

A Man of Standing

Բարձր Դիրքի Տէր, Արժանաւոր Մարդ

Ruth 3:15-18; 4:1-12

Two weeks ago I ended my sermon saying:

Risky walk, Risky proposal, Risky steps of faith...

Dr. Bruce Waltke says, "Creative risk taking is part of God's providence." ¹

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

-In chapter 2, Ruth took the initiative to find food. She ended up in Boaz's field. (God working behind the scenes).

-In chapter 3, Naomi took the initiative in sending Ruth to Boaz with a risky proposal for marriage. Boaz took this seriously, and he went on to do his homework before his commitment to marriage.

-But first, Boaz sends Ruth back with food.

¹⁵ He also said, "Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out." When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her. Then he went back to town.

¹⁶ When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, "How did it go, my daughter?" Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her ¹⁷ and added, "He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

¹⁸ Then Naomi said, "Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today." (Ruth 3:15-18 NIV11)

By the way, have you noticed that Ruth never departs Boaz's **presence empty handed?** She always leaves with food in her hands. I love this...I love this.

What is the main theme in these stories? **Hesed: Loyal love...**

We learn and experience God's Loyal Love, which means we have our share in passing God's Loyal Love to others.

I have seen in my life people who are not like that, and how painful is that...

Boaz is a man of great integrity, *gibbôr hayil* (great man), a **man of standing** (NIV), a worthy man (ESV), a man of noble character (CSB),

Boaz is generous, he is a man of God. **God is a generous God.** God teaches us how to be generous.

-Boaz always blessed Ruth, praised her. Both publicly and privately he treated her with honor and respect. Don't you love that?

Men what a message to us?

-We also see that he calls Ruth a **woman of noble character**.

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

The chapter ends with Naomi saying, "Let us see how this man is going to solve the problem. Wait here, Ruth..."

-Let me remind you the Old Testament laws about family inheritance.

The "kinsman redeemer" is the nearest relative who does certain duties to keep the name of the family in future succession.

When a husband dies, and there are no children, it is the responsibility of the brother or nearest relative (kin) to marry the man's widow and "redeem" the land.

-This is true for the Abrahamic covenant. Each family should continue their line. Each family, each clan should protect a portion of the Promised Land. The **Pentateuch, the Torah** says that the family land should remain within the family, which is a symbol of how God is keeping His covenant within His people.

Let us go to chapter 4:

-Find the Guardian-Redeemer

Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat down there just as the guardian-redeemer he had mentioned came along. Boaz said, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So he went over and sat down. ² Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, "Sit here," and they did so. (Ruth 4:1,2 NIV)

-Boaz is a practical man. "Where can I find the guardian-redeemer relative?" The best place is the gate of the city. Everyone will pass from there.

As we read, he did find him (the guardian-redeemer). **This is not simply coincidence but the hidden hand of Yahweh at work.**

-Boaz asked the man to sit with him. Not only with him, but he also found 10 elders so he would have witnesses for the conversation.

Please notice that in this book all major characters have their names mentioned, except for this guardian-redeemer.

Naomi, Elimelech, Mahlon and Kilion, Orpah, Ruth, Boaz.

But today we got introduced to the **kin** who is closer to the family of Elimelech, but

No name....

Boaz knows the name, but the narrator did not use it.

“Come over here, my friend, and sit down.”

NIV translates it as a “friend.” It is more than that.

“The phrase *peloni almoni* is an example of a wordplay termed *farrago*. The best translation is ‘So–and–So.’”²

We will see why this man is anonymous.

-To the Point

³ Then he said to the guardian-redeemer, “Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek. ⁴ I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.” “I will redeem it,” he said. (Ruth 4:3-4 NIV11)

“Mr. So and so, by now you know the story of our relative Naomi. Naomi’s husband Elimelek left behind a land. Without a husband and sons Naomi cannot inherit the land; she is forced to sell it. According to our laws the nearest kinsman should redeem it so the land stays within the family, the clan. You, Mr. So and so are the nearest. Would you redeem it?”

The answer of Mr. So and so was quick: “I’ll redeem it”.

-We Are Not Done...How About Ruth,

⁵ Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man’s widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.” (Ruth 4:5 NIV11)

“Not so fast, Mr. So and so... this is not just a Naomi issue. Ruth is childless widow. She is entitled to a marriage to keep the name of the family going further. Someone should protect Ruth. That is on you...”

Oh noooo!

Mr. So and so is not very happy with this new information.

He was happy that his “redeeming act” was good for enlarging his own estate. But marrying a woman and have a new child is not in his plan.

-Forget it

⁶ At this, the guardian-redeemer said, “Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.”

⁷ (Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.) ⁸ So the guardian-redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it yourself.” And he removed his sandal. (Ruth 4:6-8 NIV11)

Here we find the characteristic of Mr. So and so, the guardian-redeemer. We find out why even the narrator does not mention the name of this man.

