Ruth 3:1-18 “The Redeemer’s Promise”

I. The Preparations Made II. The Good Request III. The Fitting Answer

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, promises are an important part of society. When someone becomes married, they promise to love each other and to dwell together until death parts them. When someone is on the stand, they take an oath stating that they will tell the whole truth. But what if something is promised but not received. We might be tempted to doubt that promise! In our text, we are introduced to this great redeemer who is faithful to his word and commits himself to the cause of Ruth for her good. But, as you know, it is hard to wait! Waiting for what has been promised is hard. Perhaps there are children here who just can’t wait for Christmas to arrive! They know it will come- but we still have to wait! Our passage will conclude with this theme of promise and waiting! We also remember that Ruth has been provided for by Boaz for the season of harvest. For these few months, Ruth and by extension Naomi’s needs have been met by the kindness of this man. But the harvest season is now over, and Ruth is still living in the house of her mother-in-law. So in our story for today, the Redeemer promises shelter and protection for His beloved.

**I. The Preparations Made**

As we look at our passage, we see that Naomi desires a place for Ruth to dwell. Naomi has really changed in her attitude these past few weeks. Where she was only focused on her sorrow before, now she has taken good care and concern for her daughter-in-law. She desires a place for Ruth to go and dwell, that she might have comfort, protection, and lasting provision. Remember what Naomi had said in chapter 1:9- may the LORD grant that you may find rest in the house of her husband. But now Naomi is telling Ruth that she can find rest in Israel- that it may go well with you! This is the same rest and refuge spoken of in 2:12 where Boaz tells Ruth that she has come to take shelter under the wing of the LORD God of Israel. Now in 3:1- Naomi sees that this rest and provision is found not in Moab- but it is to be found in Israel all the long! What she and her family left Israel looking for are found only in Israel! Naomi is looking out for Ruth’s true good- not just a comfortable place- but a place where true and lasting peace can be found! Naomi then tells Ruth to go down to the threshing floor to meet Boaz. We must remember that the threshing floor was not a place for women during this time. And to go there in the dark was dangerous for two reasons. The first reason is that thieves were active during this time, and for Ruth to travel there alone would have been unsafe. She could be mistreated by others. The second reason that this journey was dangerous is that the only women found at the threshing floor during this time of night were usually prostitutes hired to entertain the workers. Naiomi asks Ruth to do a very bold thing- and in some ways puts her in a questionable position. This was not a place that pure, upright girls would frequent. So for this godly woman, Ruth, to be sent here would be enough for pause. But Ruth obeys her mother’s direction. And even though Naimi’s instructions to Ruth could be read as racy or scandalous- there is no ambiguity in Ruth’s actions or request. When she speaks in v. 9 she makes it clear- I am hear to be redeemed- to find someone to cover me with the shadow of their wing!

But before Ruth goes to the threshing floor, Ruth is to wash herself, put on her best garments, and anoint herself with perfume. Most children know that before you go to an important place such as church, you must first bathe yourself and put on your best cloths. That is what Ruth does in our story. Remember that there was no running water- and perfume was very expensive. To wash yourself, anoint with perfume, and to put on your best garments during this time was a rare occurrence- one that was usually reserved for the bride and groom on their wedding day. So Ruth is preparing herself for a wedding as it was- and she obeys her mother-in-law and goes down to the threshing floor. The threshing floor would be a large, circular area built on a tower or on a hill. This was so that the wind might catch and carry the chaff away when the men where winnowing. The floor would be built with gaps in it to allow the wind to blow freely. The wind in this area blows mainly in the evening and early in the morning, so the workers spent the night by the grain. And here we have Ruth watching Boaz to see where Boaz would lie down. Boaz goes to sleep at the edge of the pile of grain to protect the grain from thieves, and Ruth quietly approaches.

The season of harvest was a time of great joy and feasting. It was a season of thanksgiving- the harvest had been gathered- the grain was going into storage- after a long drought the LORD had again visited His people by providing grain. Boaz has enjoyed himself all day by seeing the hand of God providing richly for His needs- and he sleeps soundly after a hard day of work. But suddenly around midnight, his feet catch a cool breeze. He turns over to find out that someone has removed the garment from his feet. During this time, people slept in the cloths that they wore all day. An outer garment or robe would be used like a blanket to keep the sleeper warm- but the feet of Boaz turn up uncovered. Then Boaz notices in the poor lighting that there is a woman by his feet.

**II. The Good Request**

Now it may seem a little strange to our ears, but by removing the cloak from the feet of Boaz, Ruth was making a request of Boaz. And the request of Ruth is stated in verse 9. Spread your cloak over me- or literally cover me with your wing. The word for wing and cloak are the same in Hebrew- so Ruth is reminding us and Boaz of the statement made back in 2:12 where Boaz credits the LORD with providing the shelter of a wing. Now Ruth is coming to Boaz asking for this same continued shelter and provision! The reason Ruth goes to the threshing floor in the night is so that no one would see her. Also, it was the end of the harvest. How would Ruth and Naimi be provided now that the gleaning would stop! The end of the harvest highlights the pressing need for provision. Ruth also makes it very clear that she has come to the threshing floor for one reason. She is not here for a night of passion- she is here for a lifelong commitment from Boaz! Asking Boaz to cover her with his cloak or wing is essentially a proposition for marriage. To uncover the feet and then extend the garment to cover someone was a symbolic marriage proposal. It is still customary in many Arab states for a new husband to wrap his wife in his shawl or veil.

