

Ruth Makes her Move!

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[0 : 00] So, if you have your Bibles with you, it's on page number 223 in the Pew Bible today.

In the book of Ruth's chapter 3, and we're going to look today at the first 13 verses of this chapter, and God willing Derek will be preaching on the close of this chapter next Lord's Day.

The book of Ruth chapter 3, and verses 1 to 13. And for those of us who have been following the series of Sunday morning sermons in the book of Ruth, you will have no difficulty finding the book of Ruth where it is tucked away between judges and first Samuel.

But if you were to look for Ruth in the Hebrew Bible as people have it today, you will find that it doesn't belong to where it is in our English verses.

Chronologically the book of Ruth belongs where it is in our English versions. But in the Hebrew Bible as it is just now, the book is found among what are called the writings or the sacred writings, and the little group of writings in which Ruth is placed, it's placed next to the song of Solomon, which is another love story.

[2 : 11] A story celebrating the intimacies of married love and married love, which obviously carries the approval and the imprimatur of God.

And Ruth in one sense also is a love story. It ends as a love story, beautifully told.

And in that same little group of writings where you find it in the Hebrew Bible is the book of Proverbs, and towards the end of that book we read much about the virtuous woman, a wife faithfully and busily and happily doing all she can for the progress of our family.

Now the book of Ruth carefully makes the point that Ruth the Moabiteess was a virtuous woman and Boas the leading man in the story was an honourable man.

Now I mention these things because in the verses before us today there are things which may seem strange to us, risqué indeed or perhaps thought to be immoral, but that's not so.

[4 : 03] Remember the two leading characters here, Ruth, Boas, are both described as honourable people.

Feel of good character and what takes place here is just the carrying out of customs prescribed in the Bible itself for a woman found in the position that Ruth found herself in at that time and the position which Boas was able to resolve.

Let us not forget then that while the book of Ruth is as one Old Testament scholar has described it as a charming tale of human devotion and kindness which is one of the most beautiful in the entire Old Testament constituting the art of a model of the art of storytelling.

It's much more than that, it's a book about the overarching sovereignty of God, His kindness and His grace, words that you'll find sprinkled throughout this whole book and His redemption, another word tremendously important here.

And all of that's encapsulated for us in chapter 2 and in verse number 12.

[5 : 59] When Boas says to Ruth, the Lord repay you for what you have done and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

Just remember these last words, the God of Israel under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

And it is so that the reward of the Lord, God's mercy, His goodness and His redemption is acted out in the lives of the people we meet here, especially in the lives of Ruth and of Boas but indeed in the life of Naomi as well.

It is a reflection of God's graciousness and kindness. As I say these words are repeated throughout the book, the book is a sterling example to us of the covenant grace and mercy of God.

And so we come then to verses 1 to 13 in the book and here we find that to begin with Naomi, the mother-in-law of Ruth has a great significant part to play.

[7 : 49] So we first of all see that Naomi makes a plan. There's something of intrigue here maybe but I don't think we should read too much of that into what's happened or what's laid out for us here.

And if you find that there's some overlapping between Derek Sermon last week and what I say this week, it comes with a different slant as it were but it all bears repetition.

Naomi makes a plan. We find that there's a great bond of love between Naomi and Ruth.

We found that in the earlier chapters of the book and it concerned the older woman Naomi that Ruth's situation in Bethlehem could make her vulnerable to the unwanted attentions of immoral and unscrupulous men.

The lot of a widow in those days was not an easy one and Ruth was obviously a fine-looking woman and she was a foreigner in the land.

[9 : 33] So she was in a particularly uneasy situation but in the good providence of God Naomi sees a way in which Ruth's situation and her own as well could be secured and she could have a home and a settled future for herself.

Now in normal circumstances in Israelite society it was prescribed that when a man died without an heir then according to what was called a Levirate law his brother should take his widow as a wife and raise for him an heir which would be counted as it were the child of the dead man and not the child of the brother who married the widow.

This was called Levirate marriage. Word lever just been Latin for brother in law. So here was Ruth a Moabites come among the Israel people but Naomi saw a way of resolving her situation so that there would be an heir for the dead son of Naomi.

But there was no brother to take over the duty so how was Ruth's situation to be resolved?

Naomi sees how in the providence of God and that's a word that we find over arches the whole story.

[11 : 51] Ruth has been gleaning in the fields belonging to Boas and Boas happened to be a relative indeed is described as a close relative of Naomi's late husband Elimelech and here was an opportunity to redeem Ruth's situation and make provision not only for Ruth but for Naomi as well because Boas was seen as as Derek was describing it last week a goel a kinsman redeemer and here again we recognise the graciousness of God in making provision for those of his people who had fallen into hard times and as I've said the many references in the Bible to widows and orphans as well there was a great need for them to be helped and the provision of a kinsman redeemer was something very gracious indeed provided of course the kinsman redeemer was willing to fulfil his responsibility so Naomi outlined her plan to Ruth a plan that would indicate to Boas that Ruth and Naomi look to him to take on his responsibility as kinsman redeemer in their case we have all the details of Naomi's plan in the first five verses of this chapter and you'll notice that they leave nothing to chance and at the end of giving her all the instructions that she needed Ruth says to her mother-in-law all that you say I will do so why wasn't Naomi telling Ruth about each step of what she had to undertake well remember Ruth was a Moabites this practice of seeking help from a kinsman redeemer was obviously unknown to her in the country from which she had come so Naomi had to tell her all the details about it and how to go about it and we find Ruth's love for her mother-in-law reflecting Naomi's love for her was more than just mere obedience in carrying out Naomi's instruction she trusted Naomi in this whole business but I think that with Ruth by this time she had taken what we might call a shine to Boas and it was obvious that Boas had the same shine for Ruth and you can see this in