“His words clearly express concern only for his own interests; they show no concern for Ruth and the line of Elimelech at all. Thus unwilling to shoulder his full responsibilities as the redeemer with the prior right, he summons Boaz to acquire his rights (4:8a) and expresses the transfer symbolically by the physical act that customarily accompanied such a transfer: he removed his sandals and gave them to Boaz (4:8b).³

Brothers and sisters, Mr. So and so does not have a clue about *hesed*. All he is thinking is about himself and his interests. To go a second mile and to protect Ruth is not in his agenda. **That needs the act of LOYAL love.** It needs a personal sacrifice that is given from God.

He is not willing to do that. So, “Here is my sandal” (a sign of giving up his rights). “It is all yours, Boaz.”

This made me think again about my priorities. Mr. So and so was ready to receive and enjoy the blessings as kin, as close relative, as member of God’s covenant community. But when it came to sacrifice, everything was changed.

Do we deal with God like that? Do we bargain with God?

Հաշիւներով կը վարուինք Աստուծոյ հետ: Շուկայի հաշիւներ

Funny, while I was working on my sermon, billionaires were flying to space and coming back in 10 minutes. I wonder how much those trips will cost. Also, I heard this will open commercial flights to space, like each ticket \$300,000.

I am not against exploring space, and science.

I am wondering where do we spend our money?

His name is not mentioned in the book. He remains nameless for all history. How sad is this. Do you remember the rich young man who came to Jesus and wanted to know how to inherit Eternal life? Jesus realized that he was holding on to his wealth and that was his obstacle in trusting God Jesus said: “Sell everything and give it to the poor and follow me...” (Matthew 19)

The young man left Jesus sad. "He went away sad,"
How sad is it to meet Jesus and leave sad??????

Let's Get Married.

⁹ Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰ I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!" (Ruth 4:9-10 NIV)

Boaz's generosity does not calculate or self-serve his own interests.

One more time we see Boaz proving to be a man of integrity. Remember how the Bible described him as **a man of standing**.

Boaz is taking full responsibility to take care of two widows, Naomi and Ruth, knowing they cannot pay him back.

-I learned to give to others. I have experienced generous givers who helped me to get an education, buy musical instruments, equip myself and my family with skills. I could never pay them back. Those people gave without any expectations. I learned to do it to others. Now I see some of my disciples doing to others. Question, did you experience God's HESED? Pass it to others....

The Blessings

¹¹ Then the elders and all the people at the gate said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. ¹² Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah." (Ruth 4:11-12 NIV11)

The elders witnessed what happened. First, they approved that Boaz should be the Guardian-Redeemer and marry Ruth.

-The First blessing is about the fertility of Ruth (to be fruitful, what Rachel and Leah did to Jacob)).

-The Second blessing is about the community. In the blessing, we see "together build up the family of Israel."

-The Third blessing is about the union of Tamar and Judah. We will see next week how this prayer-blessing was fulfilled. ⁴ (see below details)

Application

1. This is not a romantic story, a “how to” manual on Christian marriage.

But we can learn from both Boaz and Ruth to seek God’s guidance in doing the right thing.

These days the world of integrity and sexual purity are mocked. What does the Bible teach us about those topics?

2. Consider Others more important than yourself

Paul challenges the church in Philippi saying:

“Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.” Phil 2:3 NLT

Boaz asked “Mr. So and so” to see if he was interested in redeeming the land and marrying Ruth. Mr. So and so was only concerned about in his own interests.

Boaz was acting in loyal love thinking about the “others.”

How often you think about others in a positive way.

Can you bless others?

3. Seek First the Kingdom of God

It is a way of life expressed by Jesus, “Do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt 6:31-33).

Amen

1. Bruce Waltke, *Light from the Dark Ages: An Exposition on Judges and Ruth* (lecture notes, BIBL 615, Summer School 2004).

2. K. Lawson Younger Jr, *NIV Application Commentary (Judges/Ruth)*. P 474

3. *ibid* P 477

4. NIV commentary

In the first blessing, the elders express the hope that Ruth will be fruitful and build up the house of Boaz as Rachel and Leah did in the case of Jacob. Interestingly, Rachel is listed first, Leah second. This may be a case in which the more important person is named second, as with Ruth in 1:4, 14 and Mahlon in 4:9. Leah as the mother of Judah and her descendants are in view in the third blessing (v. 12).

The second blessing contains a poetic paralleling. The last clause enhances the understanding of the first. The phrase *qārā’ šēm* literally means “may a name be called/given,” which appears to be idiomatic for “be famous.” The recurrence of the word *šēm* (name) in this blessing cannot help but be a play on the third part of Boaz’s sworn declaration, “to maintain the name [*šēm*] of the dead.” Thus the first clause of the blessing is best seen (as the NIV

translation reflects) as dealing with standing or reputation, though the richness of the nuances of *‘asē ḥayil* cannot be overlooked.

The third blessing invokes the case of Perez, the offspring of Tamar and Judah, who in spite of the machinations of his father and mother (Gen. 38)²⁸ proved to be a gracious blessing from God. This blessing subtly speaks to the parallel of Ruth and Tamar as non-Israelites included in the tribal delineation. Like the story of Boaz and Ruth, the story of Judah and Tamar is a story of family continuity achieved by the determination of a woman,²⁹ though the story of Boaz and Ruth is also a tremendous contrast to the tale of Judah and Tamar.