


Introduction:

- A. *Illus.*: In 1968 the pioneering Swiss Christian psychologist, **Paul Tournier**, began his book, *A Place for You*, this way:
The words were those of a young student with whom I had formed a deep friendship. He was sitting by my fireside, telling me of his difficulties, of the anxiety that never left him, and which at times turned to panic and to flight. He was trying to look objectively at what was going on inside himself and to understand it. Then, as if summing up his thoughts, he looked up at me and said: “Basically, I’m always looking for a place—for somewhere to be.” [p.9]
- B. Ever since Adam and Eve were evited by God from the Garden of Eden that has been at the heart of the human condition—“always looking for a place—somewhere to be.” Abraham left his home to go to a place God promised him—a place to be. The Israelites in Egypt longed for “a place to be.” When Europeans began migrating to the New World in the 1700s they invented a new word: *homesickness*. During our Great Depression, **Thomas Hart Benton** depicted the “Prodigal Son” returning home only to find his home abandoned, capturing the heartbreak of displaced Americans.
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- C. Ruth was a displaced person. She left her own homeland of Moab out of loyal love for her widowed, embittered mother-in-law, Naomi. We’ve been following their story in the book of Ruth the last two weeks. Today, **Ruth 3** begins, “One day Ruth’s mother-in-law Naomi said to her, ‘My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for.’”

I. “I MUST FIND A HOME FOR YOU” (3:1-6)

- A. The Hebrew word means a place of rest. Ruth had a home—with Naomi, but Naomi meant a place of security; she meant a husband who would care for her. It was the responsibility of parents to find a spouse for their children so Naomi says, “*I must see you settled in life.*” [Moffatt]
- B. Here was God’s own longing when his people were in Egypt. “*I must find a place of rest for you that it may be well with you.*” So he promised them their own land. There are a lot of people in the world who have come to assume that the unsettled life, the life of an orphaned soul, is just normal, like someone who knows nothing but life on the street. David wrote a psalm that sings to them of home,
*May the righteous be glad...
rejoice before him—his name is the LORD.
A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in his holy dwelling.
God sets the lonely in families,
he leads out the prisoners with singing;* (68:3-6)
- Jesus said, “*Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*”
- C. But for Naomi and Ruth it wasn’t as simple as just trying to find a husband for Ruth. They had some unusual unfinished business. Ten years before Naomi and her husband Elimelek had left the famine in Bethlehem for food in the spiritual slums of Moab. Elimelek had sold or abandoned his property to someone else, and God’s law said that, since all of Israel was really *his* people and *his* land, that property belonged back with the clan *he* had given it to. **It had to be redeemed out of the hands of the other owner.**

Furthermore, when Elimelek's son, Mahlon, who was Ruth's husband, died in Moab without an heir, the family line was in danger of extinction. That, too, was something God's law addressed. If a man died without a son, the man's next of kin—his brother, for example, or cousin, was to marry his wife and have a son with her for her first husband's sake—to keep his heritage alive. In other words, **the kinsman was to redeem both the land and the line.** So when Naomi set out to find a husband for Ruth, the field was narrowed considerably! **She had to find someone who would be their *kinsman-redeemer*.**

- D. As I mentioned last week, throughout this book, God is mostly hiding behind the scenes. But he shows up in the startling coincidences. It *just happened* that Ruth went out to glean in a field that *just happened* to belong to a near relative of Naomi's late husband, who *just happened* to come by that very morning to check on the harvest.

One thing led to another, as we saw in ch.2, and Boaz and Ruth get to know and admire one another. Boaz even blesses Ruth with these words in Ruth 2:11-12, "*I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.*" Boaz both protects and provides for Ruth so Naomi figures that he would fit the bill. "*Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match.*"

- E. So Naomi spelled out her plan to Ruth in vv.2-6... Ruth had probably been wearing widow's black but now she was to signal to Boaz that her period of mourning was over.

Boaz was winnowing barley in the evening. During the day, mules or oxen would tromp on the barley, breaking the husks from the grain. Then when the wind came up in the evening, they would toss the grain into the air and the wind would blow away the chaff, leaving the grain. That it was still the barley harvest tells us that this was within a month of Ruth's arrival in Bethlehem. Things were moving fast!

- F. What Naomi was setting up was a marriage proposal—by Ruth. With this one there's no kneeling on one knee with a ring. Listen to what happens in **vv.7-9**... Boaz has been sleeping with his long robe over him, while Ruth had no blanket. She was saying she had no one to care for her.

When she said, "Spread the corner of your garment over me," there was kind of a triple meaning. The words are literally, *spread your wings over me*. The first meaning was very literal: spread your robe over me. But that was a symbolic meaning which was basically the marriage proposal: *Would you take me under your wing?* The third meaning is deeper yet. Boaz had blessed her not long before: "*May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.*" Now Ruth was asking Boaz to do for her what he had asked God to do for her. She was asking him to be the answer to his own prayer.

