

Ruth 3

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if you've had the pleasure, or the pain, depending on your opinion, of watching *Pride!* and *Prejudice*, that's the BBC version of course, there's one moment that people tend! to remember, isn't it? When Lizzie Bennet sees Mr. Darcy having a swim in the lake at his mansion. Colin Firth does that kind of slow motion thing, doesn't he, where he rises up out of the water, and he's all wet, isn't he, and he's all rugged and good looking. And it's that moment, isn't it, where romance blossoms, where we see Mr. Darcy appear in all of his Colin Firthness, and things start to change, don't they, from that point onwards in the story. So it's the definitive moment where their relationship takes on a new energy. Well, as we've watched the romance unfold, between an unlikely couple, Ruth, the Moabite, the foreigner, and Boaz, he is the landowning, upstanding Jew, isn't he, through this, the redeeming figure that the Lord has provided her with has blessed Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth has been brought into some of the blessings of the covenant community through him. She's known the blessings of gleaming in the fields of Boaz and amongst his people, of knowing some level of satisfaction. From empty, in chapter 1, to full, in chapter 2. From famine, to feasting, from sadness, to satisfaction. So it's been a great transformation in her life, hasn't it?

The Lord has moved in her life, and things have started to change radically. She has a new place, and a new people to live with, and a new purpose under the wings of the Lord. But as we get to chapter 3, there is a sense that the romance and the union with Ruth and Boaz is yet to be made definitive. There is yet to be a kind of Mr. Darcy moment. Have a look at verse 1. Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her, My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? You see, despite the blessings that she's had of gleaming in the fields of Boaz, Naomi knows that the quest of chapter 1, which was to find Ruth a husband, is yet to be reached. Ruth needs to find final rest and final security amongst God's people through a marriage. So according to the Levitical law, a widow amongst the assembly was entitled to marriage from a relative that she might bear children for her deceased husband. The relative would redeem her from widowhood, and continue the memory of the dead brother. It was an entitlement for widows to be at rest in the community, to be secure there. And Naomi knows that Ruth, although she's part of the people in some way by now, isn't she? She's experienced many of the blessings of church life even. There needs to be something definitive. There needs to be a union between Ruth and a Redeemer. There needs to be a marriage, a matrimony, a union. Ruth needs to come in from the outsides of the field and be united finally to God's Redeemer. She needs to marry into God's people. She needs to marry this Christ-like figure that we've seen. What Ruth needs is security and rest. She needs closure, doesn't she, on her life. And if we lack assurance, I know I do sometimes, we need that, don't we? We need a final conclusion to guilt in our lives and separation from God. We need a guarantee of future blessings, not just for today.

[4 : 2 6] We need an assurance that our widowhood and our barrenness and emptiness and our foreignness and isolation from the covenant of God's people will conclusively and finally be dealt with once and for all.

where the scars of our old lives will decisively be wiped away and we will be new men and new women. And for that, Ruth and us need a marriage into God's people. In a sense, to get married to God, to belong to him totally.

Totally secure, indefinitely, united with him. So God doesn't just forgive through Jesus Christ. He marries us to Jesus Christ. He brings us to his home to share in his things, to live with him, to become one with him and all his people.

Paul says, we are fellow heirs with Christ. What's mine is yours, Jesus says to us. So as we look at this chapter, I think we see here the definitive moment in this relationship.

[5 : 46] Firstly, we see a definitive man. We see a definitive man. He is the right man for her. Now, when you imagine a Hollywood movie, love story, romance story, it's always the same kind of thing, isn't it?

They're always the same sorts of people. So you've got Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio, or you've got Julia Roberts and George Clooney. They're always the most perfect-looking people, aren't they?

They're young and good-looking and brilliant. And actually, as we've gone through Ruth, I think I've fallen into the trap of thinking that Ruth and Boaz must be like that.

It's a kind of romance, isn't it? The perfect Hollywood couple. But actually, from what we learn about them, that might not be true. We're never told, are we, that Ruth is an absolute stunner.

We're told that about Abraham's wife, Moses' wife. We're never told that about her. We are told that she's strong enough to work all day in the hot sun, to carry 22 litres of barley back from the field to the town in chapter 2.

