

Risky Proposal

Արկաճախնդրական Առաջարկ Մը

Ruth 3:1-14

I am not a person who likes taking risks. I would like to make sure that my steps are certain. This contradicts the biblical understanding of faith. I challenged you in my first sermon saying: “Get out of the boat” which means “Get out of your comfort zone”, “Walk on water” (how secure is that?). In the Bible how many times we find that God is teaching humanity **to trust Him** in their daily walk and to have faith?

-The 2nd chapter of the book of Ruth closes with the ending of the harvest season. Naomi does not have a male heir to maintain Elimelek’s family name. Ruth does not have a husband for protection and security. Their emptiness has not yet been filled.

-We read about Ruth’s **clinging to God**, to **Naomi**, and to the people of **Israel**. **She made a covenant with God**. She took the risk to go to a new land, where she does not know anyone except Naomi. She did not know where she was going. She took all these steps trusting God.

The most important point in all these events: God is working behind the scenes. We find **Hesed**, God’s loyal love towards His creation.

-We see Ruth’s **hesed** towards Naomi. And today we will see Naomi’s **hesed** towards Ruth.

-In chapter 2, Ruth takes the initiative to go out to find food.

-In chapter 3, Naomi takes initiative to find a husband for Ruth.

We see faith in action. While waiting for the Lord’s promises, we walk daily seeking His will.

Naomi takes big steps of a risky walk. “Mara,” the bitter mother-in-law has changed. She is not a self-absorbed person anymore, feeling low in her misery and pain. **She is thinking about Ruth**. What will happen to Ruth when she dies? She is thinking about Boaz, the kinsman who can become a redeemer of their land and a husband for Ruth.

Nothing is guaranteed in this plan. Naomi is going to suggest to Ruth a **risky proposal**.

Let us start:

Naomi takes the Initiative.

One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home (seek rest) for you, where you will be well provided for. ² Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. ³ 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. ⁴ 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."

⁵ "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered. ⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do. (Ruth 3:1-6 NIV11)

We see here Naomi taking the initiative and asking Ruth to move forward. She is thinking ahead about Ruth's future. **Please find a home** (NIV), **rest** (ESV), the Hebrew word can be translated: "a place, a condition of security and rest, which means in the Israelite society, marriage." ¹

"Find Boaz, he is a kinsman of ours. He will be the best candidate for you. He will be working in the field. Go there."

Some practical suggestions:

1. Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. (3)

Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak (ESV)

Some commentaries misjudge this suggestion, thinking this is a sexually attractive appearance. I don't think so. Her suggestion does not include jewelry nor a dress of fine linen. In the Middle Eastern context, this is the end of the mourning period.

-We can see a similar story when David sinned (the story of Bathsheba). Prophet Nathan confronted him with his sin. He also heard the judgment of God that he would lose his newborn child. David fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground. After seven days the child died. We read:

People in the Middle East wear mourning clothes for a long time as a sign of mourning. Naomi's suggestion to Ruth was it's time to move forward and have a normal life. It was an indication that Ruth was ready to be married.

2. don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking.

My mom knew when to talk important issues with the family. She fed us first, then she spoke. "Ruth, make sure Boaz in a good mood."

3. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.”

This is not a sexual advance from Ruth towards Boaz. “Thus, Ruth’s action of uncovering Boaz’s legs and lying down is a nonverbal, apparently customary means of requesting marriage.”²

Please notice also how Naomi prepares Ruth saying, “He (Boaz) will tell you what to do.”

This is a risky proposal, my dear friends.

What will Boaz say? “*Amot e aghchig*, shame on you lady, what are you doing?

This is adultery.” What if Boaz would use this opportunity for his sexual pleasure.

This is a risky endeavor.

This is a risky move...

Ruth obeyed her mother-in-law, and she did what was asked.

Gentleman, Man of God, Mr Boaz

When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸ In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet!

⁹ **“Who are you?” he asked.**

“I am your servant Ruth,” she said. “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family.” (Ruth 3:7-9 NIV11)

Boaz is awake. Cold feet? Who knows? A lady lying next to his feet?

Can you imagine the situation?

Who are you?

Naomi did not give instructions to Ruth about what to do after that. She was not quiet. She spoke.

1. “I am your servant Ruth,” (9)

The word **servant** that Ruth used is a different word that she used in chapter 2.

If you recall, Boaz elevated Ruth; gave her a good status at the field, protected her from other workers.

The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!”