Like Ruth, we say to our Kinsman-Redeemer...

II. MAY MY HOME BE UNDER YOUR WINGS (3:9-11)

- A. This story strikes us as a May-December romance, a young woman and an old bachelor farmer, two unlikely lovebirds who met in a barley field and got engaged in a granary. But there is a lot more to this story than that, and it is captured in Ruth's statement, "*Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer—a kinsman-redeemer—of our family.*" This is a romance, to be sure,

but Ruth's proposal is not based on romance. Ruth is basically asking Boaz to marry her in order that she might have a son *in her dead husband's name*; to carry on his legacy. She's also asking that Boaz would buy back Elimelek's land at his own expense. **She was proposing to him because she *needed* him**. Even if she'd dreamed of marrying a younger man, she *needed* Boaz. This would begin as a marriage borne of family responsibility.

- B. No other people, ancient or modern, have had this kinsman-redeemer practice. Why Israel? **Because only Israel was in a covenant of love with God; a *hesed*—loyal love—relationship**. This started when God *redeemed* Israel out of slavery in Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land—God's land which he entrusted to Israel as caretakers. So if an Israelite *lost* possession of some part of that land it needed to be bought back—*redeemed*. If an Israelite became a slave or indentured servant of another Israelite because they couldn't pay their debts, they needed to be bought back—*redeemed*—out of slavery because they were first and foremost *God's* servants. And if one of his people was in danger of losing their entire family line due to death, a kinsman needed to *redeem* that line so that God's people would not be diminished. All this was "*grounded in [Israel's] shared covenant relationship with the LORD, who said: 'And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people' (Lv. 26:12)*". [Atkinson, *BST*, p.93, quoting Leggett] So that is why Ruth's proposal was not simply romantic. **This is most certainly a love story, but a love that runs even deeper than romantic love, a love that grows from God's love for his people, and the sacred duty of Boaz to love Ruth sacrificially, as her kinsman-redeemer.**

- C. In this story we are to identify with Ruth. Like her, we were outsiders to God’s promises, foreigners to God’s favor. We were refugees in need of a place of rest, a home and a husband. “*Once,*” the Bible says, “*you were not a people.*” Like Ruth, we need a Kinsman-Redeemer to take us under his wings or we will be homeless and hopeless. **Someone must love us *despite the price.***
- D. If there was a commercial break right here, we’d be left wondering (along with Ruth) just what Boaz is going to do. But this show is offered without commercial interruptions, so let’s read on: **vv.10-11...** Do you get that? He’s praising God that he gets to do what Ruth asks, that he *gets* to redeem here! In fact, he looks back on the way Ruth had resolved not to forsake Naomi and he says, “*The hesed-loyal love you showed Naomi pales before the hesed-loyal love you are showing me.*” You see, Boaz needed a kind of redemption himself. Marriage had passed him by. He was lonely. Like Naomi, he had no spouse and he had no child; no heir; no one to carry his line forward. He had not grown bitter with God as Naomi had, but his heart ached. And now this extraordinary woman, this woman everyone knew was of noble character, this *young* woman who had not run after younger men for love or money, had proposed to him!
- E. Why do you think God made sure we knew this story? This really isn’t about how to find a mate, though perhaps you could learn a few things. But that’s not why it is in the Bible. **One reason is to teach us that as God’s people we have covenant obligations to one another.** We are to do all we can to help our brothers and sisters be wholly devoted to the Lord. That’s the goal of our love for one another—that nothing would come between God and his people, so we get involved with each other’s lives.

A second and greater reason is to remember always that as God’s people—as Christians—we are redeemed. Paul said, *“You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”* If ancient Israelites were never to forget out God redeemed them out of bondage in Egypt, how much more should we Christians remember that Jesus died for our sins. **Heb 2:9** says, *“we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”* That’s how he redeemed us. That’s how he purchased back from sin, death and the devil. That’s how he assures us a hope and a home. That’s how he became our Bridegroom. **Heb 2:11** says, *“Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.”* Jesus is our Kinsman, our Elder Brother. And he is also our Redeemer.

Conclusion

The young man told Dr. Tournier, *“Basically, I’m always looking for a place—for somewhere to be.”* This chapter began with Naomi saying, *“I must find a home for you where you will be well provided for.”* **God has given us a home for us through Jesus.** Here and now, he *is* our home, and he has promised that he has gone to prepare a place for us and that in the Father’s good time, he will *bring* us home. Are you still without a place to be? You can come home to the Lord right now, right here. When we pray in a moment, ask Jesus to be your home.

Well, I guess it is time to break out the wedding bells for Ruth and Boaz! But wait! **V.12...** *What??* There’s someone else? **Vv.13-18...** To be continued...