

Title: **When Righteousness is Risky Business (Part 3)**

Passage: **Ruth 3:11-15**

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

Number: **0213Ru3.11-15(12)**

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{Read Passage}

We come back to t/book of Ruth & I hope to finish this section this AM ==> runs from v. 6-15.

I try to picture what's happening in t/story of Ruth w/my mind's eye. It's historical narrative. Genre. Means it's a story. A true, historic, story.

I hope as I preach and teach through it I can help you visualize if you will what's happening as if you are actually there.

Rem. Ruth is a book that's organized into 4 chapt., ea. chapt. functions as a different Act in t/story. Picture an "Act" as different chapters in a play. (Ch. 1 = Act 1). We're in t/third Act, hence t/third chapt.

Ea Act has more than 1 scene (1 = 3; 2 = 4; 4 = 2). Chapt. 3 (3rd Act) can be broken down into 3 different scenes.

2d scene which central to t/entire book ==> vv. 6-15 & that's t/section I hope to finish this AM.

We've entitled this particular section:

When Righteousness is Risky Business

IOW - there are times when we are faced w/decisions in life that may have some very ser. ramifications. There may be, from our limited human perspective an element of risk.

May be risk of: a relationship // personal comfort // material loss -- even your reputation w/others (not w/God because you are going to do right in honoring Him) -- but others may not see it that way (truism if they're unbelievers).

See all of these "risky" elements in this scene.

We have Ruth going on a solitary journey as she listens to t/proposal Naomi's gave her in vv. 1-4.

Unannounced she's to go down to where t/men were working.

Unannounced she's to hide in the shadows

Unannounced she's to single out one man: Boaz

Unannounced she's to wait until he lies down for the night

Unannounced she's to sneak up on him while he sleeps & do something to him that will indicate that she is offering herself to him as a wife.

Risk for Ruth? ==>

Rejection: She could be rejected by Boaz

Reputation: Her actions could be interp. as those of a prostitute

Relationships: Her future relationship w/Naomi was uncertain

Riches (Rations): Boaz had become a source of food for R. & N . . .

It all seems so risky. Of course, it's not . . . really.

Because behind it all is t/smile of God's providence.

I don't know about you, but I've found this partic. concept of "RR" to be very applic. in my own life. Time & time again I've faced circum. & decisions that have had a degree of uncert. attached to them.

In fact, I practiced some risky righteousness last Sunday from this very spot -- if you weren't here I'd encourage you to get a copy.

These principles from this part. portion of God's Word are so needful.

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.

1. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .

7 principles . . . We have 4 left over from t/last 2 weeks.

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. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .

Second ==>

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

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

When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down.

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

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

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

So spread your covering [or wing] over your maid, for you are a close relative." Ruth proposes marriage.

1. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .

Last week ==>

c. Practice Loyalty to Others and Not Self (10)

Evident in Ruth's Hesed Toward Others

(1) Notice how Boaz commends her

Then he said, "May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter.

(a) No indication that there's anything sinful going on here

Here a man of God recognizes a woman of God -- Integrity.

(b) Why?

You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich.

i. "Kindness" -- some translations render it "loyalty"

It's t/Hebrew word רָחַם that we have seen 2x already (both used by N) 1:8; 2:20.

Specifically for Ruth ==>

You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich.

IOW - her life was characterized by loyalty. She wasn't looking out for herself above that of everyone else. We have every indication to believe that she had been a faithful wife to Mahlon (even though she didn't know YHWH) - indic. in 1:8.

She was a loving, loyal daughter-in-law to Naomi.

Boaz is starting to put t/entire picture together. Here's a faithful W. who is willing to do t/right thing regardless of what's in it for her.

There's no indication that she ever saw Boaz as a potential husband // she ever had any kind of attraction to him.

Even if he took her as his wife, 1 could argue that her act of right. still had some risk: Would she come to love him? // she be happy?

Now we get to v. 11 . . .

1. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .

d. Promote a Reputation of Integrity (11)

Evident in the lives of Ruth and Boaz

(1) FIRST: 3 things to note in this verse (3 statements by Boaz)

1. He tells R. not to be afraid.
2. He assures her that he will what she asks.
3. He affirms that she is a woman of integrity

(a) Do not fear

“And now, my daughter, do not fear.

Interesting contrast == > Boaz being "startled" in v. 8.

i. Why fear?

Don't know. May be a way of affirming t/risk she's taken . . .

May be due to her being a Moabite (stand in opposition to W.O.I).

(b) Whatever it is - he assures her by adding:

I will do for you whatever you ask . . .

i. What has she asked?