[6 : 53] Now, I'm not saying that good-looking people don't work hard, don't get me wrong on that. But it hasn't been a major feature of the description of her, has it? And Boaz himself is past his prime.

Verse 10, he says, thank you for coming to me, Ruth, and not going to the young men, whether rich or poor. Maybe he's past his prime.

So I don't think they're necessarily the typical Hollywood couple. But what features strongly between them is character, isn't it? Character. Ruth is a hard worker.

She is humble. She is loyal to her mother. And Boaz is godly. He is honest. And generous. He is a provider.

He shows mercy to outsiders, doesn't he? He loves people. He's a people person, isn't he, in chapter 2. As he comes into the fields, his workers are happy. And he pronounces God's blessing upon them.

[7 : 58] He is the picture of a godly male character. He has Christ-like character, doesn't he? So the attraction for Ruth doesn't just come from outward appearance.

It comes from character. He is the right man. The definitively godly man. God's redeemer is perfect in character.

And isn't that what we see in Jesus Christ? And in nobody else like him. God's redeemer, Jesus, he is perfectly just.

And merciful. And honest. And true. And altogether beautiful in character. If you read the gospels. Definitively so.

It's what attracts us to him, isn't it? His character. But actually there's more here. For Naomi.

[8 : 58] Net for Ruth. Naomi's reason for thinking of Boaz as a marriage partner. Is there in verse 2, isn't it? If you look there. Is not Boaz our relative? With whose young women you were.

In chapter 2, verse 1. We're told he is a worthy man. But he is from the clan of Elimelech. That is Ruth's deceased husband's clan, isn't it?

Boaz is the right man for her. Because as a relative. He can act as a redeemer. He is one of her kinsmen. So he can fulfil the Levitical law.

To marry Ruth and give her children. To give her ultimate rest. And security. Because of his nearness of kin. He is the perfect man.

To redeem her life. To fulfil the law of redemption. His eligibility for her. Comes from him sharing in the family likeness.

[10 : 02] Of being from the right clan. There can now be a marriage. Between Ruth and Boaz. In the beginning.

John the Apostle writes. Was the word. And the word was with God. And the word was God. And the word became flesh.

And dwelt among us. The incarnation. The incarnation. Of the son of God. In the man Jesus Christ. Is where God takes on human flesh.

And he becomes a man. He becomes part of humanity. He becomes our kinsman. A blood and flesh relative.

Hebrews 2. Hebrews 2. He partook of flesh and blood. Being made like his brothers in every respect. Through the incarnation.

[11:05] God leaps across the cosmos. God. For a union. With us. God doesn't just find a way of forgiving us.

By sending us his son. He does that doesn't he. But he finds a way of uniting us. To him. The creator of the human race.

Becomes a member of the human race. If I can put it bluntly. To make himself compatible with us. To become eligible. For us.

To redeem us. To bear human sin. To ascend and be a human representative. In the courts of heaven. That humans. Can be part of his body.

The church. He becomes eligible. For union with us. So Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ. Is the definitively right man.

[12:01] In his perfectly godly character. That we should want to be with him. And he is right in his humanity. In his relationship to us.

Flesh and blood. Skin and bone. One of our relatives. He is our only redeemer. Now if you think of Naomi.

Through this book. She has been a great support. Hasn't she. For Ruth. She has given her some great advice. So do you remember. At the end of chapter 2. Last week. She advised her.

To stick near Boaz's young women. And not near the young men. She has been great for her. She has led her. To the people of God. You can imagine. Can't you.

The closeness. That they must feel together. Ruth has been treating her. As her own daughter. The bond is strong. Ruth has shown a humble reliance. Upon her mother.

[12:58] And you can imagine that. Can't you. As an older Christian. Loves a younger Christian. Or an outsider. Draws them in. It's a great thing to see. But.

Naomi knows the limits. Of the role she has. With Ruth. Her priority. Is to get her into contact. With this man. The definitive. Kinsman redeemer. True and final rest. And redemption for Ruth. Cannot come ultimately.

