Ruth, A Woman of Noble Character

Ruth 3:1-18

Key Verse: 3:11: “And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character.”

In chapter 2 we learned that Ruth found favor with Boaz while she was working in his field. Boaz allowed Ruth to work in his field. It is a blessing for us to find favor with someone. We have found favor with God because of Jesus Christ. We were not a people, but we became people of God because of his Son Jesus. God made us his people through Jesus and allowed us to work in his kingdom. Amen!

In chapter 3 Ruth meets Boaz again. Naomi coaches Ruth to propose Boaz according to their customs. There are hidden messages behind Naomi’s plan, Ruth’s obedience, Boaz’s generosity, and others. We will focus on our relationship with Jesus our Lord.

First, find a home for Ruth (1-6) Look at verse 1. “***One day Ruth’s mother-in-law Naomi said to her, ‘My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for***.” Naomi wanted to find a home for Ruth. Here, ‘find a home for Ruth’ means ‘establish a family for Ruth.’ In other words, Naomi wanted to introduce a man for Ruth as her new husband. In 1:9 Naomi said the same before to Ruth for her remarriage, “*May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband*.” Naomi wanted to establish a home for Ruth. Naomi was an old poor widow. She needed a young daughter-in-law Ruth as her aid. But Naomi was not selfish. She considered Ruth’s future more than herself. God’s tender mercy and mindfulness was manifested for Ruth through Naomi.

The man who Naomi considered for Ruth was Boaz. Boaz was one of her guardian-redeemers. Above all, Boaz was a man of faith, a man of standing with kindness and generosity. Ruth had found a favor with Boaz. Naomi knew that Boaz would work in his field that night. (2) So, she coached Ruth on what to do for her proposal. Look at verses 3-4. “***Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don’t let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do***.” Naomi instructed Ruth to wash, put on perfume and get dressed in her best clothes so that Ruth might draw attraction from Boaz. It was like a preparation for a pure bride to welcome her bridegroom. Then Ruth had to creep into his threshing floor and wait until Boaz came back from his work. As for Ruth, it was not easy to obey. This was because Naomi’s idea must have been risky. Thus far Ruth had found favor in Boaz’s eyes. But her good reputation might have been ruined by her presumptuous behavior, and Boaz’s favor might have been dropped if it was against Boaz’s will and spirit. Besides, that night she could have been assaulted by other men even before she arrived at the threshing floor. Naomi’s proposal reminds us of Rebekah who coached Jacob to disguise himself like Esau so that he might be blessed by his father Jacob. (Ge 27:5-13) Naomi’s plan was as risky as Rebekah’s.

How did Ruth respond to Naomi’s words? Look at verses 5,6. “***I will do whatever you say. “Ruth answered. So, she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do***.” Ruth answered, “*I will do whatever you say.*” And she did everything exactly as Naomi told her to do. Wow! Some may claim that Ruth blindly followed Naomi because Ruth was an idiot. But Ruth didn’t follow Naomi blindly. In chapter 1 Ruth rejected Naomi’s suggestion to return to her home. Ruth was wise enough to make a right decision and have a good choice. Ruth knew what she had to do by faith and what not to do. Ruth obeyed Naomi’s proposal by faith. She trusted in Naomi as well as the God of Naomi. Here we learn what obedience is. Obedience is not a blind submission, but a reverent submission. Obedience requires trust and love. Ruth trusted Naomi and loved her. Ruth reminds us of the Virgin Mary who obeyed the angel’s message when the angel pronounced the birth of the Messiah through her. Mary said, “*I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said. (May your word to me be fulfilled*).” (Lk 1:38)

