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Compromising Situation Ruth 3

The top five Biblical ways to obtain a wife? Number one you could go into a deep sleep and allow God to perform surgery on you ribs, he will create a perfect wife while you sleep. Wake up and there's your wife. Found in Genesis 2. Number 2 you go to the enemy land and find a woman that looks good to you and tell your mom and dad to go get her for you. Judges 14. Number 3 biblical way to obtain a wife. You could sneak down to watch the village maidens dance at the harvest party. Jump out and grab the one you want, take her home to be your wife. Judges 21. Number 4. You could walk through town until God says, "Marry that woman". Do it even if everyone knows she is a prostitute. You'll find the details in the book of Hosea. Number 5 you could have your butler travel to a distant land and hang out at the city drinking fountain waiting for a beautiful young maiden to ask if you would like a drink. Bring that one home for a wife. Number 6. You could wait for your brother to die and then marry his widow, after all it's the law. Deut 25. For those gals who are interested in biblical ways to obtain a husband, this mornings story is for you. Secretly watch the man you like work real hard, watch him eat, and then when he falls asleep, go take the covers off his feet, lay down and wait. When he gets cold and wakes up in the middle of the night startled and wondering who you are; "Ask him to marry you" That is found in the book of Ruth.

In his book *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine wrote concerning the book of Ruth. "...it is an idle, bungling story, foolishly told, nobody knows by whom about a strolling country girl creeping slyly to bed with her cousin Boaz. Pretty stuff indeed to be called the Word of God. It is however one of the best books in the Bible for it is free from murder and plundering." This remark is obviously an extremely negative view held by a famous hater of God. However, it does raise the question of purpose, of significance. Is there anything of theological value? Is there anything in Ruth, any redeeming qualities of the book. In fact the book itself revolves

around the theme of redeem, redemption. Drawing up those who have been at the bottom. Lifting up those who have been left out and ignored. Ruth is a book that teaches us the rewards of sacrificial loyal love. A love that at times may appear foolish and risky, yet loving is a risk worth taking as in Ruth's case eventually God's blesses her far beyond her wildest imagination.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Ruth. It is a small glistening jewel of a book tucked in just behind the black and ugly book of Judges where evil abounded in the world and "everyone did what was right in their own eyes." The story of Ruth happened during the time of the judges. In Ruth we see a call to faithfulness, to sacrificial love, to live responsibly and righteously in an irresponsible and dark day. God looks for those who are willing to be faithful, available and teachable. For it is those kind of people that are in the position to be used of God and blessed by Him. (Pray)

The second chapter describes Ruth working out in the fields gleaning. The gleanings were that grain or barley that was left over after the harvesters had come through. It was the forgotten grain stalks tucked back in the corners and along the edges. It was the forgotten overlooked and missed stalks hidden deep in the middle of the field. The harvesters weren't supposed to go back and reharvest these areas but instead leave them for the foreigners, the fatherless, the poor and widowed. Ruth was all of these things. The gleanings she harvested were a picture of her life. She had seemed to have been left out forgotten, ignored by life and God. She was away from land of Moab. Her husband had died. She had no children. Poor, without shelter and security.

There may be some here this morning who can relate with Ruth. maybe you have felt left out on the edges for most of your life. Maybe you feel like a foreigner, out of place just about everywhere. Maybe you are feeling on the bottom, in a pile, ignored by God. Maybe it's because the family you always long to have, the family you watch others enjoying seems to be out of your grasp. Maybe you find yourself very, very lonely this morning. Maybe you feel powerless and in need of protection, need of security and help. Maybe it's spiritual help, or physical strength. Perhaps some here come with a load of sin and guilt on their shoulders. You feel like there is no way God or anybody else could possibly forgive you for it.

Maybe you think it's too late for you. It's been too many years with too many difficult and complicated things crowding in the way. Do you find yourself in a pile at the bottom of the heap this morning? Do you find yourself like a gleaner, forgotten, ignored and left out? Then this book of Ruth will be of great encouragement for you this morning.

When tough times come. When you find yourself at the bottom. These tough times confront each of us with a choice. You can choose to be bitter and angry with God for what you thought He should or shouldn't have done. You can say, "I don't need God, I will do life all by myself." Tough times will push some people to rebel against God. Or, tough times will draw you closer to His heart. You may choose to run to God's strong arms of protection, security and strength.