But the request of Ruth is not only a good request because Ruth is reminding Boaz of his earlier statement; it is also a kind request to Boaz. Remember that Boaz is a mighty man of good standing, but he is not a young man. As verse 10 points out, Ruth could have gone after younger men- but she chose to be united to a kinsman in accordance with the Law of God. Jewish Midrash states that there was a 40 year age gap between Ruth and Boaz. So if Ruth was 30- Boaz could be 70! And Boaz was being asked to obey not only the letter of the law, but also the Spirit of the Law. The Levirate Law stated that a brother must take up his widowed sister-in-law and marry her for the sake of his dead brother’s name. But this is extended family, and is not required. So for Ruth to remember the Law and to ask Boaz to keep the law’s spirit is a sign to Boaz that this is a godly woman. Ruth is clinging to the promises of God- and she has a heart for God’s people and even the inheritance of her dead husband. So the actions of Ruth and her request make it clear. She is thinking of Naomi- she is hoping in the God of Israel and His merciful law- she is looking for someone to redeem her and provide shelter and shade- hoping for a home and a child who will care for them unto their old age. So what we have here is a Moabite who is godly and has gained quite a name for herself. Even Boaz mentions this godly reputation in verse 11- literally saying that your virtue is known at the gate of the city. What strikes Boaz is that kindness and faithfulness of this woman. Both her love for the LORD and for the people of God! A woman who fears the Lord shall be praised! Give her the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates!

**III. The Fitting Answer**

In response to this good and godly request made by Ruth, we come finally to the fitting answer. In verse 13 and 14 Ruth is told to spend the rest of the night at the feet- notice not at the side- of Boaz. She is then sent home before the light breaks in order that her godly reputation might be spared. And Boaz has given her great comfort once again! Do not fear, I will do for you all that you request! Here Boaz makes a promise, and he will keep good to that promise. But we might find it odd that Boaz speaks of someone else who is closer of kin- and Boaz is going to give this other unknown to us man- an opportunity to redeem Ruth and the land of Elimelech. This is not your typical love story where a country boy meets a city girl. Here we have Boaz, an older man who pledges to take care of Ruth a younger widow. But in pledging care to Ruth, Boaz acknowledges that someone else may be the one who takes care of her! Here Boaz is embodying the true idea of a love that cares for the other person’s well being. Boaz is willing to put aside any feelings he may have in order to secure the good of Ruth. Boaz is not focusing on his own natural desires, rather he keeps in mind the needs of Ruth, the requirements of the Law of the Lord, and he dedicates himself to securing a means so that Ruth may be provided for! The second thing that Boaz does is that he gives to Ruth a token of the vow that he has made. In verse 17 he gives to Ruth 6 measures of barley- which weighed about 80 pounds! Instead of an engagement ring as is our custom, Boaz gives her a load of grain! A very practical gift! It is significant that Boaz only gives Ruth 6 measures- we remember that 7 is the number of completion and fullness- but Boaz only gives Ruth 6- which is an incomplete number. So we are once again left wanting more. Ruth receives 6 measures- not the full 7! Ruth is still not fully provided for, but she has been given a down payment on that provision! Remember that Naomi had once spoken of her emptiness- but Boaz will not send Ruth away empty! The Redeemer in our story gives to his beloved a firm promise- and a token of that promise- a down payment that looks ahead to something more- something better is coming for our beloved Ruth- something great that she does not yet have, but she has been given a taste of what is to come! Boaz then sends Ruth away while it is yet dark to spare her reputation- Ruth is a godly woman and her good name is spared false accusations. Boaz is already seeking to protect the character of Ruth.

Ruth then returns home, and is met at the door by Naomi who puts the question to Ruth- how did it go? Literally, Naomi asks “who are you my daughter?” How are you now, my daughter? This strange question is the same question asked by Boaz back in verse 9 by Boaz. And the question remains- who are you Ruth? We would say it this way- “how did it go?” Are you still a widow- are you still a Moabite from outside the covenant who lives in the land of death and destruction- or have you been redeemed? Have you been given a place- a home? Have you become the Redeemer’s beloved? Have you been purchased both body and soul so that Israel’s God is now your God- and Israel’s Redeemer is your Redeemer? Who are you? Are you still living in death or have you been given life? This most fitting question is still pertinent today. I hope you can see how this story of the beloved bride being promised redemption still applies today. You are this bride- the church is the one who has been given a promise of hope and life- a promise of belonging to a family given by their Redeemer. You have a Redeemer who did not rest until your full redemption was purchased- this story is about God’s love for His people! Yet like Ruth, God’s people have to wait! In many ways, the church is like Ruth in this time of waiting! We have received a promise from our groom- Jesus will certainly do what He has promised! He will come back to take us to His home- He will come to us and make us His bride! By faith we know that Jesus is coming back to take us to the wedding supper of the Lamb- just as He said! But we have to wait- and while waiting we trust that Jesus will be faithful to His promises! We can have faith and confidence in our kinsman redeemer! The Redeemer will not rest until He has settled the matter! This is the good news and comfort in our passage toady! Ruth asks Boaz to be the agent of blessing. That God’s protecting wing would cover her by way of the robe of Boaz- that she would find protection and provision in the house of the redeemer. Jesus Christ is our God’s agent of blessing to us! A wedding in now on the horizon! It is a story about redemption in Jesus Christ who has given life to His beloved bride! This is the story of the gospel! So, the question remains- who are you? Have you been purchased by the Redeemer Jesus Christ- or are you still in your stubborn rebellion and sin? If you have been given a home and protection in Christ- if you are His beloved bride- then you must praise Him for this gift- and trust in His promises. He has spread His wing of protection over you! The Redeemer promises shelter and protection for His beloved.