

“Finding Rest: Romance and the Sovereignty of God”

Sermon Notes

- The courtship of Boaz and Ruth may very well be the original romantic comedy. Each character has his or her own motives, circumstances and plans. But behind it all lies the story constructed by an unseen, but omnipotent author.
- We can discern the unseen hand of the Divine Playwright directing the actions of the three principle members of the cast of this romantic comedy . . .
 - in the plans of Naomi, the architect of the scheme (vv: 1-5),
 - in the actions of Ruth, her accomplice, as she puts the plan in motion (vv. 6-9)
 - and in the response of Boaz, the aim and target of their plans and efforts (vv. 10-18)

MEFC Community Group Study Guide
For the Week of October 16th - 22nd

Context

1. What does the Mosaic law say about the family's responsibility for a widow? (Deut 25:5-10) Does this passage apply to Ruth and Boaz? Why or why not?
2. Do you think it was proper for Ruth to approach Boaz on the threshing floor? What sort of reception could a woman expect alone at night among the men of Israel in the time of the judges (See Judg 19:24-25).
3. The winnowing of grain is the last step in the harvest. On the threshing floor Boaz gives Ruth six measures of the finished grain (Ruth 3:15). The author does not describe the volume of grain this represents as he did in Ruth 2:17, but Ruth is careful to repeat to Naomi that there are six measures (Ruth 3:17). What is the significance of the number six? (See Gen 1:31-2:1) How does Naomi surmise that Boaz will not rest until he has settled the matter today? (Ruth 3:18)

Observation

1. In her instructions, Naomi tells her daughter to wash, anoint herself, and put on her cloak (Ruth 3:1). What do you think was the purpose for these preparations? (See Ezek 16:8-10; 2 Sam 12:19-20; Gen 38:13-14)
2. Naomi instructs Ruth to wait until Boaz has finished eating and drinking, and approach him when he is lying down. Presumably, she anticipates that after eating and drinking, his heart would be merry, as it was (Ruth 3:7). Compare this with the scheme of Ruth's ancient matriarch, the daughter of Lot. (See Gen 19:30-38)
3. Ruth is instructed to uncover Boaz's feet and lie down. These instructions have clear sexual overtones (See Lev 20:11; Deut 27:20; 28:57). What sort of woman acts this way? What do you think Naomi expected Boaz to tell Ruth to do? Did Boaz awaken when she uncovered his feet? (Ruth 3:7-8) Were Ruth's actual actions more characteristic of a worthy woman, or a Moabitess?
4. When Boaz initially encountered Ruth, he asked, "Whose young woman is this?" (Ruth 2:5) and he is told that she is a Moabitess. Later she refers to herself as a foreigner (Ruth 2:10), and is amazed that he treats her as his servant though she is not one of his servants (Ruth 2:11). This time, Boaz asks, "Who are you?" and she answers his first question, "Whose young woman is this?" "I am your servant, Ruth." (Ruth 3:9) Compare her response to that of one of her descendants who will likewise find herself in a compromising situation. (See Luke 1:38)
5. In Ruth 2:12, Boaz blesses Ruth for having sought refuge under the wings of the God of Israel. In verse 9, she states her intention to seek that refuge under the wings of Boaz, himself. What do you think is the intent of this parallel. (See also Ezek 16:8; Matt 23:37)
6. Naomi advises Ruth that Boaz will tell her what to do (Ruth 3:4). Who ends up telling whom what to do? (Ruth 3:8)
7. Boaz sees Ruth as a woman with prospects (Ruth 3:10). He addresses her as, "my daughter." What does this say about the heart behind his intent in promising her redemption? (Ruth 3:10) What would be the impact on Ruth's ties to Naomi were she to marry a younger man who was not a kinsman-redeemer? (Gen 2:24) All Israelites were commanded to be just in their dealings with widows and foreigners among them (Deut 27:19), but does Boaz have any personal reason to be concerned about the fate of a foreigner? (See Matt 1:5)

8. Just as Boaz has been described as a worthy man (Ruth 2:1) Boaz refers to Ruth as a worthy woman (Ruth 3:11). These same words are translated “excellent wife” in Prov 12:4 and 31:10. How do you see the character qualities described in Prov 31:10-31 exhibited in the behavior of Ruth? How are the qualities exhibited by Boaz as a worthy man similar to the qualities found in a worthy woman? How are they different?
9. When Ruth returns from her midnight meeting with Boaz, Naomi asks, “How did you fare, my daughter?” But an exact translation of the Hebrew text is intriguing. Naomi's precise question is, “Who are you my daughter?” Obviously Naomi recognizes Ruth, or she would not have referred to her as, “my daughter,” but she anticipates a change in Ruth's identity. How does Ruth's identity change over the course of the book? (See Ruth 1:4, 6, 15-16, 22, 2:2, 6, 10, 13, 3:1, 9, 4:5, 10, 13, 22).

Meaning

1. In Ruth 3:1, Naomi speaks of seeking rest for Ruth. What does she mean by rest? (See Ruth 1:8-9) What is the significance of rest in the Old Testament (see Gen 2:2-3; Ex 20:8-11; Ex 23:10-12; Deut 15:1-11. How about in the New Testament? (Heb 4:1, 8-11)

Application

1. Ruth was no redeemer, but she was asked to take a risk in seeking redemption for the house of Elimelech (Ruth 3:2-4) We, likewise, are not kinsmen-redeemers. Have we been asked to take a risk for the redemption of others in our sphere of influence? (Matt 28:19) How did Ruth respond? (Ruth 3:5) How have we?
2. Boaz has promised to see to it that Ruth and Naomi will be redeemed (Ruth 3:13), yet by the end of the chapter, this is not yet an accomplished fact. What is Ruth's responsibility at this point? (Ruth 3:18) How is this situation similar to our own? (Jn 16:33)