

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH
9244 Five Forks Road
Waynesboro, PA 17268-9612 **Tel: (717) 762-2991**

SCRIPTURE: *Ruth 3*

DATE: *March 21st, 2021*

LOCATION: *Auditorium (Bill)*

SERMON: *“Poured Out”*

(Acknowledgement to Carolyn Custis James for her book, The Gospel of Ruth; and The Bible Project for their overview of Ruth)

Good morning! We're in the midst of a sermon series called **“A Page Turner”** ...which is a book so captivating that you just can't put it down...you just keep on turning the pages.

And I've been saying that our lives are like books...pages already written, pages being written, pages yet to be written...and the story of our lives can be pretty interesting as well, if we are willing to follow Jesus, climb on board and join Him in the work He is looking to do in our lives, in this church, in this community.

This month we've been looking at the book of **Ruth**, specifically at 3 individuals – Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz – and their involvement in the work that God is doing. Through their stories we've been able to see what happens when **God's Purpose** and **Human Decisions** come together.

Go ahead and open up your Bible, get out your device, or follow along on the screen as we now arrive at the third chapter of Ruth.

This morning's message is titled **Poured Out...**a phrase used to describe what Jesus did when He “emptied” Himself and took on the form of a servant...He poured Himself out for us....it's also something that we will see happening in today's passage, and something that Jesus hopes to see in your life and in mine...pouring ourselves out and serving others.

As usual, we'll start with a short video that gives us an overview of **What's Happening** here in chapter 3. Then we'll look at **What We Don't Want to Miss.** And finally, I'll be asking you, **What's Your Next Step?** What step is God asking you to take in order to join in on the work He is doing.

A 30 second review before we get started...

Last week we looked at a day in the life of **Naomi**. A day that began with so much despair and uncertainty ended with so much goodness. A landowner named **Boaz**, had shown incredible kindness to **Ruth**, and Naomi discovered that she was wrong about God...He had not forgotten her, He had not stopped loving her. Naomi was not only struck by the kindness shown by Boaz, but was thrilled to be able to tell Ruth that this man was a relative, a kinsman-redeemer.

So let's see...

1. WHAT'S HAPPENING

...here in Ruth, chapter 3.

VIDEO

In last week's video we were introduced to a term that we didn't take time to explore...but as we make our way through chapters 3 and 4, it's going to become pretty important. The term is **"Kinsman-Redeemer."**

This is a term that I doubt many are familiar with, and so before we move on it's important that we understand what this term means and why it's important to our story.

We're all familiar with the term "kin" I imagine...we will sometimes ask "Who is the next of kin?" Who is a person's closest living relative or relatives? And so when you come across the word "kinsman" in the book of Ruth, we are talking about someone who is a close relative.

A kinsman-redeemer however is much more than that. In ancient times it was virtually impossible for a woman to live without a husband or at least a male guardian. And so if a husband would die, the closest male relative of the husband would be asked to step into the gap in order to provide a number of things: He would redeem – that is, purchase - and thus inherit the land of the deceased husband, and he would also lie with the widow in the hope that she will bear a son or sons that would allow the family line of the deceased to continue.

Whoever was the closest male relative would be the one everyone would look to as the kinsman-redeemer, but if he would decline, then the next closest male relative would be looked upon to fill that role.

Back in chapter 2, when Ruth comes home from her first day of gleaning, she tells Naomi that she was working in the field of Boaz. Remember how Naomi was **overjoyed** because she said he was one of their kinsman-redeemers. *“That man is our close relative, he is one of our kinsman-redeemers.” (2:20b)*

This is important to know as we continue on into chapters 3 and 4.

Let’s turn our attention to chapter 3 and look at...

2. WHAT WE DON’T WANT TO MISS

A few weeks ago we saw Naomi and Ruth coming together with a common goal...“*We need to eat.*” And so together they come up with a plan...Ruth will go out into the fields to glean. She works the whole way through the barley season, and when it’s done, Chapter 3 begins with Naomi and Ruth getting together and coming up with *another* plan, but if we look closely, it appears that this time, they each have different goals in mind.

Let’s start by looking at...

A. Naomi’s Plan

She says to Ruth...

Ruth 3:1b-3a “My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes.

Can you ever recall a time when you tried to do a little match-making...when you tried to bring two people together? I try to steer clear of that type of stuff, but I know some people love to be “hands-on”, and take the initiative when it comes to this kind of thing.

Naomi is clearly taking a “hands-on” approach, but let’s slow down and try to figure out, “*What’s her goal, what’s her motivation?*” Why is she trying to get Ruth and Boaz together?

