

## Ruth 3: 1-18

### Introduction

- I. Old Testament narratives are challenging because we are so far removed from the original culture
- II. This passage is confusing but some things are clear
  - A. It's clear that Naomi is trying to secure a husband for Ruth
  - B. It's clear that Boaz is a godly man of character (2:1, 4) and the women would assume this
  - C. It's clear that Boaz interprets Ruth's actions on the threshing floor as being as appropriate, respectful, and even an act of hesed (steadfast love) (v. 10-11)
  - D. While it is a sexually-charged scene, it is clear that nothing sexual actually takes place

### The Passage

- I. Naomi (v. 1-4)
    - v. 1: She has an unselfish motivation to secure a home for Ruth
    - v. 2: Boaz is a kinsman (a relative who would feel a certain level of responsibility to Naomi)
    - v. 2-4: Naomi's strategy
      1. Cultural issues at stake

In those days, marriages were arranged by a male in the family Ruth is without a father, brother, or uncle, without a dowry price, and without legal rights or negotiating power (plus she's a foreigner). In a shame based culture, she probably cannot approach Boaz publicly and ask him to marry her
      2. The strategy achieves two goals
        - a. Secrecy/privacy: avoids shaming him or her if it fails
        - b. Puts him in as favorable a state as possible to accept
  - v. 3:
    - 1) maybe means "look as attractive as possible"
    - 2) maybe means "remove the evidence of your mourning as a widow so that you show him you are available for marriage again"
  - v. 4:

She's not commanded to say anything outright. Just sending nonverbal clues
- II. Ruth
  - v. 5: faithful and committed to Naomi
  - v. 6-7: Imagine being her:

a woman living in male dominated society, a foreigner in this new land, going out alone at night as a woman to a place of work where men have been eating and drinking, subtly proposing to an older wealthy man

- Ruth is a courageous, risk taking woman of faith (a female Abraham)
- v. 8-9: Ruth adds her own words: “Spread your garment over me”
    1. This is an indirect request for marriage = “I want to come under your protection and care in marriage” (see God’s use of the same phrase in Ezekiel 16:8)
    2. She is drawing on words Boaz spoke to her earlier
      - 2:12: the word “wing” is the same Hebrew word as “garment”
      - Ruth is saying: “You noticed how I’ve sought shelter under God’s wings. Now I want to find shelter under your wings. I want you to be the way God provides for me. I want you to be the tangible expression of God’s care and protection”

### III. Boaz

- v. 10-11: Boaz could be offended or tempted sexually, but instead he sees a woman of faith and character who is in need of help, and he wants to help
  - v. 10: “this kindness” = hesed
    1. Boaz may be saying she is showing hesed to him by choosing him rather than younger men.
    2. More likely, he is saying she is showing hesed to Naomi by choosing him to raise a son who will continue Naomi’s line, rather than pursuing whomever she wanted. So her actions continue to be about her faithfulness to Naomi.
  - v. 11: He chooses to be faithful to her
- v. 12: a closer relative than Boaz to whom Boaz will honorably defer
- v. 15-17: Boaz provides for Naomi

### Conclusion

- I. The two sides of righteousness
  - Righteousness = a zeal for doing what is good and right in the Lord’s eyes
- II. Righteousness avoids evil (Boaz)
  - A. Rather than be controlled by impulse in the moment, Boaz remains pure
  - B. Today’s cultural paradigm = “Expressive individualism”
    - = doing whatever feels right in the moment and not submitting to a higher authority
  - C. Righteousness is not about “expressive individualism” but rather finding life and joy in following God’s commands (see Psalm 19)
- II. Righteousness actively pursues the good (Ruth and Naomi)
  - A. These two righteous women proactively come up with a plan that requires initiative, courage and faith in God
  - B. “entrepreneurial righteousness”: righteousness that involves intentional thought, planning, courage, faith
    1. Righteous people don’t just avoid evil, they go hard after what is good and right

2. Sometimes we fall into a “passive righteousness” that is only concerned with avoiding evil.
3. How can we take an entrepreneurial mindset and apply it to our spiritual lives
  - a. Parents proactively modeling authentic faith to children
  - b. Spouses to each other
  - c. pursuing deeper relationship with God, service, etc  
see Hebrews 10: 24
- C. Entrepreneurial righteousness is grounded in faith in God’s action and hesed
  1. It was her awareness of God’s work in ch. 2 that led Naomi to come up with her plan in ch. 3
  2. It’s not about our activity for God, it’s about us finding hope in His activity and then joining him in his work

III. Where do you need to avoid evil: expressive individualism?

IV. Where have you grown stagnant? Where do you need to pursue an entrepreneurial righteousness?

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. As you read and listened to the story in chapter 3, did you agree with the interpretation given on Sunday? Why or why not?
3. Explain again the meaning and significance of Ruth’s words in v. 9 and Boaz’ words in v. 10-11.
4. Why do you think God included this story in the Bible? What does He want us to take away from that story?
5. Summarize in your own words what was meant by the term “expressive individualism.” Where do you see this mentality at work within the culture or even within your own life? And how would you appropriately engage a person who comes from that mentality in order to encourage them towards a Biblical worldview?
6. Where have you grown a bit stagnant in your life? Where do you need to pursue a more proactive and “entrepreneurial” righteousness?