

“The Midnight Meeting”

November 8, 2015

Ruth 3:1-18

I. Introduction

As you probably remember, up to the time Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem, things hadn't gone so well. In [Ruth 1:20-21](#) Naomi said, “Don't call me Naomi (which means pleasant), call me Mara (which means bitter) because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty.” When they returned, both Naomi and Ruth expected to live out their lives as poor, destitute widows living off the gleanings of the fields of others.

But God had other plans for them, and He directed Ruth's steps to the field of Boaz who “*just happened*” to be a relative of Naomi's husband. In [Ruth 2:20](#) Naomi told Ruth that Boaz “is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers.” According to [Leviticus 25:47-55](#), a near relative could redeem property or even people that had been mortgaged or sold because the original family member had fallen on hard times. Such a person was called a kinsman-redeemer—he could pay the price for those who couldn't redeem themselves. Jesus Christ is our kinsman-redeemer—turn to [Galatians 4:3-5](#). Jesus died to redeem us, He paid the penalty for our sins and so that we could become children of God.

Six weeks have passed since Ruth started gleaning in Boaz's fields. During that time, Naomi came up with a new plan—Ruth is to marry Boaz. Naomi could tell from Ruth's reports that Boaz looked on Ruth with favor, so Naomi set about to get things moving. In those days, as in many countries still today, it was the parents who arranged marriages, so what Naomi did was acceptable and correct.

II. The Midnight Meeting

A. First, Ruth prepared to meet Boaz. The chapter begins with Naomi asking Ruth if she should “try to find a home (or *security* as other versions say)” for Ruth. From what Boaz said later in this

chapter, it appears that there were other men who would gladly have married Ruth, but they could not have redeemed her, only a kinsman like Boaz could do that.

Since it was the end of barley harvest, Boaz would be using the threshing floor that night. So Naomi prepared Ruth to meet Boaz there. Naomi gave her some specific instructions. She gave 4 things Ruth needed to do. *First, she needed to wash herself.* After working in the field all day, she needed to wash off all the dirt and grime to make herself more presentable. *Second, she needed to perfume or anoint herself.* After a hard day of working in the sun, people of that day used fragrant oils to protect and heal their bodies and to make themselves pleasing to others. *Third, she was to change her clothes.* She was to take off her clothes of widowhood and mourning and dress up. *Finally, Ruth had to learn how to present herself* to Boaz. What Ruth was going to do wasn't improper—but it was all new to her. She had to learn the one way for redemption. This was the only way Ruth could offer herself to her kinsman-redeemer. She had to put herself at the feet of the lord of the harvest, and he would do the rest.

Trusting her mother-in-law, Ruth said, *“I will do whatever you say.”* So, after she had finished her preparations, Ruth went down to the threshing floor.

B. Ruth at the threshing floor.

1. Ruth submitted to Boaz. The end of harvest time was a joyful time. Now the laborers would see the results of their labors in the field as they worked on the threshing floor. The floor itself was usually clay soil that was packed to a hard smooth surface and usually it was circular with rocks placed around it. It would be outside the village often on a hill where it could catch the evening breeze. Sheaves of grain would be spread on the floor and trampled by oxen drawing a sled or by beating the stalks. Once the grain was separated, the workers would throw the grain into the air and the breeze would carry the chaff away while the grain fell to the floor. The grain would be piled up to be carried away for marketing or storage. As long as the evening wind blew, they would be there

working on the threshing floor. When the wind died down, they would hold a banquet. After the feast was over, the men would sleep among the grain. Since the threshing floor was circular, they would put their heads toward the grain and their feet would stick out. This way they could protect the grain from thieves who might break in and steal.

This was the scene when Ruth arrived, coming to the feet of Boaz. She was going to ask him to obey the law of the kinsman–redeemer and take her as his wife. So, approaching quietly, she uncovering his feet, and laid down. By lying at his feet, Ruth submitted herself to Boaz. Under Naomi’s guidance, Ruth was forcing the issue, and now Boaz would have to take the next step.

What a surprise it must have been to wake up in the middle of the night and find a woman lying at his feet. When Boaz asked who she was, Ruth replied that she was Ruth, but she didn’t call herself “*the Moabitess*” but his “**servant Ruth.**” She was making a new beginning.

Perhaps Boaz hadn’t acted on his own, because he expected her to marry one of the younger men in Bethlehem. **Ruth 4:12** indicates that Boaz was an older man and Ruth was a young woman. Perhaps he felt he didn’t have a chance. But a more important reason for not acting was that there was a nearer kinsman in town who had the first option as kinsman–redeemer for Ruth and the property and Boaz was waiting for him to act. With Ruth’s actions, the waiting had come to an end.

Ruth asked Boaz to “**spread the corner of your garment over me**”—to spread one’s garment over a person meant to claim that person for yourself—particularly in marriage. The word translated “**corner**” in the NIV and “**skirt**” in KJV also means “*wing.*” In **Ruth 2:12** Ruth had come under the wings of the Lord, the God of Israel, and now she would be under the wings of Boaz, her intended husband. By doing this, Ruth willingly submitted to Boaz.