One option is that Naomi sees this as one last chance to keep the line of Elimelech going, and that makes sense because of how important the continuation of the family line was in that culture. If Ruth were to marry Boaz and give birth to a son, this would allow the line of Elimelech to continue on.

While Naomi would love to see this happen, I don’t know if that’s her primary goal here. If we look closely at what Naomi says, it appears she has a different goal in mind. Naomi knows that one day she will die, and that would leave Ruth – a widow, without any sons, from Moab - all alone in Bethlehem. And so it would appear that Naomi’s primary goal is to do whatever she can to keep Ruth from experiencing the kind of life that foreign widows without sons would normally experience.

It sure looks like Naomi’s primary goal is for Ruth to find safety and security in the **home of a husband**. “*My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? (3:1b)*. And so she talks to Ruth about this very thing.

And don’t overlook that fact that Naomi describes Boaz simply as a “kinsman” (“*Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours?*”) not as a “kinsman-redeemer” as she had described him weeks earlier, back at the beginning of the barley harvest.

What I'm saying is she's not even broaching the subject of Boaz playing a part in redeeming her late husband's land or carrying on his line.

Throughout this series I've been referring to a book called The Gospel of Ruth, written by Carolyn Custis James. In her book she points out that...

“Naomi seeks mercy, not offspring. Her objective is security for Ruth, not a child for her family.”

This is an incredible sacrifice on the part of Naomi. Ruth has stuck with her through it all...together they have walked through fire. But Naomi is willing to give up one of the only blessings that remain in her life, and so we don't want to overlook what's happening here.

It's similar to what happened that one day as Jesus watched a poor widow put two small copper coins into the temple treasury, into the offering. Jesus had observed wealthier people coming along and putting in much larger amounts. But Jesus saw an opportunity to teach His followers something important, and so He called them over saying,

“This poor widow has put into the treasury more than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on.” (Mark 12:43-44)

Naomi, even in her poverty, was willing to give away what little she had. God is showing us, through Naomi, what it looks like to pour ourselves out for others.

While it's true that if this marriage were to come to pass, Ruth is not going anywhere...Bethlehem is a small town and they will not be strangers...make no mistake about it, their relationship will change, and will never be the same again.

Let's turn our attention to...

B. Ruth's Plan

And it appears she has a different goal in mind, because she goes off script. The instructions she received from Naomi can be summed up this way: “After washing,

perfuming and putting on your best clothes, go down to the threshing area and just lay low for a while. Watch where he goes to lie down.”

Ruth 3:4b “Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.”

And Ruth assures Naomi she’ll do just that. And so just as she promised, she watched as Boaz went down to the far end of the grain pile, where he lay down, covered up with a blanket, and fell asleep. Ruth approaches quietly, uncovers his feet and lies down.

Later that night Boaz wakes up and is clearly surprised to find a woman lying there at his feet. He asks, “*Who are you?*” and she says “*It’s Ruth*”...who by now he would be very familiar with.

Now this is where it all turns...this is where Ruth goes off script and by doing so, would seem to indicate that her goal is not necessarily the same as Naomi’s. Because rather than waiting for Boaz to tell her what to do – as Naomi had told her – *she tells Boaz what to do.*

Ruth 3:9b “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer.”

She was bold back on the first day of gleaning, asking if she could glean among the sheaves rather than following behind. She is bold here near the threshing floor, because she takes the lead, bringing up what appears to have been this ancient marriage custom where a man would take a wife by throwing a corner of his garment over her. I know this sounds strange, but it was a different time and place with customs that are very different than ours. The bottom line is, Ruth is asking Boaz to marry her.

And notice that she doesn’t refer to Boaz like Naomi did earlier that day, simply as kin...she calls Boaz a kinsman-*redeemer*...which implies specific responsibilities that are tied in to Elimelech, Naomi’s deceased husband...redeem the land, come together with the widow in order to bear a son that would ensure the continuation of the family line.

And so by referring to Boaz in this way, it would appear that Ruth's intention is to bear a son that would allow the line of Naomi's husband – Elimelech - to continue on.

Ruth's proposal seems to involve some risk...the first thing that could happen is that Boaz could say "No." But he doesn't.

She's also putting her heart at risk, not in fear of being rejected by Boaz, but because she has already experienced the heartache of not being able to bear a child. She appears willing to revisit one of the most painful seasons of her life...that time when she was married, but for whatever reason, was unable to give birth.

But her loyalty, her commitment, her love for Naomi appears to be so strong, that she is willing to put herself out there in the hope that she can play a part in rescuing Naomi's family.

