

Title: **When Righteousness is Risky Business (Part 1)**

Passage: **Ruth 3:6-9**

Theme: **Practicing righteousness while navigating the uncertainties of life**

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### **{Read Passage}**

We are in chapter 3 which is also the 3rd Act of the unfolding drama which is t/true story of Ruth.

### **III. Act Three: The Royal Line with Hope at Risk (3:1-18)**

The Royal Line = Family Ancestry of King David (foreground)

Background = King David's Descendant, JC.

What if your father had never been born? What if your mother . . . ?  
Her father? Her great, great, great Grandfather?

Mind-blowing to think about all t/unique circumstances that had to be in place in order that you be here today.

Yet God providentially orchestrates these circumstances -- all of t/lives that are destined to meet in time; all of t/children born who live here and then there and meet in all sorts of circumstances (some strange).

My parents met through a blind date over 55 years ago.

How did your parents meet? What circumstances brought them together. Where did they live when they were growing up? Maybe your dad was from Baltimore and your mom from Chicago. But they met in Cleveland. How did that all come about?

If it hadn't come about as it did you wouldn't be here!

We're talking about King David of Israel. A great King and human author of large portions of God's Word who had yet to be born and who would never have been born if not for t/preservation of Elimelech's family line through Ruth and Boaz.

We're talking about Jesus Christ the King of Kings. God incarnate who was and is t/Living Word. Who was destined to be born as a descendent of King David.

When we say "risk" we don't mean that it's up to chance. I'd be t/last person to say that anything related to God's eternal plan was at risk from His perspective -- He had it all planned out from eternity.

The "risk" is a purely human perspective.

When you read through Ruth you're faced with all sorts of circumstances that pose all sorts of problems (from a human perspective). You're faced w/human decisions upon which hang eternal ramifications.

Yet God's providential hand is behind it all. Seems like risky business to us - not to God. God never risks anything.

Brings us back to our text and a section in this book that I've titled: "When Righteousness is Risky Business"

Verses 6-15 comprise t/2d and central scene in this t/third Act.

## B. Scene Two: Reception or Rejection (vv. 6-15) or *Righteousness on a Threshing Floor*

Reception or rejection relates to whether Ruth would be received by Boaz or rejected.

Remember where we left off last time: Verses 1-5 Naomi proposes a plan to get Boaz to propose marriage (as we will see it's actually Ruth who does the proposing).

In keeping with Naomi's match-making plan, Ruth was to present herself before Boaz as a wife. Would he receive or reject her?

Secondary theme (alternate outline point) is "Righteousness on a Threshing Floor"

1984 saw the release of the movie "Footloose" starring Kevin Bacon as a rebellious teenager and John Lithgow as a wild-eyed Fundamentalist preacher.

It's a story about a small Midwestern town where rock music & dancing are illegal. With t/senior prom around t/corner, a battle ensues against a stodgy Bible-thumping preacher & his outmoded ways. Music & dancing are restored, everyone has fun & Xns are portrayed as dumb out-of-touch-w-reality killjoys! (typical HW fare)

Accordingly - there could be no righteousness on a dance floor.

Back in t/days of Ruth and Boaz it may have been said that there could be no righteousness on a threshing floor -- after all threshing floors were in some places rife w/prostitutes. Threshing floors were like truckstops -- lots of lonely men gathered in one place.

"Righteousness on a threshing floor?" Yes, it could and did happen!

And I suppose that like righteousness at a truck stop it could be risky business . . .

That brings me to t/main point of application for us ==>

### 1. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .

What do I mean by that? How can righteousness (doing good according to God's standard to His glory) ever be risky?

Again, I don't mean risky from God's point of view, but ours.

There are times when we are uncertain about what is t/right thing to do in a given circumstance.

There are times when we find ourselves in a difficult situation where we could easily fall prey to temptation and sin.

There are times when living righteously isn't easy as we navigate ourselves through t/mine fields of life.

For us, there are times when doing t/right thing may mean facing the risk of rejection // we face suffering // someone else faces suffering.

There are times when we're not exactly sure what doing t/right thing even looks like at it relates to a specific situation.

Do we act? Do we wait? Do we talk? Do we remain silent? What do we do? How much do we do? When do we do?

Might wonder afterward "did I say too much? did I not say enough? did I do too much? did I not do enough? did I do the right thing? how will all this turn out?"

### *1. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .*

Through this passage we find some guidelines that will help us navigate our lives with confidence that ultimately nothing is at risk because God is in control. For us, risk becomes trust.

#### *a. Prayerfully Listen to Godly Counsel (v. 6-7a)*

*Evident in Ruth's Heeding Naomi's Advice*

#### *(1) Verse 6 transitions us from scene one two scene two*

This is when t/curtain goes down & t/stage hands move t/furniture  
B4 t/curtain goes up again.

**So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her.**

This v. is a hinge that connects vv. 6-15 to vv. 1-5 (or scene 1 to 2).

