

A Sermon preached by Martin Tanner in St Mary's, Market Drayton on Thursday 13th October 2016 at 10.00am

SS4 RUTH CHAPTER 3

Ruth's life has fallen apart. Her husband is dead and she has left her homeland of Moab and come to live with her widowed Mother-in-Law, Naomi, in Bethlehem, a place that is strange for her.

She is spending her days gleaning in the fields around Bethlehem. First gleaning the barley harvest and then the wheat harvest. The summer is passing and Ruth's prospects of improvement do not look good.

BUT Chapter 3 verses 1 to 5 are THE TURNING POINT of the Book of Ruth **and to understand the turning point we need to understand what a "Kinsman-Redeemer" is** (or "Guardian-Redeemer" as the NIV puts it)

God gave each tribe and each family a piece of the Promised Land. The idea was that this piece of land would stay in the same family for generations. All Israel would be the same, all would be land-owners. There wouldn't be some who owned lots of land and some who were land-less. No Lords and serfs.

To maintain this situation, provision was made if a man died without sons. The provision was called "**Kinsman-Redeemer**" and it allowed the nearest male relative to buy the land and marry the widow and have sons to carry on the deceased's name. And if the nearest male relative wouldn't do this then it went on down the line until someone would.

The only requirement was this: The Kinsman-Redeemer could NOT take the initiative. He had to be asked **by the widow** to redeem her husband's land. The woman had to take the initiative. That was the Law.

So now you can see how it all fits together.

3v1 Naomi says,

"My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you?"

(2)

This is Naomi prodding Ruth into action.

Naomi's husband, is dead and his son, Ruth's husband, is also dead. **So it is ONLY RUTH who can take the initiative and claim her kinsman-redeemer rights from Boaz.**

Naomi cannot find Ruth a husband but she can prod her into action. And so verses 1 to 5 are the turning point of the Book of Ruth.

Naomi advises Ruth, v3 to *"Wash and perfume herself and wear her best clothes and go to the threshing floor and meet Boaz"*

Boaz is an older man who is a successful farmer, rich and single. He is a good catch but, though he has met Ruth in the fields and talked with her, he has done nothing else to develop the relationship. Perhaps Boaz is a bit shy with women.

Anyway, on this night the Bible tells us that Boaz has a good meal, drinks some wine and is in good spirits. He will also be tired because it is harvest time and farmers at harvest time work long hours and threshing itself is hard work. He is so tired he can't even go home but merely sleeps in his place of work.

All he wants is a good night's sleep to recharge his batteries for the next day. Which is why he doesn't notice a beautiful, perfumed woman, entering the threshing floor.

She lies down at his feet.

Then later, v8, Boaz wakes up momentarily and is startled to find a woman lying at his feet.

Ruth says to him, *"Spread the corner of your garment over me since you are a kinsman-redeemer"*

What is this? This isn't a request to keep her warm. This is a request for marriage. The important words are *"since you are a kinsman-redeemer"*.

It is code. Ruth is saying to Boaz, "MARRY ME!"

(3)

And Boaz replies, v10,

"The Lord bless you. This is a great kindness. You have not run after younger men. Now don't be afraid. I will do all you ask."

Boaz understands that it IS a request for marriage, understands that Ruth is putting the Law of kinsman-redeemer into operation, and is pleased that Ruth chooses him rather than a younger man more her age.

He then pays her a great compliment saying, v11

"All the town knows that you are a woman of noble character".

But also says the unwelcome news that while he indeed is indeed **A** kinsman-redeemer there is **another** who is nearer in line than he is and he must go in the morning and talk to him first.

There is a snag! Boaz wants to say "YES, YES, YES" to Ruth's request for marriage but he can't quite until the problem of the nearer relative is sorted out. **But he does promise to do his very best.**

Then Ruth, v14, lays at Boaz's FEET (NB not with him. There is purity here) and both get a bit more sleep until just before dawn when Boaz fills Ruth's shawl with six measures of barley. It's a way of saying, *"Your empty days are over!"* Then Ruth slips home to Naomi while it is still dark.

Naomi says to Ruth,

"WAIT my daughter until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today."

(4)

Finally, remember that this story of Boaz being a kinsman-redeemer to Ruth is also a beautiful illustration of the truth that we all have a kinsman-redeemer **IN JESUS CHRIST.**

Jesus indeed fulfils all the requirements to be our kinsman-redeemer because:

1. Faith in him makes him us blood relatives Matthew 26 v28
"This is MY blood of the new covenant which is shed for YOU, and for many, for the forgiveness of sins"

2. He is able to pay the price Romans 4 v25
"He died for our sins and was raised for our justification"
"By his stripes you have been healed" Isaiah 53 v5

3. He is willing to pay the price Mark 10 v45
"The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many"

All we must do is CLAIM Christ as our kinsman-redeemer.

We all have to go to "the threshing floor" like Ruth did, and make our request. And if you have never asked Jesus to be your Redeemer then why not ask him today? Why not say your own prayer inviting him to be central to your life?

THEN we will have all the blessings of being redeemed, of hope, peace, joy, purpose and the sure and certain promise of an eternity with the LORD.

-MARVEL in the fact that when Ruth asked Boaz to be her redeemer she started the line of events that would result in Jesus being born as our Redeemer.

-MARVEL that today in Bread & Wine we can draw near to him and he will feed our souls and spirits.

-MARVEL that we are not alone, that we are not insignificant, but that God loves each one of us and wants to Redeem us.

A 'kinsman-Redeemer' is at the very heart of our faith.