Naomi was pouring herself out for Ruth, willing to let her go so that she could find provision and protection in the home of a husband. **Naomi is offering herself – pouring herself out - in order to save Ruth.**

At the same time, Ruth is pouring herself out for Naomi, being willing to risk her heart by putting Naomi's interest ahead of her own. **Ruth is offering herself – pouring herself out - in order to save Naomi.**

In all of this, let's make sure we don't miss...

C. How Boaz Responds

In books and in movies, there is this common story line where a somewhat quirky but fun-loving woman keeps popping up in the life of a man...and every time she does he pretends that he finds her irritating and annoying...but we all can see that deep down, he's really falling in love with this woman. Pretty common story line.

We've been watching as Ruth keeps popping up in the life of Boaz. First she shows up in his field and wants to more or less butt in line.

Now she shows up in the middle of the night and proposes marriage. And his response - once again - is great, because what he sees here is just an incredible act of kindness. He tells Ruth...

Ruth 3:10 “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier.”

The Hebrew word for “kindness” in this verse? **Hesed**. The third and final time it’s found in the book of Ruth. Boaz recognizes that what Ruth is doing here is living as God intended...selflessly, sacrificially. Going against the grain of her own self-interests and putting the interests of others ahead of her own.

The kindness, the *hesed* that Boaz sees displayed by Ruth touches his heart. He goes on to assure Ruth that his intention is to do all that she asks...except...there is one small problem. He tells Ruth...

Ruth 3:12 “Although it is true that I am near of kin, there is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I.”

You see, Boaz is not in a position to marry Ruth or to redeem Elimelech’s property. There is a closer male relative living in Bethlehem, and he is first in line when it comes to redeeming Elimelech’s property and everything else that comes with it.

And so if Boaz is looking for an out, here it is. He could simply say to Ruth, “Thanks, but not my responsibility.” But as we’ve come to see, this is not Boaz.

He is willing to pour himself out in order to rescue this family, and so he tells Ruth, *“If this man, this relative is not interested in being your kinsman redeemer, I am...but stay here for the night, and come tomorrow, we’ll see what happens.”*

In all of this, what’s interesting is that while it seems pretty clear that Boaz has been attracted to Ruth since he first encountered her out there in his field, his attraction is never said to be based on Ruth’s appearance, but on Ruth’s character traits, including her kindness. Not how she looks...but how she lives.

And because of the kindness – the *hesed* – that he sees in Ruth, it challenges him, it encourages him to respond by rising to the occasion. By being willing to marry Ruth, he is pouring himself out not just for Ruth, but for Naomi, and even for Elimelech.

The next morning he sends Ruth on her way, but not before providing her with an ample supply of barley. Then he heads to town in order to settle the matter when it comes to who will assume the role of kinsman-redeemer. This is where we'll pick up next week, but let's close as always by me asking you:

3. WHAT'S YOUR NEXT STEP

Was there anything in today's passage that resonated with you? Something that you feel that you need to respond to? A step to take in other words?

This term that we've looked at: "Kinsman-Redeemer" may not have caused any of you to think there is a step to take here. It's not a term that we use in today's culture, but some of you who have studied the book of Ruth before, may know that Jesus Himself is seen as a kinsman-redeemer. And so the next step that God may have for some of you is to

Follow Jesus as your Kinsman-Redeemer.

See, Jesus is our kinsman, He is part of our family by virtue of being not only fully God, but fully man. More than that, Jesus came to be our redeemer. I said back at the beginning of the message that Jesus poured Himself out, emptied Himself and came to us - fully God and fully man – in order to serve us and save us...to redeem us, inviting us to know Him and follow Him.

Just as Naomi was poured herself out in order to save Ruth...and Ruth poured herself out in order to save Naomi...and Boaz poured himself out in order to rescue the family line...Jesus has poured Himself out in order to rescue and redeem you.

It's likely that Jesus is inviting someone in here, someone out there, to begin following Him, spending time with Him, watching Him, learning from Him in order to live like Him. Loving God and loving others.

I would imagine some of you may have questions about taking such a life-changing step, and if so, I would welcome the opportunity to talk with you about any of this, just contact me here at the church and we'll set up a time to get together.

What other steps might God be asking some of us to take? Perhaps **A Willingness to Let Go.**

For Naomi, it was a willingness to let go of Ruth. And Ruth was all she had. For the widow in Jesus' day, it was a willingness to let go of her two copper coins. And those coins were all she had.

I have heard people say on numerous occasions that it wasn't until they were willing to let go and offer to Jesus that which was most important to them, that it all came together for them. It wasn't until then that following Jesus really clicked.