### *A. Scene One: Remedy Proposed (vv. 1-5) or Naomi Proposes: A Husband for Ruth*

*Through t/Pain, in our Plans, stands God's Purpose.*

Isaiah 46:10 **Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';**

#### *1. The Beauty of God's Invisible Hand (1-5)*

**Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?"**

a. Beauty in the selfless actions of others (1)

Simply put - she wants Ruth to have security - N. considered Ruth's welfare above her own. Beauty of God's providence was at work.

b. Beauty in Orchestrated circumstances (2)

(1) Orch. = cap. "O"

God is t/leader orchestrating all things acc. to His good pleasure.

**“Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were?  
Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight.**

*Ruth, you made a decision to go into the fields to find us food. You just happened to land in t/plot of land owned by B. B. just happens to be our relative.*

Not a coincidence but providence. More ==>

**. . . Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight.**

b. Beauty in Orchestrated circumstances (2)

*Do I see them as coincidence or do I worship God in what is His doing?*

1. The Beauty of God's Invisible Hand (1-5)

c. Beauty in Providence greater than our plans (3-4)

*Do I trust God to work?*

Is my God so big that His program for my life and His KD extends beyond my plans?

Noami def. has a plan. Might even call it a scheme.

She's playing "Matchmaker" ==>

**“Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes . . .**

**(1) Ruth's Preparation (3)**

Washing up; Smelling good; Looking good. Personal hygiene.

**(c) Looking good (3c)**

**. . . put on your best clothes . . .**

Ruth washing up; applying perfumed oil; and donning a nice clean cloak that would cover her entire body.

**i. We looked at the parallel to 2 Samuel 12**

How David marked t/end to his period of grief for his sick child by washing; anointing himself; and changing his clothes.

What we have here . . .

**“Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes . . .**

Noami is emphasizing to Ruth that her time for mourning the loss of her husband is over. She's to put all pain of the past behind her.

Ruth wasn't only to look & smell good for Boaz; her change would also indicate to him that she was ready to marry again.

**(1) Ruth's Preparation (3)**

**(2) Naomi's Plan (3-4) Go; Wait; Act; Listen.**

**(a) Go (3d)**

**... and go down to the threshing floor;**

**(b) Wait (3f)**

**... but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.**

**(c) Act (4a)**

**"It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies ...**

**... and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down ...**

While t/Heb. word for foot can serve as a euphemism for t/sexual organs, we noted that this isn't t/normal word for that.

This Heb. word seems to be deliberately used to steer t/reader away from any immoral thoughts.

But it does so subtly

There are hints of sexual overtones. That can't be denied.

For t/reader hearing this story for t/first time there's a crisis looming, a potential disaster.

Risky righteousness.

Is this wise advice from N.? Will Boaz misinterpreted it?  
Will sexual sin follow?

All we've learned about Boaz and Ruth will be put to t/test. Are they followers of YHWH who walk in t/integrity of His law?

Edward Campbell in his classic commentary on Ruth pub. in 1975: Does this roster of double entendres mean that the story-teller is simply seeking to titillate his audience? Emphatically not. His intent is much more serious than that. Having led his audience to participate in the mystery and ambiguity of the scene, he obviously means to say that it is of extreme importance whether or not here at the threshing floor things will go forward according to what Israelite custom and Israelite *hesed*-living calls for. Here is where the modern western audience must beware; Ruth is not to be read as though the sexually provocative scenes are "throw-ins" without any importance to the story's direction. What now happens at the threshing floor is as essential to the story-teller's purpose as what happened on the Moabite highway between Ruth and Naomi, or what happened in the harvest scene when Boaz praised an impoverished widow who was gleaning, or what will happen in the solemn civil hearing at the city gate. At each of these points in the story, a moment of choice is presented to both actors an audience, and at each of these points the choice is made in favor of what righteous living calls for. To comprehend the outcome of the threshing floor scene, we must be as clear as we can on what Israelite custom and law would call for, and we must observe the developing portrayal of these three remarkable people who are living in it. [Campbell, 132]

Here's t/plan, Ruth. Get prepared (wash; anoint; dress).  
Then ==> Go; Wait; Act;

**(d) Listen (4b)**

**... then he will tell you what you shall do."**

## ***I. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .***

One of the things we can do is to

### **a. Prayerfully Listen to Godly Counsel (v. 6-7a)**

*Evident in Ruth's Heeding Naomi's Advice*

**She said to her, "All that you say I will do."**

**So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded (instructed) her.**

### **(1) Grammar gives us t/nuance "exactly as, entirely as"**

She didn't let N. advice go in one ear & out t/other. She didn't placate her by listening w/her ears while rejecting what she said in her heart. She thoughtfully, no doubt prayerfully, considered what N. had to say

There are times we find ourselves in difficult circumstance & we don't know what we ought to do. It's during those times that God uses t/wise, godly advice of others to steer us through those blinds spots.

Proverbs 1:5 **A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,**

Proverbs 12:15 **The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.**

A blind spot in your mirror can cause you to have an accident.

A blind spot in your life can cause you to steer off course spiritually.