So far she's only asked 1 thing ==>

. . . spread your covering [or wing] over your maid

Much more than wanting to be covered to keep warm, she was presenting herself to him as a wife.

As a man in training to be a good husband: *"I will do whatever you tell me to do"* (right?)

We could put together a whole new angle on wedding vows.

Ruth's confession in 1:16-17==>

. . . where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge.

Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.

“Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried.

Then we can have t/groom respond ==>

And I will do for you whatever you ask . . .

[alm. makes u want 2 shed a tear....]

ii. Of course, that's not what he means

He will do what she asks (marriage) only if he can do so legally and ethically. That's another crisis that begins to develop in v. 12.

1. Do not fear
2. I will do for you what you ask
3. ==>

(c) He affirms that she is a woman of integrity

. . . for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.

Something very insightful in what he says that you are bound to miss in your English translations.

i. In the original Hebrew text "all my people in the city" is lit. "all the gate of my people" Similar expression occurs 3 times in chap. 4

. . . all the gate of my people know that you are a woman of excellence.

What's t/signif? What do we see in chapt. 4? Legal proceedings.

In ancient Israel t/legal center of a town or city was found at t/gateway of his town. The gate was were men hung out. Barbershop.

Gate was often where legal proceedings were carried out ==>

Deuteronomy 21:18–21 18 **"If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them,19 then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his home town."**

Deut 25 refers to t/gate being t/place where t/elders would be found.

(2) In making reference to "the gate" Boaz is doing 2 things:

1) He's saying that Ruth's integrity was known, not only by t/rank and file of those who lived in Bethlehem, it was known by t/religious and political leaders of t/town.

2) This is also a way for B. to say to R. *"We all know that you are not an Israelite. We're aware you are a Moabite. Under most any other circumstance, that wouldn't be a good thing. But your character is so worthy & your belief in & loyalty to YHWH so evident that t/spiritual shepherds over us have nothing but good to say about you."*

... you are a woman of excellence.

(a) That word excellence . . .

know where else that exact same Heb. word is found? Prov. 31.

Proverbs 31:10–12 10 An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. 11 The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. 12 She does him good and not evil All the days of her life.

Boaz knew this about her. She was a W. of excellence and would make an excellent wife!

That 31st chapt. of Prov. goes on to say (don't miss this connection):

23 Her husband is known [where] in the gates, When he sits among [whom] the elders of the land.

31 Give her the product of her hands, And let her works praise her in the gates.

... all the gate of my people know that you are a woman of excellence.

(3) Not only true of Ruth

Word "excellence" recalls the description of Boaz in 2:1 ==>

... a kinsman of [Naomi's] husband, a man of great wealth ...

(a) "Man of great wealth" = Heb phrase 'îš gibbôr ḥayil

Could be translated "mighty man, a warrior, a military hero" (Gideon). Or "a prominent man" "a wealthy man." Or "a man of noble character" "a man of integrity" "an excellent man."

No indication that B. was a military man.

While there is indication that he was a man of wealth (owned land and had servants) t/emphasis is better placed on his character.

ESV: "a worthy man"

HCSB: "a prominent man of noble character"

He's a special man. He knows t/LORD & // great spiritual integrity.

In fact

The feminine equiv. of this phrase is found in Prov. 31:10 =>

'îšah ḥayil (excellent woman/wife). Noble or excellent character.

Boaz is a "man of high standing / good reputation."

(b) That's evident here in chapter 3 as well

He wasn't about to take advantage of Ruth or presume any salacious intent on her part.

He would have nothing of immoral behavior.

In that regard, t/Jews likened B. to Joseph.

Example, t/Targum of Ruth says this:

“But he restrained his desire and did not approach her, just as Joseph the righteous did, who refused to approach the Egyptian woman, the wife of his master . . . ” [Beattie, Targum of Ruth, 26–27]

That's not to say that R. was in any way like t/wife of Potiphar.

I. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .

d. Promote a Reputation of Integrity (11)

Evident in the lives of Ruth and Boaz

Being known as a man or woman of biblical Integrity goes a long way when RIRB.

(4) I spoke to this in some degree last week (from t/opp. POV)

I said that we ought to give one another t/benefit of t/doubt when it comes to judging intent, when they do or say something that might be interpreted in different ways.

Unless you have good reason to assume t/worst, why not assume t/best? From t/persp. of this AM, be sure that you do your best to live your life so that when those sorts of questions come up, people will have to conclude t/best about you.

One of my fears is that of being accused of doing something I didn't do & having no witnesses to exonerate me.

When I was in college one of t/professors told us about a pastor who was in his office when police showed up unexpectedly to arrest him. He had been accused of inappropriate conduct w/a teenage girl. Only evidence they had against him was t/word of this young woman. Fort. she later confessed that she made it all up. But years later t/man was still categorized by t/legal system as a sex offender.

