

Waiting

Ruth 3:14-18

God is the creator and we are His creatures, so one way we honor Him is by waiting. We can understand intellectually that every good and perfect gift comes down from Him, but the testing of our faith comes when a that gift doesn't arrive according to our timetable.

Summary of the Text

Ruth lays at Boaz's feet through the night and gets up when it's still dark and no can be recognized. Boaz says not to make it known that a woman came to the threshing floor and then gives six measures of barley into Ruth's garment which she takes into the city (vv. 14-15). When Ruth arrives at Naomi's house, Naomi asks, "Who are you, my daughter?", and Ruth tells her everything Boaz did for her including the six measures of barley; he didn't want her to go back to Naomi empty-handed (vv. 16-17). Naomi then tells her to sit still until she knows how the matter will turn out because Boaz will not rest until he finishes the matter that day (v. 18).

Darkness to Light

Good stories unfold deliberately over time. In the creation of the world, darkness comes before light: "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.... So the evening and the morning were the first day" (Gen. 1:2, 5). The Lord made an unfinished world that dwelt in *good* creational darkness, like a womb where life will be knit together (Ps. 139:15). Darkness is followed by light: evening and morning after evening and morning as the Lord forms and fills the world. The entire old covenant was a time of darkness that looked forward to the light. Israel had a lunar calendar where the months began with the new moon. It was a time of types and shadows anticipating the rising of the sun, the coming of the messiah, and the fulfillment of God's promises (Heb. 9:10, 10:1). This scene begins at night. Ruth takes the godly risk to go down to where Boaz sleeps at the threshing floor, unseen in the cover of darkness (3:2). Boaz wakes in the middle of the night and can't see who is there (v. 8). He then tells her to stay the night (v. 13). Morning begins when she leaves but by the time the day is over, Naomi says, the matter will be concluded (vv. 14, 18). Darkness leads to day. The book of Ruth began with the darkness of famine and uncertainty in exile, which led to the bleak death of Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion. A little light appears with bread back in Bethlehem and the return, but Naomi couldn't see it. None of these hard circumstances surrounding occur because of Naomi or Ruth's personal sin. The Lord had hard and lean times to see them through as they travel through darkness into light. It's easy to read someone else's story and say, "Just wait, it will get better!" And awful to say, "What did you do to bring this darkness upon yourself?" when there's no indication they did. We need to be ready to wait on the Lord in our own story, looking for the light.

Waiting on the Lord

Boaz has already thrived in the darkness. Rather than wake up angry, he learns it's Ruth laying at his feet and praises her for showing even more kindness at the end than at the beginning. She seeks a kinsman-redeemer who will bless Naomi and not a rich young man (v. 10). He wants to marry her and could take this opportunity to do so. A marriage is a covenant between two people who commit for life to one another, and they could have committed and consummated that night. Boaz also could have consummated without committing to her. Instead, he brings up the fact that there's a kinsman-redeemer nearer to her than he is and he must find out if he will redeem her (v. 13). They both wait patiently that night (v. 14). We can imagine that it was not the most restful sleep, if they slept at all. It might stand out that there's no description of their emotions, prayers, hopes or dreams. It's not that they didn't have them or that they're unimportant. The entire book Song of

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Songs is dedicated to intense romantic desires and fulfillment. Those things were there but what comes first is faithfulness to God. Boaz wants to marry Ruth and Ruth, Boaz, but both want even more to be faithful to God. So the emphasis is on honoring the Lord. Ruth shows *chesed*, covenant kindness to Naomi because the Lord has shown it to her. He called her out of idolatry, out of Moab, out of the sadness of widowhood into the hope of Israel. She will not repay Him by breaking His commandments. She settles in Israel, works hard, and then responds in faith to Naomi's plan. Boaz is a mighty man who works hard and treats his reapers and gleaners right. He wants a woman but will not take her before she has been given. Elimelech is like Adam who forsook God, took from the tree he wasn't supposed to, and went into exile, east of Eden. Instead of enduring famine in Israel, Elimelech fled to Moab and died. He thought by changing the scenery things would get better—look at all that food in Moab! Boaz is a new Adam and he has a prosperous field. Here's a woman who can help him and would help him if it weren't for this closer kinsman-redeemer. Were he unbelieving, he would doubt God's blessing and take the forbidden fruit. Instead of giving in to sin, Boaz buckles down. He shows us what true masculinity looks like, which is the glad assumption of sacrificial responsibility. He takes care to protect her—even from herself—as he instructs her not to be seen (v. 14). He takes care to provide for her with six measures of barley (v. 15). In Hebrew it's just "six" so we don't know if it's ephahs or something smaller. If it's ephahs, that's 180-300 pounds and one strong garment. The point is that this is a heap of blessing. He owes her nothing and there's a good chance he won't get to marry her, and still he abundantly blesses. He faces the likelihood of real disappointment, and finding out about the other guy is something Naomi could do, but he takes responsibility anyway to get it done that day. Boaz does this gladly because he is a pillar.

Things of Earth

Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz have all been waiting on the Lord, but they have not been passive. Godly patience means taking action where you can and *then* waiting on the Lord. Perhaps Boaz didn't marry Ruth already because he knew about the nearer kinsman-redeemer. Now he has the opportunity to find out. When we pursue the Lord and our good desires, we find all kinds of tangible encouragement in the meantime. The emphasis on "six" draws attention to it, the number right before seven. Here is something good while you await completion. God will finish and provide the rest Ruth seeks, and here's six big ones to be encouraged by. Unbelief would say, "I need a husband, not a heap of barley." Faith says, "Thank you, Lord. You always provide." In faith this is how you interpret the Lord's provision now, how should see your past, and how to hope for the future. Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi love the Lord more than earthly blessings, but they don't set their faith against His blessings. They want the good things of earth given by Him. They want to eat and be satisfied. They want abundance and not famine. Ruth wants a husband and Boaz a wife, and there's zero idolatry in this because they obey the Lord. We should imitate this faith. If you want a new job, work in the meantime. If you want to meet someone, put yourself in the position to do so. If you want to see your children grow and flourish, teach and spend time enjoying them. In all of this, wait on the Lord. We plow, plant, water, and God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). The disciples waited for Christ, even unknowingly, to complete His work. Jesus relied on the Father to keep Him to the end and to raise Him up. Wait on the Lord who is good to you now and will finish the work He began in you. He waits on you with patience, with the abundant goodness of His covenant.