

**Taking Refuge**  
*Ruth, Pt. 3*  
*Ruth 3*

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## I. PRAYER

- i. I pray that if there is anyway here today who has not taken refuge in Jesus Christ, that your Spirit would convict them of their need for the Gospel of Jesus Christ and lead them to take refuge in Jesus Christ.

## II. INTRODUCTION

### a. **Because my entire immediate family are members of this church, many of you know the kind of family I was blessed to grow up in.**

- i. I didn't just grow up in a Christian home, I grew up in a home that loved and cherished Jesus.
  - It wasn't one of these cultural Christian homes where we would just attend church every once in a while, but our faith never informed our lifestyle.
    1. I was disciplined to follow Jesus since before I can remember.
  - I never had one of those crazy conversion experiences where there was this time in my life where I was actively rejecting God and living this wild lifestyle...then suddenly came to believe in Jesus...and everything changed.
    1. I don't have that story.
    2. I know people who have that story.
    3. But I don't remember a time where I did not believe in Jesus.



- ii. My faith was important to me in High School and College...I even majored in Biblical Studies in college and immediately got a job doing ministry right out of college.
- You could say I immediately became a professional Christian.
    1. I had strong knowledge of the Bible, I could act mature in my faith, I didn't do anything that would cause people to question my integrity.
  - See, I had built my identity as one who was a strong, mature Christian.
    1. You could say I even was building my career on this.
    2. And there is a big difference between finding your identity as a "model Christian" and actually believing that I was a sinner in need of the grace of God.
    3. Those are two completely different things.
    4. Christianity as a social construct and actual rescue from death and despair that is only found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- iii. See, as someone who was in vocational ministry, as someone who grew up in a strong Christian home, and as someone who valued being seen as a strong Christian...if you asked me why I needed the Gospel...if you asked me why I needed to be "saved"...I could give you the right answer...
- And that answer would sound sincere and heartfelt.



- But during that time in my life...did I really believe that I needed to be saved?
  1. Did I really believe that I was someone who needed the blood of Jesus to be shed on my behalf to pay for the egregiousness of my own sin and my own rebellion against God?!?
  2. No. I didn't really believe that. I really didn't believe that I had sinned in that sort of way.
- I would say that I needed the gospel because that was the right Christian thing to say, but I didn't really think that.
  1. There was no conviction or sorrow over my sin.

**b. That was until 2010. I had been in ministry for a couple of years at that point and had a really hard first year of marriage.**

- i. Kim and I had moved from Virginia to Dallas so I could attend Seminary and God started to do something in my heart that at first wasn't all that great.
  - God started to show me that everything I was building my life on...although it had a Christian veneer to it...wasn't actually a love for Jesus but rather a love for myself.
    1. That I was prideful and saw myself as better than others.
    2. That I was selfish and never would inconvenience myself for others.
    3. I could articulate the theological intricacies of the gospel, but really could care less for the lost.



4. God showed me that I loved being in the ministry more than my own wife and was a lousy, absent husband who did a great job at making everything I did sound spiritual so you couldn't argue with me.
- See, I was a good Christian.
  1. And because that was my identity, I didn't have all of this overt, external sin in my life.
  2. But my heart was sick and I used God and His Word to steal glory from Him and give it to myself.
- ii. **And in God's grace, in 2010, He showed me the sin of my heart...how I was a fake...**
  - All this Bible knowledge. All of this history being the "model Christian."
    1. And it was all about me.
  - And God revealed to me, that I needed to be saved.
    1. That I had a sick, rebellious heart that loved myself more than God...and I deserved judgement.
    2. And my only hope was rescue because I could not change my my heart.
    3. I needed to put my faith in Jesus and not myself.

### **c. And this is what I want to talk about this morning.**

- i. What do we mean when we say that we need to be saved?
  - ...Place our faith in Jesus?
  - ...Come to Jesus. Conversion.
  - What does that mean? How do we do that?



- ii. Because maybe there are people here who are like I was.
  - Your life has a Christian veneer to it but if we're really honest, you don't think you need to be saved from anything.
  - Or maybe you're not sure what you believe about Jesus yet and this whole idea of salvation is confusing to you.
- iii. Either way, as we continue in our study of the book of Ruth and study ch.3 together, this is what we are going to learn about.

### **III. RUTH 3**

#### **a. Before we get into ch.3, let me make sure we're all up to speed on the story of Ruth.**

- i. There is a woman living in Bethlehem named Naomi with her husband, Elimelech, and her two sons.
  - This family decides to move to Moab to escape a famine and while in Moab, Elimelech dies.
    1. Naomi's two sons marry Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah.
    2. But 10 years later and no children later, both Naomi's sons die.
    3. So, Naomi is now living as a widow in Moab with two daughters-in-law who are also widows and childless.
- ii. So, Naomi decides to move back to Bethlehem, Orpah stays behind in Moab, but Ruth remains faithful to Naomi and comes back with her to Bethlehem.