13 Then she said, "I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants." (Ruth 2:12-13 NIV11)

-Boaz blessed Ruth and asked Yahweh to protect her, under his wings. (Will talk about the wing in a moment).

-Ruth replied by thanking Boaz that she found favor in his sight, and she used the word **servant**. (*šġpġġ*)

-She was elevated from foreign girl to servant. (She received a "green card," a permanent resident card)

Now, in chapter 3, Ruth uses another word for **servant** (*'ġmġ*). It is a word that indicates she is ready to be married to Boaz (from green card to full citizenship). "Ruth's reference to herself as an (*'ġmġ*) is appropriate in the context of a request of marriage to a *gġbbġr ġayil* (great man) like Boaz."³

2. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family." (9) (NIV)

"Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer." (9) (ESV)

What is this garment business?

The Hebrew word for cover, **garment is *kġnġp***. It also means **wings**. The same word Boaz used too when he said to Ruth,

"May you be protected under God's wings."

Brothers and sisters, **placing the corner of a garment** over a woman was a symbolic act reflecting the commitment of marriage.

In their time: "this is the engagement ring."

The imagery is so beautiful.

-God makes the same covenant with Israel. God makes the same covenant with us. Under his wings, he will cover us, and he will protect us.

"Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your naked body. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine.

(Ezekiel 16:8 NIV11)

Ruth is saying to Boaz: "You prayed and blessed me. (Ruth 2:12) Will you become the answer of your own prayer, cover me under your wings? Marry me, Boaz."

Boaz takes initiations:

¹⁰ “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. 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. ¹² Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. ¹³ Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the LORD lives I will do it. Lie here until morning.” ¹⁴ So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, “No one must know that a woman came to the threshing floor.” (Ruth 3:7-14 NIV11)

Boaz is a man of God, and a gentleman.

Two important ideas here:

1. “This kindness (*hesed*) is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor...”

Boaz finds *hesed*, loyal love in this woman. He finds integrity and loyalty.

2. “All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character.”

The same words “noble character” is used in Proverbs 31:10 woman of noble character.

Boaz, a man of great integrity, finds a woman of noble character.

We find in his answer why he did not propose to Ruth. He also reveals that there is another kinsman, guardian-redeemer, who is closer in the order of the family. He needs to clarify that first. Then he makes an oath to be the “wings” that cover this woman.

Come next week for the continuation.

Application:

1. Risky walk. Risky proposal.

Dr. Bruce Waltke says, “Creative risk taking is part of God’s providence.” ⁴

The Bible is full of risky walks with the guidance of God.

God does His part, but we have our part as well.

I am urging you to not stop praying for our church mission and service.

It is not a coincidence that you are here.

It is not a coincidence that Kevin is your pastor
It is not a coincidence that you attend this church.

What are the steps of faith you should take in obedience to God's calling?

Doreen Fischer found that she can use her abilities to serve the people who are mourning the loss of anything in their life.

She is taking a step of faith. She is in prayer and consultation with other Christians how to do it.

Each of us has a role, risky steps.... Under the guidance of God

2. Under whose Wings?

We are redeemed by the blood of Jesus. We all are sinners, and we cannot redeem ourselves. We live under His WINGS, under His garment. We all are naked, and God clothes us with the garment of the love of Jesus.

It does not matter how you cover yourself, you cannot. Only Jesus's blood can cover us, redeem us, heal us, encourage us, give us purpose to live and serve.

3. Integrity

I find both Boaz and Ruth demonstrated their Godly character. We find pure motives, we find integrity.

No short cut, easy answers. Boaz kept his word. He also was careful to not rush things, and made things clear with the other kinsman.

In the world, integrity seems to be a forgotten quality.

Whether one is looking at the political scene or at the world of business, there seems to be a great shortage of integrity.

I am sorry to say, sometimes we don't find it among Christians. That is not good.

Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the skies.

⁶Your righteousness is like the highest mountains,
your justice like the great deep.

You, Lord, preserve both people and animals.

⁷How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!
People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

⁸They feast on the abundance of your house;
you give them drink from your river of delights.

⁹For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light. **Psalm 36:5-9**

Amen

1. K. Lawson Younger Jr, *NIV Application Commentary (Judges/Ruth)*. P 457
2. *ibid* P 459
3. *ibid* p 461
4. Bruce Waltke, *Light from the Dark Ages: An Exposition on Judges and Ruth* (lecture notes, BIBL 615, Summer School 2004).