**The Gospel According to Ruth 3**

Audacious Faith

*March 24, 2019*

**Introduction: Literary Devices in Ruth**

* **Allusion:** An allusion is a figure of speech whereby the author refers to a subject matter such as a place, event, or literary work by way of a passing reference. It is up to the reader to make a connection to the subject being mentioned.
  + *Field*
    - To put us in mind of the patriarch’s journeys away from and then back to the Land (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who all left and returned enriched)
      * Note: Naomi, despite what she said, did not return “empty.” She returned with a devoted daughter-in-law, a new member of God’s family, and most importantly carrying the seed that would eventually produce Messiah. “Empty”? Not by a long shot!.
    - So that we understand this story as an ***undoing***, or ***reversal*** of the curse incurred by Elimelech.
* **Repetition**
  + *Moab/Moabitess* (3X)
    - The author wants to make sure we understand Ruth’s cursed lineage and what that means for her present status.

(Numbers 25:1–5)*1 While Israel lived in Shittim [She-teem’], the people began to whore with* ***the daughters of Moab****. 2 These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. 3 So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. 4 And the Lord said to Moses, “Take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the Lord, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel.” 5 And Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Each of you kill those of his men who have yoked themselves to Baal of Peor.”*

(Deuteronomy 7:3–4)*3* ***You shall not intermarry*** *with them [Canaanites, generally], giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, 4 for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.*

(Deuteronomy 23:3–6)*3 “No Ammonite or* ***Moabite*** *may enter the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the Lord forever, 4 because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way, when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. 5 But the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam; instead the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loved you. 6* ***You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever****.*

* + I.e. Boaz had perfect permission to shun, avoid, spurn, reject and withhold favor from anyone from the cursed land of Moab.
  + Eagles: “There’s going to be a heartache tonight, a heartache tonight. I know.”
* **Foreshadowing**
  + Boaz is introduced as a “relative of Naomi’s husband” (the Hebrew word just means “distant relative”)
  + So, we don’t know yet if would qualify as a “kinsman redeemer”, we only know that he was in some way related to Elimelech.
  + A little foreshadowing; A very subtle way of letting us know that he *could be* (but according to the Levirate law quite possibly *not able or required* to be) a “kinsman-redeemer.”
  + And as quickly as his name appears, it disappears from the storyline.
    - Don’t you wish sometimes that you could go back and read the stories in the Bible as if it were the first time? *Hey, wait a minute, what happened to Boaz?*
* **Show, Don’t Tell**
  + Notice how the author skillfully reveals the character of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz *primarily* by what they say and do.

(Ruth 2:1–7)*1 Now Naomi had a relative of her husband’s, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. 2 And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I* ***shall*** *find favor.” And she said to her, “Go, my daughter.”*

* Boaz
  + ESV “worthy man”” ???
    - gihb-bore = Strong, mighty, brave
    - It’s the same word used to describe David’s “mighty men”; and men elsewhere who were strong and brave in battle.
  + Boaz means “strength”
    - Recall the twin pillars of the Temple
      * Boaz = By strength, fleetness
      * Jachin = He will establish
      * NT application: Revelation 3:12, Those who overcome by faith become “pillars” in the house of God.
  + We also know who Boaz’ mother was, but ***we will save that juicy*** and important bit for a little later.
* Ruth’s Character
  + Submissive to authority/eager for counsel – evidenced in the way she seeks permission from Naomi (“Let me…” and then waits for the “Go, my daughter”)
  + Industrious – evidenced in the way she takes initiative (“go to the field”)
  + Integrity – evidenced in her ready determination to keep her vow to care for Naomi (“and glean among the ears of grain…”)
    - NOTE: This, even after Naomi’s “I came back empty” when she came back with Ruth, a devoted daughter-in-law.
  + Faith – evidenced in her declaration that she “***shall***” (not might or maybe) find “***favor***” from someone in Bethlehem. Why was this an evidence of faith?
    - Favor = hesed: 248x in OT: *favor, mercy*, KJV: *lovingkindness*
    - Favor (*hesed*) was extremely unlikely because of Ruth’s lowly status:
      * Strike One: Her association with Elimelech, the deserter
      * Strike Two: A childless widow
      * And worst of all, Strike Three: recall: Moabitess (3X in 7 verses)
    - I.e. Ruth is acting as if her newly adopted God is indeed tender in mercy towards the poor and alien is true. This is faith: Our weakness laying itself down on God’s strength.
    - Ruth is expecting the God of Israel to answer Naomi’s prayer in 1:8, and grant her “*hesed*”. Wow!

*3 So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech. 4 And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, “The Lord be with you!” And they answered, “The Lord bless you.” 5 Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?” 6 And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, “She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. 7 She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.’ So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest.”*

* Background: The Gleaning Law
  + **The “What” of the Gleaning Law**

(Leviticus 19:9–10)*9 “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. 10 And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God. (This is repeated in* Leviticus 23:22)

* + **The “Why” of the Gleaning Law**

(Deuteronomy 24:19–22)*19 “When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for* ***the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow****, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 20 When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for* ***the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow****. 21 When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. 22* ***You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this****.*

* Yahweh: I want you to show mercy so that you can remember and celebrate the mercy that I have already shown to you.
  + **NOTE:** There were no civil penalties for not observing the gleaning law, so that those who kept this law of charity could do so ***voluntarily*** (as Christians did in the book of Acts and elsewhere).
  + **So, the Gleaning Law…**
    - Reveals Yahweh for His tender love and provision for the weak and helpless ones in society.
    - Personal
    - Discerning
    - Voluntary (to give Yahweh’s people the blessing of giving. I.e. “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”)