- So, for Ruth, going to Bethlehem with Naomi is no easy experience.
    1. She is a foreign, childless widow living with another childless widow.
    2. They are very poor and very vulnerable as women in a patriarchal society with no good men to protect them.
    3. They will struggle to eat and they will struggle to not be taken advantage of.
  - This is a point in the story we can't take lightly and we need to try and feel what Ruth was feeling.
    1. Imagine being plucked out of your country and cultural context dropped into a country where you had no money, no relationships with anyone, you didn't speak the language, you didn't know the culture, and you had to be on guard from predatory men.
    2. It's lonely and its dangerous.
- iii. **Now, as we talked about last week, God had put into the Law a provision for how the poor in Israel could be fed through gleaning crops.**
- God required landowners to leave some crop behind when harvesting their fields so the poor could come and gather what was left behind and have some food.
  - So, Ruth, goes to glean in the fields to get food for her and Naomi and we saw last week that Ruth so happened to glean in a field owned by a godly man named Boaz.
    1. And Boaz so happened to be a relative of Elimelech, Naomi's late husband.
  - And Boaz treats Ruth with dignity and respect and sends her home with a 5-6 week supply of food for her and Naomi.



## b. Read Ruth 3:1-9

- i. Now, this sounds like an odd request from Ruth to Boaz...let me see if I can clear this up for us.
  - First of all, what does it mean that Boaz is a redeemer?
    1. If you remember back in Ruth 2:20, Naomi told Ruth that Boaz was one of their kinsman redeemers.
  - And the Naomi is referring, here, to the practice of Levirate Marriage.
    1. You can read about this in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 but here is how it goes...
    2. If you are married and your husband dies and you do not have a son to carry on the name of your husband.
    3. Then the brother of your husband who has died (your brother-in-law) is obligated to marry you and if you have children with your new husband, your first son will continue on the name of your first husband.
    4. You tracking?
    5. This was so that the name of your first husband would not be forgotten.
  - Now, we don't know if Boaz's exact relation to Ruth's late husband.
    1. As we'll read in v.12, Boaz was not first in line to redeem Ruth, but there was someone else and the text does not specify for us the exact family relationship.
    2. However, we do know that Boaz is one who could redeem Ruth if no one else in the extended family would.



ii. **So, knowing this, Naomi instructs Ruth to do something unexpected...to take a rather bold risk.**

- Naomi tells Ruth to get dressed up, head down to Boaz's field, wait till he goes to sleep, then uncover his feet and lie down.
  1. Now, to be honest, scholars are perplexed at what Ruth is doing here.
  2. Some want to read into this a sexual act, but there is nothing in this story to suggest that...so most reject that interpretation.
  3. But we know that in this gesture by Ruth, she is basically asking Boaz to marry her.
  4. She pleads with Him to redeem her...to marry her...to spread his wings (his garments) over her and take her into his family.
  5. We do have other biblical support for the act of spreading your garments over a widow as a gesture of taking her in marriage.

iii. **But the book of Ruth is clearly trying to illustrate something for us.**

- Here in ch. 3, we see Ruth taking this risk and hoping she can take refuge under the wings of Boaz as her redeemer.
  1. Back in Ruth 2, Boaz praises Ruth for her faith in God and this is what he says in **Ruth 2:12**.
  2. And there are tons of other places in Scripture where God describes salvation like hiding under the shadow of his wings.



- So, the book of Ruth is taking this encounter between Ruth and Boaz, her redeemer, and providing for us an illustration of what it means for us to encounter our redeemer, Jesus Christ.
  1. And here is what it wants us to see...
  2. ...that what it means to place our faith in Jesus, to be saved, to be converted, to ask Jesus in our heart, to start a personal relationship with Jesus (whatever you want to call it)...but this book wants us to understand that to place our faith in Jesus means to TAKE REFUGE.

**iv. It's not an intellectual ascent to the things of God.**

- It's not a prayer that you pray and if you do it right, it unlocks the favor of God.
- It's not a moral standard you achieve.
- It's literally taking refuge in our redeemer, Jesus.
  1. You realize you are in danger, you have no way of getting yourself out of that danger, and so you take refuge under the only thing that can save you.
  2. What does it mean to be a refugee?
  3. I am in danger where I am, I need to escape, so I go to a new country and I have absolutely nothing to offer them, and my only hope is that they would be merciful and take me in.
  4. Taking refuge.
  5. Putting faith in Jesus means taking refuge.