When we're driving we sometimes ask someone else in t/car to help us out ("do you see anything behind me?"). // "Do you see anything hindering me?"

When righteous living seems risky, seek out those you trust, those who know God's Word, & prayerfully consider what they have to say.

## (2) Ruth follows Naomi's advice

**When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry . . .**

Lit. "And Boaz ate and drank and his heart was good."

Hebrew idiom expresses euphoria, well-being. Merry is a good translation.

Others have suggested "he had a sense of well being"; "he felt at peace with the world"; "his heart was sweet,"

Some cultures it could be rendered: "his liver was happy,"  
Nothing like a happy liver to make you feel good.

Why was his liver happy? Usually your liver isn't happy if you drink too much wine (or any other alcoholic beverage).

The t/Hebrew is ambiguous as to whether Boaz's happiness was related to drinking wine.

Psalm 104:15 **And wine which makes man's heart glad . . .**

Ecclesiastes 10:19 . . . **wine makes life merry . . .**

Proverbs 20:1 **WINE is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.**

"happiness of heart" is connected with the end of harvest in Isa. 9:2.

I think that Boaz had a nice meal after a hard day's work & prob. had a cup or 2 of wine. I picture him relaxing with some of his friends, talking around a fire.

After an interval of time ==>

**... he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain ...**

The heap of grain on the threshing floor (which was a large area).

He lie down at the pile of grain to sleep for the night. He slept right at the grain in order to protect it. If some wild animal came in the night he might hear it; if a thief came by he might be aware of it.

**... and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down.**

I'm sure that some time passed. Ruth waited until he was asleep and the fire grew cold turning into dim embers.

She sneaks up to him, uncovers his lower legs, and she lies down.

and waits . . . . Waiting isn't easy. Maybe she was tempted to clear her throat / make a noise.

### ***1. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .***

Something else we can do is to

#### ***b. Patiently Trust God and His Timing (7b-9)***

*Evident in Ruth's Patience in Waiting for Boaz to Act*

*Timing is everything and*

*God's timing may not be our timing. <==From Gal 4 on Dec. 23*

*Timing is everything and*

*God's timing is always perfect.*

Ruth waits (probably praying // thinking // wondering).

**And it happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward . . .**

**(1) Boaz is fast asleep and suddenly he awakes with a start**

Some believe that Boaz trembled/awoke because his feet were uncovered and he felt the chill. No indication of that.

He simply "awoke with a start" (this often happens when the subconscious senses that something is wrong or someone is in the room - *examples*).

**. . . and behold, a woman was lying at his feet.**

וַיִּרְאֵהָ = introduces 'a surprise clause.' From shock to surprise. From fear to astonishment.

Given the spiritual climate in the period of the judges, an average Israelite might have welcomed a middle of the night visit from a young woman. Likely be interpreted an offer of sexual favors

But not so with Ruth and Boaz.

**And he said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth your maid.**

no door to hang t/do not disturb sign on.

2:13 "maidservant"

Word "maid" here is different. 2:13 refers to a female of a very low social order. This word may be used of a socially higher class of women who are avail. for marriage. If there's any doubt ==>

**So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative.”**

Some translations have "covering" others have "wing". Difference is in t/Hebrew vowel pointing.

The ancient Hebrew language was originally written with only consonants, no vowels. You couldn't even buy a vowel . . . .

You intuitively learned what words meant by context and perhaps inflection.

CVT

Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes developed an elaborate system of vowels that were later added (roughly 8th to 10 c. AD).

Some words might have the same consonants but different pronunciation & t/pronunciation guided by vowels can be t/difference between 2 words that mean something entirely different.

A new monk arrives at the monastery. He is assigned to help the other monks in copying the old texts by hand. He notices, however, that they are copying copies and not the original books. So, the new monk goes to the head monk to ask him about this. He points out that if there was an error in the first copy, that error would be continued in all the other copies. The head monk says, "We have been copying from the copies for centuries, but you make a good point, my son." So, he goes down into the cellar with one of the copies to check it against the original. Hours later, nobody has seen him. So, one of the monks goes downstairs to look for him. He hears sobbing coming

from the back of the cellar and finds the old monk leaning over one of the original books, crying. He asks what's wrong. The old monk looks up and sobs, "The word is 'celebrate.'"

The word here in v. 9 can form t/word "wing" or the word "garment".

Either way the meaning isn't really altered.

This is clearly a request that Boaz take Ruth as his wife.

Ruth proposes marriage.

What will happen? We will find out next time.

### ***1. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .***

#### **a. Prayerfully Listen to Godly Counsel (v. 6-7a)**

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### ***1. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .***

#### **b. Patiently Trust God and His Timing (7b-9)**

*Evident in Ruth's Patience in Waiting for Boaz to Act*

5 more points through v. 15 (next time).

*There was a very cautious man Who never laughed or played. He never risked, he never tried, He never sang or prayed. And when he one day passed away, His insurance was denied. For since he never really lived, They claimed he never died.*