**So, Back to the text (v3)**

* Here, again, we see indications of Ruth’s industriousness (v3)
  + As soon as she received permission from Naomi, she was out the door and on her way.
* Sorry, a little more background: OT layout of cities and fields
  + The town
    - Homes
    - Businesses
    - Synagogue
    - Probably the community well
  + The agricultural fields surrounding the town; one big field with sections delineated by rocks indicating ownership by particular families who lived in the town.
    - Note: Houses/buildings could be sold in perpetuity (forever) but fields would, if sold, would revert to the family in the year of Jubilee.
* Chance and Providence
  + Ruth “happened to come” to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz.
    - Literal Hebrew, “as hap happened…” or “as chance chanced”
  + The author is playing with us here; teasing us
  + Because we really have two lenses through which to view the story as it unfolds.
    - Ruth, Naomi and Boaz: Pure chance (i.e. they were not purposefully arranging the events of their meeting)
    - Yahweh: Working all things together for the good of those who love Him and are the called according to His purpose.
      * The Lord truly is the master author and story teller. Consider:
        + He needs to get Ruth together with Boaz

Ruth: The cursed Gentile woman, as a foreshadowing of the NT salvation of the Gentiles.

Boaz: The rich, mighty warrior who can save, protect and provide for Ruth.

* + - * + So, he makes Rahab (Matt. 1:5), the prostitute of Jericho, the mother of Boaz, thereby inclining Boaz to have mercy on the “cursed Gentile” Ruth.
    - John Flavel: “The providence of God, like the Hebrew language, is better read backwards.”
      * I.e. all these amazing pieces that God is moving around make sense to us in hindsight, but would have been perfectly undiscernible to Naomi, Ruth and Boaz.
      * And even Samuel, as he was writing this lovely account, could not have known how beautifully it would picture Christ’s covenant love and faithfulness to his bride, the church.

(1 Peter 1:10–12)*10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

**Again, back to the text!**

*4 And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, “The Lord be with you!” And they answered, “The Lord bless you.” 5 Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?” 6 And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, “She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. 7 She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.’ So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest.”*

* Boaz, the true king figure
  + Pursues his people (Immanuel, God with us)
  + In order to bless them
    - The Lord be with you!
    - The Lord bless you (i.e. And also with you)
      * Why are we satisfied with our sterile:
        + Hullo
        + How’s it goin’?
        + How ya doin’? (That only invite people to think about themselves?)
      * When we could invoke the covenant name of our God to bless our brothers and sisters in Christ?
    - David in 2 Samuel 6:19

*And [David] dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house.*

* + - And David’s greater son, Jesus
      * Who came not to be served, but to serve…
  + In order to inspect them
    - Recall that Biblical charity is ***personal*** and ***discerning*** charity.
    - And the fact that Ruth has to ask permission to glean reminds us that Boaz’ permission to do so was ***voluntary***.

**Application**

* Chance and providence
  + Ruth (like Joseph in Egypt) had no idea what God was up to.
    - How God was orchestrating events
    - How God would use her lowly status, grief, pain, loss and shame to work great things.
    - How God would use the seemly random events in her life to bring the “bread of heaven” to Bethlehem (the house of bread)
  + Beloved, this is us. And God gives us this story so that we will not lose hope in the midst of seemingly random events. There is no such thing.
    - And like Rahab, your pain, loss, dislocation, alienation, sorrow and grief, might be working some great good for a ***future*** (not even your own) generation.
  + For one of the best literary examples of this, read, “Cry the Beloved Country.”
    - Characters – Tragedy, pain and grief – Healing, comfort and blessing
* God’s mercy to the lowly and despised
  + Ruth is a type of all who find God’s favor/*hesed*.
  + God gives us this beautiful story so that none will lose heart.
  + “Here is a trustworthy saying, and worthy of all acceptance…”
* Learn to read the Bible according to Jesus instructions (reproof, really) in Luke 24. It’s all about Jesus. So, see Boaz as a type of Christ
  + Introduced, fades and then reappears
  + A mighty man
  + A kinsman redeemer who could, but *didn’t have to* take Ruth (this will be very important later on)
  + Elimelech and sons = Adam leading his bride astray
  + Boaz = Jesus rescuing OT (Naomi) + NT (Ruth) bride with his “favor”
* Biblical Charity
  + Personal

(Matthew 25:40)*40 And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’*

* + Discerning

(2 Thessalonians 3:10)*10 For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.*

* + Voluntary

(2 Corinthians 9:6–7)*6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

* + **NOTE:** Unlike the “living wage whether or not you work” legislation being talked about today.
    - Impersonal (administered by government agencies that have little or no face to face contact with the recipients)
    - Undiscerning (doled out regardless of willingness to work)
    - Coerced via taxation

(Proverbs 12:10)*10 Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast,* ***but the mercy of the wicked is cruel****.*

* Seek grace to imitate the sterling character and audacious faith of Ruth
  + Like Jacob wrestling with the angel of Yahweh
  + Like the Syrophoenician woman with the demon possessed daughter in Matt. 15
    - “I have come for the lost sheep of Israel”
    - “Lord, but don’t the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table?”
  + Who believed with the kind of faith described in Hebrews 11

(Hebrews 11:6)*6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists* ***and that he rewards those who seek him***.