- v. And we need to understand what this means. So, as we continue to study Ruth 3 together, we are going to learn two things about how we take refuge in our redeemer.

**c. And the first thing we need to know about it is that it is an ACT OF FAITH.**

- i. For Ruth, it was an act of faith for her to go to Boaz that night, uncover his feet, and ask him to be her redeemer.
  - When you put your faith in someone, you are trusting them to do something for you that you cannot do for yourself.
    1. And so the very act of faith has to have two components to it...humility and risk.
    2. Humility - because you have to be able to admit that there is something that you need but you are unable to provide it for yourself.
    3. Risk - because you cannot control if the one you're putting your faith in will come through for you.
  - Now, Ruth was in great need. She was a childless, widow in a patriarchal society. There was no chance that she was going to find another husband unless she was redeemed through the custom of Levirate Marriage.
    1. Ruth had a need and she knew she could not provide that need for herself.
    2. Humility here was not an issue.
  - But what is remarkable about Ruth is the risk she took.
    1. Let's just think about this for a second about what she did.



2. First of all, Ruth is a woman who is going to a man and asking him to marry her. That was not customary.
  3. Secondly, Ruth was young asking a much older man to marry her. Again, not customary.
  4. Third, Ruth was poor asking a rich man to marry her!
  5. And on top of all of that, Ruth was a Moabite! She was an immigrant. She was not part of the covenant community of Israel.
  6. Boaz was a wealthy, Israelite, man and Ruth was a poor, immigrant, woman.
- So, what Ruth did that night when she went to Boaz was she broke through gender, age, economic, and racial barriers!
    1. Huge risk.
    2. No guarantee Boaz would say yes.
    3. But she took that risk because she had faith that Boaz was a man of God who would redeem her.

ii. **And when we encounter our redeemer, Jesus, it takes an act of faith.**

- We need something that we absolutely cannot provide on our own.
  1. And unlike Ruth, our problem is not our place in society, or our gender, our race, our economic class, or anything like that.
- Our problem is that we have sinned against a Holy God.
  1. God created us to love Him and to love one another.
  2. But we have darkened our hearts and we love ourselves more than we love God and one another.



3. Like I shared in my story, I was a good Christian. You couldn't point to much external sin in my life.
  4. Oh, but I loved myself more than God and more than others.
  5. There was envy in my heart, pride, malice towards others.
  6. A desire to use the things of God so people would look at me and applaud for me instead of Him.
- We have all sinned against God, internally and externally, and we deserve his judgement.
    1. And there is nothing we can do to make it right.
    2. God says that all of our righteous works are but filthy rags stained with our selfish motivations.
    3. You can be like me and try and live the most religious, squeaky clean life...and it will not change your heart.
    4. What we need is forgiveness and a new heart and that is not something we can provide ourselves.
  - And so, in the same way that Ruth acted in faith by laying down at the feet of Boaz it takes an act of faith for us to come to Jesus and say I have nothing to bring or to offer.
    1. I have no reason why you should redeem me. I am a sinner and you are holy.
    2. I need to be saved. My sin has put me in a dangerous place and I've got nothing to offer.
    3. But I'm here because I recognize that the only chance I have is your mercy.
- iii. **Taking refuge is a humble and risky act of faith.**



**d. But the second thing we need to know about taking refuge in our redeemer is that it is also an ACT OF GOD.**

i. **Read Ruth 3:10-18.**

ii. After Ruth steps out in faith and asks Boaz to marry her, we see that Boaz had to respond.

- And as we already noted, Boaz had many reasons to disregard Ruth.
  1. From society's perspective, Boaz would have to lower himself to redeem Ruth.
- But what does Boaz do? Boaz is moved by Ruth's humility and says that he is willing to do what needs to be done for him to redeem Ruth.
  1. In Ruth 4, which we will study later, we see Boaz confront the person who would be first in line to redeem Ruth but that person is unwilling to do it.
  2. But Boaz is willing to do it.
- See, Ruth's act of faith is only as useful as Boaz's favorable response.
  1. There would be no redemption without the mercy of Boaz.

iii. **And our only hope for redemption, for being cleansed of our sins, is for God to act.**

- God needs to do what I cannot do for myself.
  1. The story of the Bible is God creating us.
  2. We sin against Him.
  3. God gives us the law to show us we cannot live up to God's standard and we need Him to do it.
  4. So, God sends our redeemer, Jesus!