David Ring was born dead without oxygen, resulting in cerebral palsy. His brothers all died of hemophilia. His parents divorced. At 11 his father died of cancer. Three years later his beloved mom also died from cancer leaving him orphaned. David's relative wanted to institutionalize him; David grew angry and self-pitying. He hated God and most of all hated himself. Tough times confronted David with a choice. he could continue to wallow in his misery, or choose to accept God's purposes for his life, cerebral palsy and all. He received Christ and entered the family of Christians. he learned to accept himself and thank God for creating him as "fearfully and wonderfully" made. David still walks with a limp and speaks with an impediment but in his inspiring speeches all across the country he challenges people not to ask why me...but instead ask the question...what now. God what do you want me to do with my problems? God I'm in the middle of tough times, how can I glorify you with them? A victim of tough times will blame others, blame themselves and always miss the hidden blessing. We need to be asking God, looking how he may transform.

Read with me Ruth chapter 3 as we see how God takes one who is at the bottom, left-behind, forgotten on the edges and transforms a potential scandal, paving a way for grace and restoration. God loves to take the underdog, the left out, the forgotten one on the edges and work His plan through their life. He did it through Rahab the Harlot, through the woman at the well, and here God works through a Moabite woman named Ruth. (READ.)

Isn't it amazing how God in his providence resolves wrong turns and potential scandal, real pain and hurt to pave for people a way of grace and redemption. Are you hurting this morning? Do you find yourself in a heap at the bottom of a very black and deep hole? There are some notes of encouragement we can glean from this third chapter of Ruth as we watch how God transforms a potential scandal into a pathway of grace and redemption.

In the ancient near east it was considered a great tragedy to not have a heir to carry on the family name. The Bible tells us in Deut. 25:5-10 about the practice of Levirate marriages. If a husband should die without child, it was the responsibility of the next closest eligible relative, brother etc., to marry the widowed relative and provide an heir for her deceased husband. Back then I think the guys had vested interest in whom their brothers would marry. Ruth's husband died without an heir. And her husband's brother also died.

In the first couple verses Naomi wants to provide security for Ruth in the form of a husband. She relates that Boaz, her kinsman, is down at the threshing floor to winnow the wheat. She puts the statements in a negative form that demands an answer in the affirmative so the truth comes out more forcefully than just merely stating the facts. Yes, Boaz is a close relative. Yes. It is his turn tonight to be down at the Bethlehem city threshing floor.

Why at night? Maybe it was cooler to do such hard work. Maybe there was a breeze to blow the chaff away. See at the threshing floor the grain stalks that had been harvested were beaten with a flail. This releases the grain kernels from the stalk. Then Boaz would take a large flat basket and fill it with the threshed grain. He would throw it into the air and the wind would blow away the lighter chaff and the good stuff, the heavier grain would fall down at his feet onto the flat threshing floor.

I see this threshing and winnowing as an illustration of Ruth's life. It is only under the threshing, the beating of the stalks that the good kernels of grain can be released. It is under crucible of pain and suffering that the good can be released. Some of us feel at the bottom, crushed and beaten. We are feeling the crucible of tough times. Yet, those tough times can forge strong character.

Point number one this morning. Excellent things often come through the river of pain and suffering. There are plenty of examples. Everyones birth came through the river of pain and suffering. But most of you who are mothers would say it was worth the pain. Right now there are Olympic athletes who are training hard, breaking down and building up muscle so they can be prepared to compete in the Australian Olympics. They punish their bodies, sweat and work through the pain so that they can be eligible for the prize the gold medal.

Ruth has lived life through the crucible of pain and suffering. She knows only Naomi trying to eke out a living in a foreign land. Her husband died. She bears the shame, the pain and loneliness of no children. She has walked through tough times, yet has chosen to turn to God instead of wallowing in bitter rebellion and hatred. So God has the opportunity to take those tough times and forge strong character in her life. Responding well in the face of tough times will produce excellent things. In the face of tough times are you asking why me? or are you asking God, what do you want me to learn God? How can I bring glory to you in the midst of this trial. James 1 tells us to consider it all joy when we encounter various trials knowing the testing of your faith produces endurance's and endurance will make you complete so that you lack nothing.

