Ruth 09: She Came Back Full

Ruth 3:10-18
10 And he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.
11 And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirerst: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.
12 And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.
13 Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth: lie down until the morning.
14 And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor.
15 Also he said, Bring the vail that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city.
16 And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her.
17 And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law.
18 Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.

Intro

• This morning we will continue our journey through the story of Ruth.
  o This is our 9th lesson and we will finish chapter three.
• If you will remember, last week,
  o we left Ruth standing in the dark
    ▪ having just proposed marriage to Boaz
    ▪ after an audacious plan
      • that involved uncovering his feet
      • in the middle of the night.
• Today we will discuss Boaz’s reaction to that proposal
  o and set the stage
    ▪ for the final scenes of the story.
• However, as we progress into todays lesson
  o let me point out something
    ▪ that we haven’t discussed much,
      • up until this point.
• This is a narrative.
  o It is the telling of a story to convey specific points.
• Narratives in the Bible

Ruth: From Ruin To Redemption
are designed to demonstrate the goodness of God.
- The point of this story is not just
  - that it is an interesting love story
    - but it is designed to show us how God loves us.
- It is divinely inspired,
  - the person writing the book of Ruth
    - is operating under the inspiration
      - of the Holy Ghost,
  - however, there is a certain amount of literary craft
    - that goes into this sort of a narrative.
- Things like foreshadowing and repetition
  - help establish important points
    - while the story builds up tension
      - in some places
        - and releases it in others.
        - Just like any other good story.
- Some of these devices are not
  - as apparent to us,
    - reading an English translation,
      - as they were to the original readers
        - of the Hebrew story.
- For instance when words or phrases
  - are repeated in the Hebrew
    - they are not always translated
      - exactly the same into English.
- The translation tends to match the context,
  - looking for the best way to convey the thought
    - in the English language.
  - While the original author, writing in Hebrew,
    - may have chosen a less convenient
      - way of expressing a concept
    - but chosen to repeat a phrase
      - that had appeared earlier in the story,
        - thus connecting two portions of the story
          - in an indirect, yet recognizable fashion.
  - We sometimes miss those connections in the English translation.
    - This morning, this morning we will encounter
      - the repetition of key phrases
        - that really help shape the story.
  - I will point those out several times this morning.
- However, first we need to pick up
  - with Ruth standing at the foot of Boaz’s bed
    - on the threshing floor.

Ruth: From Ruin To Redemption
We have just heard her audacious proposal
  but we have not yet heard from Boaz.
    Today’s text begins with Boaz’s response:

10 And he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

• These opening words are extremely important,
  Because they relieve the dramatic tension
    of Ruth standing at the mercy of Boaz.
• Finally we get to hear Boaz’s response to Ruth.
  He begins with a blessing.
  Blessed be though of the Lord, my daughter.
    This is the same phrase that Naomi used earlier in the story.
• If you will remember, we talked about how Naomi
  was essentially saying that the Lord
    would have to bless Boaz
      because she didn’t have any resources
        to repay his kindness.
  The grammatical structure of the blessing
    makes it clear that this isn’t Boaz blessing Ruth
      but it is Boaz calling on God to bless Ruth.
  And it conveys that same sense of indebtedness
    that Naomi felt earlier in the story
      when Boaz helped Ruth.
• Immediately then,
  we see that Boaz is overwhelmed,
    in a good way,
      by Ruth’s proposal.
• He continues by extolling her kindness in this matter.
  He says, you have shown me more kindness now,
    at this point of the story,
      than you showed earlier in the story.
• That raises the question,
  what kindness did she show earlier in the story?
• This hearkens back to her first meeting with Boaz
  where he told her that,
    because of her kindness to Naomi,
      the Lord was going to bring her
        under the shadow of his wings.
• There is a repetition of
  an important Hebrew word in the story
    that links the two passages.

