

Dear Friends,

RUTH 3:1-5

Things have been going well for Ruth and Naomi. Ruth has been gleaning on Boaz's land. He has shown her favour. Now however, the harvest has come to an end. Ruth has never had any illusions. When she committed herself to Naomi she said, "Where you lodge, I will lodge." We noticed at the time that the word "Lodge" is the word for an overnight shelter used by wanderers and travellers. Ruth was prepared for the kind of poverty that would mean living a hand to mouth existence of permanent insecurity. She had no expectations of a settled life.

Naomi however, is still seeking this security. To Ruth she says, "My daughter, shall I not seek for you a settled place, that it be well for you." The Hebrew word "Settled place" means a home, a place of rest, quiet and tranquillity. Not a new place to lodge each night, but somewhere permanent. Naomi's view is that the way to this is through marriage. Today women and men have more choices. We find our settled places in a number of different ways, not only through our relationships. Ruth and Naomi were just accepting the realities of their day and being practical. A suitable match for Ruth would give them a much better chance of survival and security.

Naomi has set her sights on Boaz as a suitable partner for Ruth. She comes up with a daring and dangerous plan. It could go terribly wrong. While it's Naomi's plan, Ruth will have to carry it out at enormous risk to herself. If it doesn't work Ruth could be ruined. Desperate times call for desperate measures.

Naomi knows that on this night Boaz will be sleeping on the threshing floor where the men have been beating out the harvest. She tells Ruth to wash; anoint herself, that is put on some perfume; and dress in her finest clothes. Then she is to go to the threshing floor where she'll find Boaz.

The story teller teases us. What happened between Ruth and Boaz is actually none of our business. That's between them. But the narrator makes suggestions in a roundabout way and leaves us guessing. Naomi says to Ruth, "Do not let yourself be **known** to the man until he has finished eating and drinking." Naomi's hope is that after his meal and a few drinks Boaz will be in a good, contented mood. This will be an ideal time for Ruth to make herself **known** to him. The word "Known" is used in the Bible in lots of different ways, one of which is for sex. Is that what Naomi has in mind?

Her instructions continue. After his meal, Boaz will lie down. Ruth is to take note of where he lies, then go, uncover his feet and also lie down. By uncovering his feet, she will uncover the lower part of his body. How much of that lower part is she to uncover? To uncover someone's nakedness is in the Bible sometimes a roundabout way of talking about sex. What might Naomi be suggesting? Naomi tells Ruth that from there Boaz will tell her what to do. What might he tell her to do?

Ruth says, "Whatever you say to me I will do." Ruth has not so far shown herself to be all that good at doing what she's told. Naomi told her to go back to Moab. She didn't. Will she do what Naomi has told her to do this time? And then will she do what Boaz tells her to do? Or will she improvise and take control herself?

God bless you,

Tony