the way that Boas had been looking after Ruth in the earlier chapters when she was working in the fields yet nonetheless the plan that Naomi had set in motion and that Ruth had to carry out was a risky one especially if other people saw what she was doing and completely misunderstood what she was doing or even if Boas himself misunderstood what she was doing but she carried it out to the letter and I'm sure with a bit of a flutter in her heart at the same time so we read that at the close of the working day when the winnowing of the wheat was done and the workers lay down to sleep in the open after the day's work that

Boas too lay down to sleep a bit away from the others obviously guarding the wheat that had been winnowed Ruth came and as we read in verse number seven here she came softly and uncovered Boas' feet and lay down Naomi made a plan then we find that Ruth carried out this plan Ruth made her move and she carried out the plan to the fool.

Look at the end of verse number seven she came softly and uncovered his that is Boas' feet and lay down so that was the conclusion of Ruth's move but then look at verse eight what do we find there

at midnight the man that's Boas was startled and turned over and behold a woman lay at his feet you can imagine when Boas woke up it was pitch dark he was conscious of somebody there and the word startled is a very strong word can mean terrified even and he said who are you now secrecy was all for Naomi and Ruth in carrying out their plan and it seemed that so far it had worked perfectly but then we find this startled Boas when he became conscious that there was somebody lying at his feet and he said who are you and then a voice gently said to him I am Ruth your servant and then she said words that we found earlier on in chapter two in verse twelve spread your wings over your servant or you are kinsman redeemer spread your wings these are the words that Boas used for Ruth in referring to God Boas said that Ruth had come under the wings of the God of Israel and now Ruth is saying spread your wings over me these are words that are used in the prophets especially Ezekiel referring to God spreading his wings over young Israel as it were and making Israel his own and here is Ruth asking Boas to be a kinsman redeemer for her Ruth had come to Boas with water mounted to a request for marriage to fulfill the duty of continuing her late husband's line and securing his inheritance among his people and Boas understood this immediately his attitude and the alacrity with which he said he would act shows that not only his agreement to carry out a duty it was more than that to him obviously a duty that he would love to fulfill for there was this bond as I say developing between the two of them but there was a hitch in the story Boas knew that there was a closer relative to a limelight who should be asked first of all to be the kinsman redeemer but the way that Boas speaks to Ruth here and this is a conversation remember in whispers he was hoping that the other man would not fulfill the duty but he couldn't pass him over but nonetheless Boas said to Ruth I will redeem you and he meant every word of it now let's take a look at the broader picture here for remember as I've said this book is full of the language of God's covenant relationship with his people and we know from the ending of the book that the book links us it links us to the story of God's covenant relation with his people further on through David's line and eventually we come to that greatest of all kinsmen redeemers the Lord Jesus Christ born into the world to be one of us it's interesting that it is Ruth the Moabitess who shows the loving kindness that was typical of God himself she had come to know in her heart's experience the love of God and she was going to find that loving experience too through the kinsman redeemer Boas and we can know the love of

[24 : 46] God through the great kinsman redeemer who came in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and just as the graciousness and the loving kindness of God changed Ruth's life so the loving kindness of God expressed in Christ can change your life even today when we trust in Jesus and he will take you under his wing and protect you and give you as he give to Ruth a future and a hope I think it's a lovely way that the book of Ruth connects us through the ongoing story of redemption to the Lord Jesus for Boas it was going to be a duty of love we read in Paul's letter to the Galatians chapter 3 and verse 13 about another duty of love deeper than anything we could imagine for it took a great cost to fulfil it for we read there that Christ redeems us by becoming a curse before God in order to remove our curse before God the great American theologian Jonathan Edwards wrote these words by Christ's purchasing redemption two things are intended his satisfaction and his merit the one pays our debt and so satisfies the other procures our title and so merits the satisfaction of

Christ is to free us from misery the merit of Christ is to purchase happiness for us to see that beautifully illustrated in the case of Ruth but Jesus has come for us for you today may find that redemption in him if you were not done so already to free us from the misery of sin and to enjoy the knowing and happiness of knowing him and his covenant loving kindness now all of scripture we read is given for our instruction so friends from this story in Ruth take its advice come and shelter under the wings of the saving work of Christ our great kinsman redeemer and here is a promise as Boas said to Ruth Christ says to us I will redeem you amen let us pray together we thank you for your word oh Lord we ask you to bless it to us and help each one of us to respond to us in the way that we need for Jesus sake amen