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• It is the word “hesed” in Hebrew,
  o which is translated as kindness in our text.
    ▪ This word conveyed a deeper action
      ▪ than just kindness,
    ▪ it spoke of family devotion,
      ▪ loyalty
      ▪ and a commitment that expresses itself
        ▪ in great acts of kindness.
• When Boaz praised Ruth
  o for forsaking her homeland
    ▪ and staying with Naomi,
      ▪ he was praising her not just for her kindness
        ▪ but for her family devotion,
        ▪ for her sense of loyalty,
        ▪ for the sacrifice that she was making
          ▪ to bless another.
• Now we learn that this is how Boaz views
  o Ruth’s proposal to him.
• She has not done that
  o which many other young women
    ▪ might have done.
• In the former case involving Naomi,
  o the natural course
    ▪ was to turn back,
      ▪ as her sister Orpah did.
    ▪ But Ruth denied that natural inclination
      ▪ out of “hesed” or kind loyalty to Naomi.
• In this latter case, the natural way of things
  o would have been for Ruth
    ▪ to forget about the Hebrew traditions,
      ▪ that she wasn’t necessarily bound to,
        ▪ and pursue a much younger husband.
• The word “young” here
  o conveys the idea of choice,
    ▪ or preferred.
• It would have been the natural course of events
  o for Ruth to seek out a man her own age
    ▪ and marry either for love,
      ▪ in which case she might have chosen
        ▪ a “poor” young man
          ▪ and been happy,
        ▪ or for security,
          ▪ in which case she might have chosen
            ▪ a “rich” young man

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• and still been happy.

  • Obviously, Boaz thinks that Ruth
    ▪ would have no trouble
    ▪ attracting these other men
    ▪ if she so desired.

  • There is implied compliment in the statement.
    ▪ Ruth could have had anyone she wanted
    ▪ and surely there were better options than him.

  • However, in the same sense of the loyalty
    ▪ that bound her to Naomi,
      ▪ Ruth has shown respect
      ▪ for the familial traditions of the Hebrews
    ▪ and has chosen, out of the kindness of her heart,
      ▪ to pursue a man that qualifies
      ▪ as her kinsman redeemer.

  • She has unnecessarily constrained herself,
    ▪ and Boaz translates this as an act of kindness.

11 And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.

• Continuing his warm and tender tone,
  ▪ Boaz addresses Ruth once more as “my daughter,”
    ▪ as he sought to calm her fears,
    ▪ or insecurities about the situation,
    ▪ with a traditional word of comfort,
      ▪ “Do not be afraid.”

• Shifting his own attention
  ▪ from the past to the future,
    ▪ Boaz reassures Ruth
      ▪ by promising to do for her
        ▪ everything that she asks.

• This is a notable turn of events.
  ▪ If you will remember,
    ▪ Naomi’s plan was for Ruth to go to Boaz,
      ▪ without her widows garments on,
        ▪ making it known that she was available,
          ▪ then to do whatever Boaz
            ▪ told her to do.
  ▪ However, we saw Ruth essentially call an audible
    ▪ and decide to do things her own way.

• Instead of waiting for Boaz to tell her what to do,
  ▪ she told him what she wanted him to do.

• She wanted him to marry her.
Now Boaz declares that he is the servant of Ruth,
  • he will do what she has asked him to do.

The narrator has flipped the societal roles.
  • Boaz, the wealthy Hebrew landowner,
    • is the master,
      o and Ruth, the destitute Moabite widow,
        • is the servant.
  • However, in this case,
    • Boaz has submitted to Ruth’s desires.
      o In one sense she is now the master
        • and he is her humble servant.¹

By way of explaining his actions,
  • Boaz describes Ruth
    • as a “woman of notable character,”
      • a “virtuous woman.”

This statement describes Ruth
  • in the same language
    • that had previously been used in the story
      • to describe Boaz.

In other words she was,
  • in many ways his equal.
    • She may have been a destitute widow
      • but she was a woman of worth,
        o or a woman of strength,
          • a virtuous woman.

The Hebrew reader of this story
  • would recognize the repetition
    • of the same type of description
      • being used for Ruth
        o that had been used of Boaz.
  • No wonder Ruth hasn’t pursued anyone else,
    • no one else was her match!
      • No one else was her equal.
  • At this point in the story
    • we see that Ruth and Boaz
      • were made for each other.
        o They are of the same noble character.