When one has experienced lack, she then more profoundly can enjoy the fulfillment. When one has known profound loneliness, she is much better able to enjoy the delight of a good friend. We visited Dachau prison last week and watched a film showing the delight on the faces of the surviving prisoners when the Americans freed them. To a prisoner, freedom is never again taken for granted. To those here who have fought for our nations freedom, who have endured suffering for our freedom, you can know and appreciate far better our freedom. Until you have experienced want and need, it is difficult to fully enjoy the provision of God. To the one who has experienced a huge debt of sin. The freedom from that guilt produces a strong heart of love. As Jesus himself said, to the one who sinned much, and experienced God's forgiveness much, demonstrates great love in response. The truth is we all sin much, some are just better at recognizing their need better than others.

Do you find yourself in a tough time this morning. Be encouraged that excellent things often come first through the forge of pain and suffering. The quality of character you gain through the experience will depend on your response. Don't waste a pain by wallowing in the why mes of life. Step forward and ask what now God. What do you want me to learn. Where do you want me to grow in this situation.

The story continues in verse 3 as Naomi has Ruth wash herself, put on some perfume and best clothes. Just a note; This is the first reference to Ruth physical appearance. Physical beauty is enhanced when inner spiritual beauty is first established. If you are looking for a beauty makeover...look inside before you drive to the beauty shop.

Naomi tells Ruth to go down to the threshing floor and watch Boaz work from a hidden place. Wait until he eats his dinner and drinks and relaxes after a hard day of work. Then v.4 take a note where he lies down, go uncover his feet, lie down and wait. Verse 5 and 6 twice say the Ruth did exactly what her mother in law told her to do. God was working through Naomi to fold blessing into Ruth's life. Ruth proved to be teachable and obedient even when God's plan may have made little logical sense to her.

That is point number two this morning. Remain teachable and obedient to God even though his plan may make little logical sense at the time. You see Ruth was from Moab. She didn't grow up around Bethlehem. She didn't know all these funny Israelite customs. She had learned different ways. Yet, she remained teachable. She didn't say to Naomi. No that's not the way we do things back in Moab. She didn't balk and complain. Even though it was probably way out of her comfort zone. Even though it was risky and she had to be extremely nervous. She says OK. I'll do it. She followed Naomi's plan because she loved and trusted Naomi and knew she would only act for her best interest.

This reminds me that sometimes God tells us to do things that don't seem to have a good deal of logic to them. He calls us to turn the other cheek and forgive those who are angry and say cruel things to us. That's not natural. He tells us to give up our bitterness, our envy, our jealousy. He tells us its more important to be righteous then successful and wealthy and popular. That doesn't make a lot of logical sense. He tells us to live pure when the whole media screams for us to do

otherwise. He calls for us to deny our self when the rest of the world say to look out for number one. He calls us to share our faith, to live our faith even in times and places where it is way out of our comfort level. When you are at the bottom, in the middle of tough times, God may call you to do something that is righteous but makes little logical sense to you at the time. Are you willing to be teachable and obedient? Point number two this morning. Remain teachable and obedient to God even though his plan may make little logical sense at the time. Why? Because you trust the One who loves you and know that He will always act in your best interest. He calls us to the illogical for our own good. The maker of our hearts knows far better than us what is best for us.

Verse 7 Boaz finishes his work and meal. He makes up a pillow from a heap of grain and goes to sleep. Ruth sneaks down uncovers his feet, lays down and waits. V. 8 in the middle of the night, Boaz feet start to get cold, he reaches down to adjust the covers and is startled. Behold! there was a woman lying at his feet. V.9 Who are you? Ruth identifies herself and then employs the euphemism asking Boaz to receive her in the way of marriage. Spread your covering over you maid for you are a close relative. She is asking him to fulfill the levirate marriage responsibility and place her under his wings of protection and security and love. It's interesting the exact same word is used in the Hebrew text in chapter 2:12. Look at that with me. Remember this is the prayer of blessing that Boaz prayed for Ruth when they met out in the field after being so impressed by her love and loyalty to her mother in law Naomi. Lets picks it up in verse 11. Wings and covering are the exact same Greek word kanaf. Ruth had already placed herself under the wings of God, know she wants to placed under the wings of Boaz. This is a picture of a covenant relationship. Eze. 16:8 uses this same word to speak of the Lord God entering into a covenant relationship with the people of Israel to protect and cherish them.