From Naomi herself. Not forever. It must come from the man himself. The redemption rests on a relationship. With one person. And one person only.

The kinsman redeemer. He is the definitive man. The only man. Who can bring her security. Not Naomi. But Boaz. None of us.

[13:55] Can we. Can ride into a union with God. On the backs of other Christians. While we can love. And rely on one another.

Can't we. We can build each other up. There is only one name. One name under heaven. By which we can be saved. Not the minister. Not the mother.

Not the mentor. Not the messenger. But the man. The man himself. Only him. Ultimately. He is the right man.

With the right character. Of the right kin. Jesus the redeemer. So the definitive moment for Ruth. Is to be joined with this definitive man. And so it is for us.

To know Jesus. And be united to him. That's where we are. Definitively changed. Forever. That is the Miss Darcy moment. To meet him. He is the definitive man.

[14:55] Secondly though. In this definitive moment. In the relationship. It comes at a definitive place. A definitive place. So.

For Lizzie Bennett. It was the lake. Wasn't it? At Mr. Darcy's house. That changed her mind. For Kate and Leonardo. It was at the front of the Titanic. Wasn't it?

In that moment. And then for Romeo and Juliet. It was the balcony. Places. That stick in their memories. Full of significance in the relationship. Places loaded with meaning in the relationship. And in Ruth and Boaz's courtship. There is such a place here in chapter 3. Just have a look at verse 3 and 4. Naomi says to Ruth. Wash therefore and anoint yourself. Put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor.

Don't make yourself known to the man until he's finished eating and drinking. When he lies down. Observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. And he will tell you what to do.

[16:02] Naomi tells Ruth to go and meet him. In verse 3. That is the place isn't it?

Where this encounter happens. That's the place that they will probably remember. 20 years old. He falls asleep after a long day's work. Probably at the end of the harvest. Verse 6.

Ruth goes down to the threshing floor. And he goes to sleep at the bottom of the barley pile. The work is done. He's probably been to the harvest festival party. Hasn't he? He's in a good mood. He's merry. They say. Don't they? That the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. It's an opportune time. But it's the place. That we need to take note of.

Because the threshing floor. Was not the only place. That was not only significant for Ruth and Boaz. The threshing floor was a place of significance for the dealings of God.

[17:01] With his people. So that the threshing floor. Was the place where the grains would have been separated from the chaff. Isn't it? Where the inside of the wheat would have been kept.

And the outside was thrown away. And burnt as fuel. And the whole economy of Judah. Was built on agriculture. Wasn't it? So the threshing floor was literally the bedrock.

Of their society. Of their provision. It was a place where distinctions are made. And judgments are given. Of dividing things between the fruit.

And the waste product that is thrown away. And it's that image that God has used. In the Old Testament. To demonstrate his work amongst his people. Of his refining judgment amongst them. Of refining them and making them the people that he wants them to be. It is a place of judgment. And of separation. And distinction. So 2 Samuel 24.

[18:02] King David. Sins. By taking a census of the armies on his day. You can read it later. And we're told that it displeases the Lord. And God sends a judgment on the land.

And we read there in 2 Samuel. That the angel of the Lord was at the threshing floor. As judgment was about to come on the land. As a place of judgment. When Gideon.

In the book of Judges. Is called by God. He initially refuses God's command. Doesn't he? And what was he doing? He was treading out the grain. Threshing out the grain.

The threshing floor. Is the setting whereby Gideon's rescue of God's people. Is about to be set. So it's a place of rescue. Then think of the New Testament.

With the final action of Jesus' judgment. Where the wheat is sifted from the weeds. By Jesus himself. John the Baptist says. Doesn't he? Matthew 3. His winnowing fork is in his hand.

[19:03] He will clear his threshing floor. And gather his wheat. Into the barn. But the chaff he will burn. With unquenchable fire. You see the threshing floor.

In the Bible. Is a place where God deals. Definitively with people. It is where he sifts them out. For a final resolution. For destruction or for rescue.

And so it's no coincidence. That Ruth must meet Boaz. At the threshing floor. It's a decisive place. It's where God. Brings people in. Or he throws them out. Now all of this. Comes to a head in our minds.