What an amazing turn of events this signifies!
  • Ruth had arrived in Bethlehem
    • a few short weeks ago

¹ For convenience I have not reworded portions of this paragraph.

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Notes by Pastor Tony McCall  
The Pentecostals of Lake City

- as a foreigner at the mercy of the locals.
  - She was the lowest of the low,
    - with no recourse but to scavenge in the fields
    - behind the servants of the landowners.
- But because of her devotion to her mother-in-law
  - and her willingness to abandon everything for her,
    - the townspeople have recognized her true character.
- She has earned a good reputation among the people
  - during the six months that have transpired.
    - And now, her kindness is coming full circle.
- She is a woman of worth
  - and now she will be united
    - with her soul mate,
  - the man who is her equal in character,
    - the only man in Bethlehem
      - that is worthy of her.

12 And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

- But, every plot needs a wrinkle.
  - Every budding love story
    - needs a moment of dramatic tension.
- Ruth’s heart must have skipped a beat
  - when Boaz continued by saying
    - that, while he was a kinsman redeemer,
      - there was another in line ahead of him,
        - another who had a more immediate claim.
- Now that Ruth has drawn Boaz out,
  - and now that the reader knows
    - that they are the perfect match,
      - the narrator reintroduces the tension
        - that carries the story to the next phase.

13 Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman’s part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth: lie down until the morning.

- Boaz approaches this problem just like a man.
  - First he focuses on the immediate dilemma.
    - What should Ruth do now,
      - in the middle of the night?
        - Should she try to sneak home at this late hour?
      - Instead he tells her to spend the night here.

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• The Hebrew text intentionally uses a verb here
  o that is free from any sexual connotation.
    ▪ The narrator does not want to be
      • misunderstood on this point.
        o Ruth spent the night at his feet,
          ▪ not in his bed.

• The verb that is used is the same word
  o that Ruth used in her pledge to Naomi
    ▪ when she said, “Where you lodge, I will lodge.”

• Essentially, using the same word,
  o Boaz said, “Lodge here.”

• There is an implied sense
  o of fulfillment of Ruth’s vow
    ▪ in this statement
      • that speaks to more than just
        o the immediate context
          ▪ of where she will spend the night.

• Then he shows all the sensitivity of a man:
  o In the morning, I will fulfill my duty
    ▪ and talk to the other kinsman.
      • If he wants to marry you,
        o then so be it.

• But if not, then I will be your kinsman redeemer.
  o Perhaps from Boaz’s viewpoint,
    ▪ she is covered either way.
  o If he chooses to marry her
    ▪ then she will be well provided for
      • but if not, then he will
        o more than gladly
          o provide for her himself.

• However, from Ruth’s view this has to be
  o somewhat of a shock.
    ▪ She doesn’t want another man.
      • She wants him.
  o If she wanted another man,
    ▪ she could have pursued the younger men.
      • What is not visible, in the text,
        o but implied in the story,
          ▪ is the sense of trusting in God
            ▪ that is inherent to this whole story.
  o Essentially Boaz is urging Ruth to just wait
    ▪ and let God work this out.
      • Together, they will trust him,
        o and though it is not abundantly clear, yet,
how, in the end it will all work out.

14 And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor.

- Ruth lay back down at his feet
  - for the remainder of the night.
- In the wake of their midnight conversation
  - neither Ruth nor Boaz
    - probably slept much that night.
- Boaz’s mind probably was preoccupied
  - with plans for resolving the case in the morning
    - and anxieties over whether
      - he would be able to gain
        - the right to Ruth’s hand.
- No doubt these issues were also on Ruth’s mind,
  - but she had the added concern
    - of getting away unnoticed in the morning.
- In order to preserve her reputation
  - she would need to be gone
    - before anyone could recognize her.
- To prevent suspicions about her activities at night
  - on the threshing floor
    - where Boaz slept,
      - before dawn broke
        - she got up and prepared to leave.
- By now Boaz was awake as well,
  - and under the dark sky
    - he initiated a second conversation.
- He supported her efforts
  - to get away without being noticed,
    - for he had a reputation to preserve as well.
- He could not afford to have Ruth discovered
  - and recognized by the rest of the workers.

