

Bible Study Notes for Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

The Book of Ruth Chapter 3 by Kathy Mathew for w/c 25th October 2020

This week in our study of Ruth chapter 3, we are conscious of the unseen hand of God at work in the lives of Naomi and Ruth. We have witnessed Naomi's faith and kindness towards Ruth in the previous chapters and it may appear in this chapter that she's become a schemer. No of course this is not the case. Because of the devotion shown by Ruth to her mother-in-law, Naomi feels responsible for her well-being and future and so puts a plan in motion. Her suggestion to Ruth is rooted in the peculiar custom in ancient Israel of *Kinsman Redeemer* (see Leviticus 25:23-25 and Deuteronomy 25: 5-10) ' *The Kinsman-Redeemer*' was a man legally obliged to take care of the childless widow of a member of his family. He is the nearest relative to the dead man and is required to marry the widow in order to continue the dead man's name and family line. The story unfolds to reveal the character and suitability of Boaz who has been providing for Naomi and Ruth through his generosity and kindness.

Ruth's obedience and boldness in agreeing to do as Naomi asks of her and then carry it out is noteworthy. Certainly Boaz and Ruth would know of each other over the period of the harvest. Naomi's instruction to Ruth and how to go about petitioning Boaz to exercise his responsibilities must have been frightening for her and when he awoke her pulse must have been racing. Ruth's simple request that he take her under his wing as a close relative is a further example of Ruth's great humility and submission. Even to the present day in some traditions when a Jew marries a woman, *he throws the skirt or the end of his talith over her* to signify that he has taken her under his protection.

We now see the integrity of Boaz as he recognises Ruth's kindness and devotion to her mother-in-law – "blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter" Boaz is principled and upstanding as he informs Ruth of the law and that there is another who has a prior claim to her. We note the godly way in which Boaz acts in this chapter. He is a rich and powerful man to whom a young woman is offering herself for marriage. Boaz could easily have taken advantage of Ruth but he remains resolute in his desire to keep the law. He responds by promising to "do you all that you ask" and in the morning loads Ruth with barley to take home to Naomi. Gone now is Naomi's emptiness. The steadfast love of the Lord had not abandoned her after all. As this story races on, the writer uses the classic cliff-hanger to end the chapter. "Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens...." What a marvellous God is working in the background to bring about his purpose for this man and woman!

Q 1. Often one good turn or act of kindness leads to another. Take a minute to think how this has been your own experience?

Q 2. A great message in the book of Ruth is that of persistence and rewarded trust. How do you rate on the spiritual clapometer of perseverance and loving kindness?

Q 3 Ruth appeals for marriage to Boaz. Have you ever had to ask someone to do something significant for you without knowing the outcome? How difficult was it for you to gain the courage to ask the question? Did you pray about it?

Q 4 Naomi tells Ruth that Boaz will settle the matter concerning a close relative, quickly. What does this tell us about Boaz and his sense of urgency concerning this matter? When you have difficult things to work through are you anxious to settle them quickly? Would you pray first? Is it a benefit to address things quickly rather than allowing them to linger?

Q 5. In this chapter we see God working out his plan in the lives of real people. Take time to stop and reflect upon the ways that God has worked in your life in the past, and pray that God will continue to work through your life to accomplish His purpose.

This chapter demonstrates that both Ruth and Boaz were people of great integrity. We see this in Ruth as she lives up to her vow to stay with Naomi. The high integrity of Boaz is seen in his honesty and in his strong values. He is a man of high morals in the way he protects Ruth's reputation. Throughout we see God in charge of the situation making sure that Ruth's hand in marriage is gained by the right man at the right time.