Second, a woman of noble character (7-18) Boaz finished eating and drinking. He was in good spirits. Then he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. He went to the far end of the grain pile so that he might not make any mistake and harm others. At that time Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and laid down. This was the expression of her proposal for marriage to Boaz according to their custom. In the middle of the night something startled Boaz; he turned and found that there was a woman lying at his feet! (8) Boaz asked, “***Who are you***?” Ruth answered, “***I am your servant Ruth. Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family***.” (9) Spreading a garment over a person is an action of wedding in the Middle East. Boaz realized that Ruth proposed to him. How did Boaz respond to Ruth’s proposal? Look at verses 10-11. “***The LORD bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character***.” Boaz called Ruth “my daughter”. Boaz must have been much older than Ruth. Boaz praised Ruth who did not run after younger men, but chose him who was much older than her. Boaz thought that it was Ruth’s kindness for him. Boaz promised to do all Ruth requested. He would do for her as a guardian-redeemer. Boaz praised Ruth as a woman of noble character. As Boaz said, Ruth was a faithful woman. She was faithful to her dead husband and her old mother-in-law. She would be faithful to her new husband.

Proverb 31:10-30 says about a woman of noble character, (selected) “*A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life...She gets up while it is still night; she provides food for her family and portions for her female servants...She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy...Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land...She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue... Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her...Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*” I believe that Ruth had all these characters and qualities as a noble woman.

In verses 12-13 Boaz mentioned about a barrier between them which he had to resolve in carrying out to redeem her. It was a nearer guardian redeemer who was more closely related to Naomi. Boaz said that if he wanted to redeem Ruth, it would be good. But if he refused, he would redeem Ruth. According to Boaz’ words, Ruth stayed with him until morning. Boaz gave six measures of barley for the sake of Naomi. (15) After returning to Naomi, Ruth told everything which had happened in the threshing floor. Naomi said in verse 18. “***Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.***” Naomi believed that Boaz would meet the closer guardian-redeemer that day to request about the redemption. Naomi believed Boaz’s integrity and she had confidence in his favor for Ruth. All these were Naomi’s plan, but behind all these there was God’s divine sovereignty over the history of Israel. God wanted to build up the family of the Messiah through men and women of faith like Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi. People love and hate. They meet and depart. They live and die. Even though people think that they rule and control everything, God works behind them. God works behind them to fulfill his will. The Book of Ruth is a beautiful love story between Boaz and Ruth, but in their romance, God establishes a godly family, the bloodline of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Third, be prepared to welcome Jesus. In the book of Hosea God compares himself to a husband and Israel to an unfaithful bride. Through these metaphors God claimed their repentance and restoration of their covenant as people of God. Paul replaced Israel with the churches of Christ and Jesus as our bride. He said in 2 Corinthians 11:2, *“I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him*.” He also said in Ephesians 5:23, “*For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church*.” Ruth’s encounter with Boaz in the threshing floor shows our future when we meet Jesus in heaven as our bridegroom. In Matthew 25:1-13 Jesus compares us to his pure virgin brides and himself to our bridegroom. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, we must keep watch, be prepared to welcome Jesus our bridegroom anytime anywhere. As Ruth washed, putting on perfume and getting dressed in her best clothes to meet Boaz, so we also must wash from our sins, put on perfume of our devotion and get dressed in our holy robe to meet Jesus. Even though Ruth met Boaz on the threshing floor at night secretly, we will meet our Lord Jesus in heaven under glorious God’s light so that everyone may see our holy union. John describes this moment in the book of Revelation. “*I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*” At that time, “*he will wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, because the old order of things has passed away*. (Rev 21:1-4)

Ruth 3 starts with the words “finding a rest (home)’, and it finishes with “the man will not rest”. In other words, the story starts with a marriage between Boaz and Ruth and finishes ‘a marriage between Jesus and his church.’ We find true rest and peace in Jesus, our true bridegroom because he welcomes us into his eternal home. This is the hidden message behind the romance between Boaz and Ruth. God used Naomi, a woman of faith, to establish a godly family for the Messiah. May God richly bless our life of faith, our devotion, faithfulness to our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us renew our marriage vow to our Lord Jesus as his pure, faithful, virgin brides. Last week Queen Elizabeth II passed away. She took a rest in peace. She was praised as a woman of noble character. But she cannot compare to Ruth, who gave her life for the Messiah, our Eternal King. I watched how English cabinet members pledging their loyalty to their new king Charles. We must show our loyalty and devotion to our majesty and king Jesus more than they do. Amen!