Here in chapter 3:9 Ruth employs the same poetic image of a covering wing used by Boaz earlier. This Moabite woman was calling a pious Israelite man to enter into his own pronounced blessing. Boaz had prayed that God would bless and protect and provide for Ruth. He prayed that God would richly reward her for her kindness...and now Boaz is called on to be a major part of the answer to his own prayer. That leads

us to the third point this morning. Be careful what you pray...for you may in fact become the very answer to your own prayers. Praying can be risky can't it, some here this morning may wake up startled, just like Boaz, startled to discover the answer to their prayer is staring at them in the mirror. As we continue to read Boaz becomes the instrument God uses to provide richly for Ruth and answer his own prayer.

What have you been praying for? Maybe god wants to wake you up, startle you to see that your answer is starring at you in the mirror. Maybe you have been praying that God would fix that difficult person you work with, that obstinate person you live with, that neighbor that just can't seem to get along with. You can't change them, but you can do something about you. Maybe the answer is staring at you in the mirror. Maybe the restoration of relationship needs to begin with you. Perhaps you've been praying "God fix my spouse she or he is a real pain in the neck right now..." Maybe you are the answer to the prayer. not to try and fix them but to examine your own attitudes. Are you acting in loving and kind ways? Would Jesus respond the way you are at times?

Maybe some here are praying that God would bring their friend to Christ. Praying that God would send someone to talk to their neighbor about Christ's love. God's answer to your prayer could well be you. Maybe you have are praying for God to send worker for AWANA kids program this fall. Maybe you are praying God would provide financially for our church. Maybe praying that God would send people to the mission field. God may well call you to be a part of the answer.

Don't wait to be asked. Pursue it. Do it. Decide what area you want to serve and allow God to choose the venue. I love to preach but He has not called me to preach in the Kingdom, just right here in Yacolt. Some He may call to teach it may be to adults, it may be to teens, it may be to AWANA kids, it may be to pre-school junior church kids. You be teachable and obedient and let God choose the venue.

I remember a man in my church growing up. He loved to play the organ. He practiced so hard and tried so hard...but everytime he would get a chance to play in a evening service, he would get so nervous and flustered everyone else had a real hard time worshipping God instead of being nervous with him. But he had such a love to play the organ for God. So he decided to go to the Old folks home every Sunday he would go

and play the organ for the people there. They loved it...and I think he is still playing there. If you don't care how many people and what venue God will use a willing and flexible available heart for Him. You may wake up startled to discover you are a big part of the answer to your prayers. Don't be surprised if God should place you in situations that challenge us to join Him in His work and plan. Can you see where God is at work? Look for it and join Him.

The story continues with Boaz accepting responsibility and desiring to accept Ruth proposal of marriage. He calls her noble and an excellent woman. This is the same Hebrew word used to describe Boaz in 2;1. It is also the same word used of to describe the excellent wife in Proverbs 31. Interesting that in the Hebrew Bible order placed Proverbs just before the book of Ruth.

V. 12 Boaz acts responsibly in a evil and irresponsible time. He could have taken advantage of this potentially scandalous opportunity. But he does not. Boaz did not send her out late at night into the streets alone. He also protected the rights of the closer kinsman redeemer, and protected her honor by sending her home before daylight not wishing to complicate her life by the village gossips. Nothing had happened that night, but the gossipers often care little about facts.

V. 13 we see Boaz was prepared to redeem Ruth. to be her kinsman redeemer. This involved buying back to regain possession of the family property that had been lost. To redeem meant to marry Ruth and provide an heir for the family. At other times redeem meant to rescue and deliver from those who had been sold into slavery. To rescue from a poor situation. This was what a redeemer did, and Boaz was ready to be that for Ruth.

Just as Boaz desired to be her kinsman redeemer. Jesus desires to be our kinsman redeemer. He wants to free us from the captivity of sin. He wants to buy us back from out of the slave market of sin and self so that we can begin to live life the way God created us to live. The way He intended us to. Maybe you face a situation of potential scandal. Maybe you are wading through some tough times right now. Maybe you feel yourself on the edges, forgotten and leftover. There is One who desires to be your redeemers. I Peter 1:18-19 tells us that we were redeemed not with money, or a certain way of keeping rules, but redeemed by a

sacrificial act of love, Jesus blood and death on the cross. Jesus the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Jesus wants to lift us up. No longer slaves but sons and daughters, princes and princesses of the king of the universe. Are you ready to be redeemed by Jesus? He wants you to accept him in faith and belief. Confess you sin to Him, repent and believe and you will enter into a relationship and transforming life of faith.