I tried thinking of what it is that we find it hard to let go of, and for many of us, I think our answer would be our children. As fathers and mothers, we pour ourselves out for our children.

While it's true that the church tends to emphasize the teaching and training aspect of raising children – *“train up your children in the way they should go... - there is also this aspect of pouring ourselves out for them.*

As parents, we give and we give... we make sacrifices...we empty ourselves of ourselves, our own desires, and make decisions based on what is best for our sons and daughters. Not to spoil our kids and give them everything they want. Of course not, but there is this aspect of laying aside what we would like to do and instead, do what is best – *what is best* – for our sons and daughters.

For approximately 20 years we give and sacrifice only to do what? To let them go. And that is not easy, it is not without pain.

I recall talking with a good friend years ago, his son had just been married and my friend and his wife drove their son and his newlywed wife to the airport where they would take off

on their honeymoon and then take residence in another state. My friend shared that as they drove home from the airport, at one point he pulled the car over and he and his wife together just began to sob. Long and hard. No words spoken...but both knowing that this moment of “letting go” had arrived...and it was extremely painful.

Even knowing they would see each other again, even knowing that with today’s technology they would be able to communicate frequently and easily...their relationship with their son would change, and never be the same again.

As pastors, we could tell you stories of the fallout that comes when parents are unwilling to let go of their children once they are grown.

If Olivia decides that she will marry one day, it will be one of the happiest days of my life, and one of the hardest days of my life.

It’s on that day that I will surrender the title of the most important man in her life, and hand that title off to another man. And I like that title, I love filling that role. But she’s not going to stay 13 forever. And I’m not going to be around forever.

And so just like Naomi poured herself out for Ruth, Karen and I are going to continue to pour ourselves out for our daughter, as many of you will continue to pour yourselves out for your sons and daughters.

And one day we will let them go.

Because that is what is best for them.

Until then, we need to pour ourselves out and live in such a way that our children will see that Jesus is the most important man in *our* lives, in order to help them to see Jesus in that same way.

And *that* we will be okay with.

One last suggestion for a possible Next Step...**Be Willing to Take a Risk** in order to advance Gods' purpose. We looked at the risk that Ruth was taking by being willing to revisit that painful part of her past, when she was unable to conceive.

It should cause us to be open to the possibility that at some point God may be calling us to take a risk in order for His purpose to be fulfilled. I was trying to think of some examples of things I would never do again, because of past failures and the pain that comes with it.

I remember being asked to sing in school one day, it didn't go well, the music teacher made a point of letting me know how far off key I went. I remember as an adult participating a Bible quizzing event, where a question is asked and first person out of his or her chair gets to answer the question...didn't go well, I may as well have been sitting back in a Lazy-Boy Recliner.

I have been around guys who know how to use certain tools as if they were body parts...and I'm there trying to figure out not just how to use it, but how to hold it. These are trivial things, but they're embarrassing nevertheless, and I said to myself, "I'll never sing a solo, never going to quiz again, never going to lead a work crew..."

Taking it to a different level, for Karen and myself, our first attempt to adopt ended with incredible pain that lasted for several years. He was in Romania...we had his picture, we had his name, we had his room and we had his bed and it all fell apart.

The question became, should we put our heart out there again? Without being willing to take that risk, Olivia would never have become a part of our lives, and I can't imagine life without Oliva.

The thing is, all of us have our own stories of times when we have either failed or have experienced hurt because of a dream that didn't materialize.

This is a hard one, and takes much prayer, wisdom and discernment. There are some things from our past that we would be foolish to revisit. But at the same time, I would encourage all of us to look for those times when God is calling us to take a risk by putting ourselves out there...and by doing so, join in on the work that He is doing.

For some, it might mean reaching out to someone and offering an apology for something done or words said. You may feel it's risky, because you don't know how it will be received. Is God asking you to take this step?

For some, it might mean taking another stab at sharing your faith. Maybe in the past you struggled for what to say, or maybe what you did say wasn't well received. Is God asking you to try again?

For some, it might mean offering to serve here in the church in a way that you feel is pretty risky...serving in the nursery or in Children's Ministry. Maybe you tried teaching at some point in the past, and you felt like you bombed...is God prompting you to try again?

There is work that He is looking to do, and as I've been saying for weeks now, He's inviting us to take part. And write some pages in our life story that will make for good reading some day.

Okay, when we come back next week, we'll pick up where we left off. It's now morning, and Ruth has returned home, telling Naomi what Boaz said about this close relative who is first in line as kinsman-redeemer. Chapter 3 ends with Naomi telling Ruth that...

Ruth 3:18b “...(Boaz) will not rest until the matter is settled today.”