2. Ruth listened to Boaz. After submitting to him, Ruth listened to Boaz. Boaz could have refused to have anything to do with Ruth, but because of his love for her, **he accepted her.** He even called her “**my daughter**” and **he blessed her.** **He also reassured her.** In the darkness of the night, he

reassured her as he said, “Don’t be afraid, I will do for you all you ask.” However, what had seemed to be a simple procedure to Naomi and Ruth, turned out to be a bit more complicated since there was a man in Bethlehem who was a nearer kinsman. But Boaz would see that one way or another, she would be redeemed.

3. Ruth received gifts from Boaz. When she worked in the fields, Ruth had received special treatment from Boaz. His workers had allowed her to follow the harvesters, they had protected her from harm, and they had dropped sheaves just for her. Boaz had shared a noon meal with her. But now Boaz gave her even more grain. Ruth received gifts from Boaz. He wasn’t just concerned about Ruth’s future; he also met her present needs in a very generous way. She hadn’t asked him for anything, but he gave her the grain because he loved her. He was about to marry her, and he didn’t want his prospective bride gleaning in the fields like a poor laborer.

C. Finally, Ruth returned home to wait. When Ruth returned home with the grain and Boaz’s promises, Naomi asked, “How did it go?” Actually in the Hebrew Naomi asked, “Who are you, my daughter?” In other words Naomi was asking, “*Are you still Ruth the Moabitess, or are you the prospective, Mrs. Boaz.*”

Ruth told Naomi about her conversation with Boaz and then showed Naomi the generous gift Boaz had given them. Naomi could no longer say her hands were empty. They were full because of the grace of the kinsman-redeemer. Ruth’s faith and obedience had brought about a complete change in their lives.

Since Ruth and Naomi believed that Boaz would accomplish what he said he would do, they had to wait patiently until they received the good news that Ruth would be a bride. So Naomi counseled Ruth to “Wait.” She could do no good following Boaz around Bethlehem trying to get him to keep his promises. Naomi was confident that Boaz was busy working for Ruth and that he wouldn’t rest until the matter was settled.

III. Conclusion

The story of Ruth isn't just a love story about the marriage of an alien widow to a respected Jew. It is also a picture of Christ's relationship to those who trust Him and belong to Him. In the steps that Ruth took to enter into a deeper relationship with Boaz, we see the steps God's people must take if they want to enter into a deeper relationship with the Lord. Like Ruth, it's not just the gifts that we should seek, but the Giver Himself.

A. First, we must prepare to meet God. [2 Corinthians 7:1](#) says, “**Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.**” Like Ruth we need to get rid of the dirt and grime in our lives—the sin that contaminate us. [Turn to James 4:7-8](#). When we confess our sins, [1 John 1:9](#) tells us that God will forgive us. But confessing means that we need to put out of our lives those things that defile us—that make us dirty. We need to get rid of sin in our lives.

After washing, Ruth anointed herself so that she smelled good. When we become Christians [1 John 2:20](#) says, “**You have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.**” We all have the Holy Spirit, but, if we are going to “*smell good*”—i.e. if we are going to be the Christians God wants us to be, then as Paul wrote in [Ephesians 5:18](#) we must “**Be filled with the Holy Spirit.**” If we are going to be useful to God—if we are going to smell good to Him, we must allow the Holy Spirit to fill us—to control us. Finally, we can't come into God's presence in our own righteousness, as [Isaiah 64:4](#) says, “**All our righteous acts are like filthy rags**”—as [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) says we can come only in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. If you want to enter into a deeper relationship with your Lord, you must come to him with a clean heart and mind. [Turn to Hebrews 10:19-25](#).

B. Come before God and submit to Him. After preparing herself, Ruth came to Boaz where she submitted to him. In a similar manner when we come before God, as we read in [James 4:7](#) we need to

submit to Him. We need to recognize who God is—as Isaiah wrote in [Isaiah 64:8](#), “We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.” Turn to [Romans 12:1-2](#).

When we come to God seeking a deeper fellowship with Him, like Boaz, He won’t refuse us. In [John 6:37](#) Jesus said, “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.” Speaking to Christian in [Revelation 3:20](#) Jesus said, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” God could force His way in, but He waits for us to invite Him in. And just as Boaz reassured Ruth, God reassures us—in [John 14:1](#) Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.” In [Matthew 28:20](#) He said, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” We have no reason to fear, as [Romans 8:31](#) says, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

Boaz was concerned about the redemption of Ruth. God has the same concern for us. His Law said in [Ezekiel 18:4](#), “The soul who sins is the one who will die.” But God brought about our salvation through Christ Jesus—[Romans 8:32](#) says, “He (who) did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all.” Jesus is the only Way, in [John 14:6](#), Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

C. Wait for the Lord. Finally, after Ruth had been with Boaz, she returned home and waited for him. Just as Naomi was confident that Boaz “will not rest until the matter is settled today,” we can be sure as [Philippian 1:6](#) says that “he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” We need to wait for the Lord. As the Psalmist wrote in [Psalm 46:10](#), “Be still, and know that I am God.” The Hebrew word translated “*be still*” could be translated “*take your hands off, relax*.” It’s so easy for us to get impatient with the Lord and start interfering in things we ought to leave alone. He is God, and His hand can accomplish the impossible. Our hands may get in the way and make matters worse. We need to put ourselves at the feet of the Lord of the Creation, and He will do the rest.