5. Jesus lives the righteous life that we could not live!
  6. He lives righteously in our place.
  7. And then Jesus goes to the cross and takes on God's anger and judgment towards our sin.
  8. If we were to take on that judgement, it would put us in hell for eternity.
  9. But since Jesus took it in our place, he goes to the grave for three days and because he satisfies the wrath of God towards our sins, he conquers death and walks out of the grave.
  10. And now lives as our redeemer willing to apply his righteous life and victory over death to all who humbly come in faith to Him.
- iv. **Yes, to take refuge, we must act in faith, but God must act in mercy and do something to save us and he has done that in Jesus Christ.**
- To put your faith in Jesus, to be saved, means to trust that Jesus has done for you what you could not do for yourself.
    1. It has nothing to do with your intellectual knowledge.
    2. Your religious rituals.
    3. Or how squeaky clean your life is.
- v. **It has everything to do with taking refuge at the foot of the cross.**

## **IV. RESPONSE & COMMUNION**

**a. And if you consider yourself a Christian, my question for you is this:**

- i. Does refuge describe your faith in Jesus?



- Have you had that moment where you got on your knees at the foot of the cross and you said:
  1. God, I am a sinner.
  2. I have nothing to offer you.
  3. I have nothing to bring that will even come close to righteousness.
  4. My only hope is that the life of Jesus would be given to me.
  5. That Jesus' victory over death would be given to me!
- ii. **Do you actually believe that you need to be saved from your sin?**
  - Or are you like I was.
    1. You've always been a Christian.
    2. You live a Christian life.
    3. You say Christian things, act like a Christian, vote like a Christian, decorate your house like a Christian...
    4. And although you can talk about the cross of Jesus Christ and you know your Bible well, you really have no clue what you need to be saved from.
    5. There is no true conviction and sorrow over your sin.
- iii. **In Matthew 7, Jesus tells us what it will be like when people like who I used to be, and maybe some in here, come before the judgment of God.**
  - He says in v.22-23 – *“On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’<sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”*



1. This is what happens if we do not humbly take refuge at the foot of the cross.
2. We can have crosses around our neck, Bibles on our shelf, fishes on the back of our car...but if we have not recognized our need to be rescued from the wickedness of our own sin and taken refuge at the cross, Jesus will say depart from me.

## **b. How do you need to respond to this, this morning?**

- i. Because every one of us needs to respond somehow...let me help you.
- ii. If you're here and you have taken refuge at the foot of the cross and as you hear this message of how God has redeemed us in Jesus Christ all you can say is amen...
  - I want you to respond this morning by coming to the communion table and celebrating what Christ has done for you.
    1. Where we break bread and remember the broken body of Christ who endured the wrath of God in our place.
    2. And we have juice, where we remember the shed blood of Jesus that has cleansed us from our sins.
    3. So, if you've taken refuge at the cross, come to the table and remember what Christ has done for you.
    4. Be encouraged that you have been redeemed.



iii. **But if you're here, and you call yourself a Christian, but you're like I was...**

- Your life has a Christian veneer to it but you've never actually understood why you need to be saved...
  1. That you're in danger of Jesus saying to you that he never knew you because you never came to the foot of the cross for refuge...
- It's possible you've always seen yourself as a Christian but you're really not.
  1. And this morning I want to encourage you to take refuge at the cross maybe for the first time.
  2. Don't disregard the conviction of your heart right now. Grace is available if you'll humble yourself at the cross.
  3. And if you're feeling that conviction, I want to encourage you to come pray with one of our prayer ministers here to the sides instead of coming to the table.
  4. We can help you talk through what you're feeling and we will pray with you and we will gladly go with you to the foot of the cross if you need.

iv. **And lastly, if you're here and you've never considered yourself a Christian or believed in Jesus...here's what you need to know.**

- Earlier, I mentioned that stepping out in faith is an act of humility and it's a risk.
  1. It was a risk for Ruth but it is not a risk for you.
  2. Because God has already acted.



3. Jesus has lived, gone to the cross, and been resurrected and he is offering redemption to you as a free gift if you will take refuge in Him.
4. If you know that you are a sinner and that you need redemption, I plead with you this morning to come to one of our prayer ministers and pray with them and ask God to save you and experience redemption for the first time.
5. You don't need to know everything or have your life together.
6. All you need, is need.
7. Don't disregard the redemption of your heart this morning.
8. Come take refuge.

**c. We have our communion table and our prayer ministers. How do you need to respond this morning?**

- i. Don't let the fear of others seeing you stop you.
  - Following Jesus is about humility.
  - Not impressing others.
  - Don't let that stop you.
- ii. The band is going to come up and play a song over all of us.
  - I encourage you to take these moments to pray and ask God how you need to respond this morning.
  - And then come forward as you feel led.

**V. PRAY**