When we're reminded. That the threshing floor. In Jerusalem. David's capital city. Becomes the same site. Of the temple. In Jerusalem.

[20:01] 2 Chronicles chapter 3. Solomon began to build. The house of the Lord. In Jerusalem. On Mount Moriah.

Where the Lord. Had appeared. To David his father. At the place. That David had appointed. On the threshing floor. Of Ornan the Jebusite. He began to build.

In the second month. Of the fourth year. Of his reign. The threshing floor. Becomes the place. Of the temple. Where decisive judgment. Is made over the people.

Where sacrifice is made. Where wrongs are put right. Where sin is punished. There is a definitive place. Set amongst God's people.

Where sin is dealt. With. Definitely. A place where. You and I can go. As an outsider. And be welcomed in.

[20:58] But. You must go there. You must go there. To the threshing floor.

You must go to the temple. That is what the people are taught. The mountain of the Lord. In Jerusalem. Where the temple stood.

Well. We know. Don't we. That it becomes. The Mount of Calvary. The definitive place. Of threshing. And judgment.

And sacrifice. Is the cross of the Lord Jesus. Where Jesus. Is sifted. He is threshed. Like wheat. Where he is crushed. Under the millstone. Of decisive judgment. And it's only at that place. The cross of Calvary.

[21 : 55] Where we can find rest. Where we can find a final resolution. Where we can receive closure. Any unresolved issues tonight.

Things that you've yet to deal with. In your conscience. Inconclusiveness. Perhaps lack of assurance. Lack of assurance.

Of future security. And blessing in the Lord. It is good to be around church. Isn't it? It's good to glean. But maybe you want something final. Something solid.

Well. There is a threshing floor. That we must come to. Where things are set right. A threshing floor. Where things are final. And no more is said about it. The definitive place. Of the cross of the Lord Jesus. Where he is crushed.

[22 : 57] For our iniquities. And with a lack of assurance. Ruth must have felt that. Mustn't she? Kind of on the edge of God's people. Ruth must have felt that.

Her instruction was simply to go to the right man. To the right place. And find resolution there. He's the definitive man.

At the definitive place. And lastly. It's a definitive request. It's a definitive request. Now as far as marriage proposals go. With Ruth and Boaz.

This has to be one of the riskiest ever. Doesn't it? For one thing. It is Ruth. Who takes the initiative to Boaz. Which was pretty bold. Wasn't it? It was unheard of.

And we get the sense. That as she dresses up. And goes out to meet him there. That there's a lot that could go wrong here. So she's setting herself up for huge rejection.

[23 : 55] So she goes at night. So there could have been major questions about her integrity. Going to see him at night. Couldn't there? About the nature of her visit.

It's a very risky and bold move. Move. But Ruth knows that now is the time. She won't get another chance like this. And she needs a definitive answer.

She wants things to be settled. Once and for all. There is no time to postpone the meeting. She has to go to the threshing floor. And make her request now.

To make her petition. Have a look at verse 8 and 9. At midnight the man was startled. And turned over. And behold a woman lay at his feet. He said who are you? And she said I am Ruth your servant.

Spread your wings over your servant. For you are a redeemer. Now I hope we get a sense of the shock of that there. This request she makes. Is a very bold and forward thing to say.

[24 : 58] She asks him to spread his wings. Over her. Now the same word for wings there. Can also be used for clothing.

For a garment. It's a very clever use of language. And that alludes to the image of a man clothing his wife to be. Of covering her in his garments.

So to put it simply. This is a proposition of marriage isn't it? She says for you are a redeemer. That is clearly on her mind. She makes that obvious to him. It's a bold move.

So she goes to the right man at the right place. The place of decision. And of judgment. But the petition. Comes with a whole attitude of humility.

And submissiveness. Now Ruth doesn't just blast her way in. Does she? And demand marriage. In a kind of February the 14th clause.

[25 : 55] She follows her mother's advice. And she is humble. There is this odd thing isn't there. With her uncovering his feet.

And lying down next to them for the night. Now I'm not sure of the entire significance of that yet. But from other times we see that in the Bible. We know it's a sign of reverence. Don't we? And of submission.