15 Also he said, Bring the vail that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city.

- However, maintaining his lavish generosity
  - and demonstrating his good faith
    - or, perhaps, to make it look
      - as though she had gone to get the grain,
        - rather than spending the night with him,
          - he sent her off
• with another substantial gift of food.

16 And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her.

• If Ruth and Boaz
  o had been deprived of sleep that night,
    ▪ no doubt the same was true of Naomi.
  o The one who had concocted this scheme
    ▪ probably lay awake all night
      ▪ wondering how her daughter-in-law was faring.
        • But the question that Naomi asks Ruth
          ▪ upon her return
            ▪ is kind of odd.
  o In the original language,
    ▪ she uses the same phrase
      ▪ that Boaz used
        • when he woke from his sleep
          ▪ and realized there was a woman laying at his feet.
  o That phrase was translated, there, as “who are you?”
    ▪ That was pretty good translation.
      ▪ But now Naomi uses the same words
        ▪ in a different sense.
  o In some sense she means to ask how things went,
    ▪ but she does so by essentially asking
      ▪ “who” or “whose” she is.
  o If you will remember,
    ▪ that is a repeated concept as well.
  o That is what Boaz originally asked
    ▪ in the field the first time he saw Ruth.
  o Now the narrator puts those same words in Naomi’s mouth.
    ▪ The answer before was
      ▪ she was Naomi’s daughter in law.
    ▪ The answer now is she is Boaz’s wife to be.
  o There is a great sense of fulfillment in the use of the phrase.
    ▪ The story is coming full circle.

  o In response, Ruth reported to Naomi
    ▪ everything that had happened.

17 And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law.

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I want you to notice how the narrator very briefly described Ruth’s telling of the events of the night. A whole conversation is encapsulated in a few words, in the previous verse, but now he comes back down to word-for-word details.

This happens because the narrator is making an important point in the story. Perhaps the most important point of the whole story.

Ruth says, He gave me six measures of barley and said to me, “Don’t go back to your mother-in-law empty.” There is an important echo here of the lament of Naomi earlier in the story.

Naomi went out full but came back empty. Now we see Ruth as the reversal of those fortunes. Ruth went out empty but She came back full! What a reversal.

Naomi leaves the house of bread, Bethlehem, the land of promise. And when she leaves she is full.

But when shoe goes out into the world, Moab robs her of everything she has. She comes back empty, broken and destitute.

However, when Ruth leaves Moab, coming out of the world, she is broken and destitute and empty.

But now, her fortunes are reversed. Just as surely as Moab robbed Naomi of everything, Ruth finds fulfillment in the house of bread, in the promises of God!

These words signaled to Naomi as well, that her empty days were finished. That’s just how things work in God’s house. When you come into his presence, you may come in empty.

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but you will leave full.

18 Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.

- Naomi has the last word in the chapter,
  - stating that Boaz is a man of character
    - and he “will not rest until the matter is settled today.”
  - This is the final repetition of the chapter.
    - If you will remember,
      - when she instructed Ruth
        - to go out to Boaz in the night,
          - Naomi used the word “rest”
            - as a euphemism for marriage.
    - Ruth was essentially seeking rest.
      - Now we see that Boaz will not be able to “rest”
        - until the matter is fulfilled.
  - Boaz will not rest
    - until Ruth is able to find her rest.
      - There is a nice paralleled here
        - to carry the story into the next chapter.

Close

- When we started this story,
  - we spent a large amount of time
    - talking about Naomi.
- So much so that my wife asked, why?
  - Here’s the reason why.
- This is more than a love story
  - between Ruth and Boaz.
- This is a story of the goodness of God.
  - It is a story of reversal of fortune.
    - It is a story of how Naomi went out full
      - but came back empty
    - While Ruth went out empty
      - but came back full!
    - The difference is the directions
      - they were going!

- The world will empty you.
  - The House of God will fill you!
    - The story is not about going out empty.
      - The story is about coming back full!

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