. (Lev. 25: 25-28) Interestingly, this was one of two ways that God had uniquely ordained for the return of land to its owners (the other being the Year of Jubilee).
- Naomi took the initiative to put into her faith into action based upon what she knew of God and His Word.
- There are some areas of God's Word that we need to put into action in our own lives.

2. Ruth displayed her faith in asking for protection based on God's Word

- First off, Boaz was not drunk. He was merry from a celebration.
- Winnowing and threshing: In threshing, the grain was beaten out from the stalks with flails or trodden over by oxen. Then, they would winnow the grain by throwing it in the air and the wind would carry away the chaff. Then, they would remove it from the threshing floor and place it in heaps to be sold. In this scene, Boaz is threshing his grain and would sleep next to it to protect it.

- Ruth shows up dressed in her best and keeps an eye on Boaz to make sure that she sees exactly where he is.
 - By washing herself and putting on her perfume, she is sending a message to Boaz. A widow would go through a period of mourning and would dress accordingly. Ruth is declaring that she is past her mourning period and is ready to be married again.
- Ruth goes and finds Boaz asleep. She pulls the garment from his feet and lies down. When he awakes he asks “Who are you?” She tells him and then tells him why she is there.
- Notice her request: “Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.”
 - This word for “wings” can also be translated “garment”. There is a clear signal here.
 - Ezekiel 16:8-12 uses language from God to His people and it is bride and bridegroom language. It speaks of God covering His people with a garment.
 - It was also common in the Ancient Near East to use this language to describe marriage. The gesture of a man covering a woman was a symbolic act signifying the establishment of a new relationship.
 - Ruth has already found protection under God’s wings. Now she is seeking protection under the wings of Boaz, whom she knows that God has provided.
- We can’t miss that Boaz serves clearly as a prefiguration of Christ—who is the kinsman-redeemer provided for us by our Father in heaven (we will see this more next week). Ruth’s example of faith toward Boaz demonstrates for us how we should express faith toward Jesus Christ.
 - We are to humbly come before the Lord and ask him for his protection as our Redeemer. He alone can protect us from the condemnation that our sin deserves. Only through his work accomplished on the cross can redemption take place.
 - Ruth was confident in her request of Boaz because God’s Word had provided for the kinsman-redeemer. You and I have confidence in our request of God to redeem us because of God’s Word to us. He has promised to redeem all of those who come to him by faith. And He cannot violate His Word.

3. Boaz demonstrates his faith by accepting responsibility based on God’s Word:

- Boaz was under no obligation to act on Ruth’s behalf because there was a nearer relative who had “first dibs”. However, Boaz accepts this responsibility based upon the call and providence of God.
- Now, let’s notice a couple of things here. There is much speculation about this scene. Many commentators and scholars want to interpret this as being sexual and risqué. Why?
 - This scene was not uncommon for prostitutes to come and take advantage of men who were full and happy on the threshing floor. They would come at night and offer themselves to these men.

- However, this scene is different and it tells us much about Boaz and his character. Think about the scene. It's night time. The whole thing is shrouded in secrecy (probably for the purpose of protecting Ruth from embarrassment). Boaz is an old man and Ruth is a young woman. Ruth owes a debt of gratitude to Boaz. She even refers to herself as "your servant". Boaz could have easily taken advantage of Ruth here. But he didn't.
- He instead protected her. *"To be a person of integrity means I am innocent in my relationships. I'm not using you, cheating you, manipulating you, or lying to you. I'm a person you can trust, because of my integrity, my commitment to purity before God."* I wonder if we are people of integrity?? I wonder if there is someone we need to confess something to. Who are we "in the dark?" Who are we in the moments when we could get away with stuff?
- Boaz accepted responsibility for Ruth... a younger woman. A foreign woman. A Moabite woman. He didn't need her. He didn't have to have her. She needed him a lot more than he needed her. But, he loved her. He had the capacity and the ability to redeem her. And he accepted this responsibility based upon the Word of God.
- Boaz was the one in position to redeem Ruth and Naomi. That made him acceptable. (Notice that there were other options for her to marry and Boaz was surprised that she didn't choose from them). The question of this text is less about whether Ruth found Boaz acceptable but whether Boaz found Ruth's request acceptable. And of course, he did.
- Jesus did the same for us.
- Jesus is the only acceptable Redeemer. The question for all of us to ask is not whether we find God acceptable, but rather he finds us acceptable. And of course, through Jesus' death on the cross, he does. And he has promised and is bound by the Word of God to fully accept us based solely on those terms.