And humility. Think of some of the other examples we've got in the Bible. So Mary in the Gospels. Constantly comes to Jesus. And falls at his feet.

At the death of Lazarus. She comes and falls at his feet. She sits at his feet. And listens to his teaching. Weeps on his feet.

And wipes the tears with her hair. So it's a bold move. And yet it's a humble petition. For marriage from Ruth. She has to shake off any sense of shame.

[26 : 56] Doesn't she? She has to forget herself. And lie down at the feet of Boaz. And then she must wait.

She must wait for him. To make the next move. She goes to the right man. She goes to the right place. But when she gets there.

She must let him serve her. She has to throw herself. On his kindness. At that point. She is undeserving.

And she must wait on him. To come to Jesus. At the cross. And to be joined to him. Is the definitive and final way.

That God blesses. Us his people. But we come. Don't we? In submission. And humility before him. We know our need. And we come to his feet.

[27 : 57] Waiting for him to serve us there. Now isn't it lovely. The way that Boaz responds to her. As he wakes up in verse 11.

Have a look. Now my daughter. Do not fear. I will do for you. All that you ask. You know. It could feel risky. Couldn't it? It could feel risky. For you. Tonight. To humble yourself. To forget yourself. To come to Jesus.

To the cross. And throw yourself. On his mercy. It could feel risky. But. But he says to you. As he says to Ruth.

Now my daughter. Do not fear. Do not fear. The Lord Jesus. Will never. Turn you away. John.

[28 : 52] Chapter 6. All that the Father gives me. Will come to me. And whoever comes to me. I will never cast out. I will never cast you out.

Now as we. As we close. I think it's important to see. The details about. The issue of Boaz's answer here. And there's a lot more to this chapter. We haven't got time for it all.

But he initially. Welcomes the idea. Doesn't he? But there's a potential hurdle. In verse 11 to 14. My daughter. Don't fear. I will do for you all that you ask.

For all my fellow townsmen. Know that you're a worthy woman. And it's true that I am a redeemer. Yet. There is a redeemer nearer than I. Remain tonight. And in the morning.

If he will redeem you. Good. Let him do it. If he's not willing to redeem you. Then as the Lord lives. I will redeem you. Lie down. Until the morning. So she lay at his feet.

[29 : 51] Until the morning. But arose. Before one could recognise her. It turns out. Doesn't it. That Ruth has another relative. That can also redeem her.

But rather than a problem. Actually we see Boaz's determination. To get the marriage sorted. As soon as possible. Ruth will have redemption.

One way or another. Either through the other relative. Or through Boaz himself. So Boaz gives her six measures of barley.

Presumably to avoid rumours. About the meeting. And she heads back into town. And we're left with this conversation. Between Naomi and Ruth. Aren't we? In verse 17. These six measures of barley.

He gave to me. He said to me. You must not go back empty handed. To your mother-in-law. She replied. Wait my daughter. Until you learn how the matter turns out. For the man will not rest. He will settle the matter.

[30 : 53] Today. You see despite the delay. And despite the potential problem here. There will be a conclusion. Won't there? The man will not rest.

The man will not rest. But will settle the matter. Today. Says Navy. And the barley he gives to her. Is a sign of a pledge. That that is true. That he will not turn her away. He will redeem her. One way or another. He will settle it.

It's an odd break in the narrative. Isn't it? There is a delay. There is a period of waiting. And perhaps. With that. We feel a bit disappointed. But actually. It's so relevant to us.

Isn't it? Because as we await. The appearance of our Redeemer again. And our Saviour. This is a great chapter. On assurance.

[31 : 49] We realise that there is one definitive man. The Lord Jesus Christ. One definitive place. At the threshing floor. The cross. And one definitive way.

That we can approach him. To throw ourselves upon him. And his mercy. But then it is our Redeemer. Who pledges.

To complete the work of redemption. He will settle it. He will settle it. What we have desired. And we have hoped for in him.

He will make a reality. He will make it a certainty. He said to us. He says to us. My daughter. Do not fear. I will do for you.

All that you wish. Let's pray.