Imagine being accused of something you didn't do. Think of most anything that could ruin your reputation. You declare your innocence, publicly.

Now ask yourself, "How would people who knew me react? Who would they tend to believe? Would they say, 'No, know her/him. The track record of her life speaks more loudly than those accusations.' Or would they say, 'Well, I don't know'"

I. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .

d. Promote a Reputation of Integrity (11)

You can only do that, really, if you endeavor to live as a man or woman who knows and lives JC.

Fifth ==>

e. Put-off Manipulation and Put on Faithful Obedience (12-13a)

Evident in Boaz's Knowledge of God's Word and Trust in His Sovereignty

“And now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.”

(1) "Close relative" = גֵּאֵל

To do the part of a kinsman - to redeem a relative from danger or difficulty (TWOT).

(a) Related to Israelite family law

Within a family (clan) a *gō'ēl's* is the nearest relative who is responsible for the well-being of his closest kin.

(My plan is to spend more time next week on this - everything u always wanted to know about *gō'ēl'* and were afraid to ask.)

2:20 Naomi ==>

"The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives (*gō'el*)."

Ruth==>

So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a לַאֲנִי."

Boaz==>

"And now it is true I am a לַאֲנִי;

Ruth thinking...*wow, this is all working out just as N. said it would!*

(2) However, life isn't predicable, it it?

It would be 1 thing if all that life tossed our way was softballs we could hit out of t/park w/every swing. We have to expect t/unexpected: fastballs, curveballs, sliders, even t/occasional knuckleball. All of this tests our faithfulness.

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

Ruth puts it all on t/line. Risky righteousness. What does she hear?

"all you say I will do. . . ."

It's like that job interview: "You are certainly qualified & I think you'd be a good addition to our team." (can feel it coming) BUT...

Maybe it was that gal you were courting . . . or that guy who was courting you . . . "You're a wonderful person . . . BUT . . ."

Don't you hate that word sometimes?

Maybe Ruth was anticipating it also . . .

"all you say I will do. It is true that I'm a close relative."

BUT, there is a relative closer than I."

IOW - *there is someone who is 1 step in front of me in line.*

Goes back to Deut. 25. Boaz shows his integrity // he knows God's Word, t/OT Law.

It's not that he doesn't want to redeem Ruth as his wife. It's that he's such a man of integrity that he won't lie // bend t/truth // compromise.

Boaz knows what t/right thing to do is & he's not going to manipulate t/system so things fall his way.

Boaz also demonstrates his unwavering trust in God's sovereignty.

“Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives.

Meaning: "As sure as YHWH is t/living God, I will do as I promise."

Boaz do you really need to check with this closer relative? C'mon. No one is likely to notice. Ruth is a Moabite. You're doing her a favor. In fact, you'd be doing that closer relative a favor by not getting him involved.

How easy it is to rationalize away your sin. // manipulate circumstances to make them "more favorable" (so we think).

[Do the right thing and trust God.](#)

1 Sam. 24 - David was being pursued by Saul who sought to kill him. David and his men are hiding in a cave. Saul mistakes it for a latrine and goes in to relieve himself. He doesn't know David's hiding there. David's men are telling him, *"This is no coincidence. God has providentially delivered him into your hands."*

What does David say? 1 Samuel 24:6

. . . "Far be it from me because of the LORD that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the LORD'S anointed."

Do the right thing and trust God.

Risky? That decision may have cost David his life. He was going to do what was right. God would deliver him. He didn't need to manipulate t/circumstances, tilting t/odds in his favor.

Do you have a wayward husband or wife?

Do the right thing and trust God.

Are you struggling financially?

Do the right thing and trust God.

Are you in a situation where your conscience is being violated, where you are compromising your integrity?

Do the right thing and trust God.

But I might lose my job // I might not be able to pay t/cable bill // I might lose out.

Do the right thing and trust God.

I. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .

e. Put-off Manipulation and Put on Faithful Obedience (12-13a)

f./6 Protect the Honor of Others (13b-14)

Evident in Boaz's Protection of Ruth

(1) How does he protect her?

"...Lie down until morning."

Bookends the beginning of the v.

"Remain this night..."

Might wonder. Some may think this sounds a little too much like t/old country song, "Why Don't You Spend The Night" (R. Milsap).

Why don't you spend the night? Somehow it seems so right

Why does it have to end so soon, please stay 'til the morning light

It's such a long way home, and you'd only be alone

Ah, come on now, why don't you spend the night?

"Remain this night..."

Word is lit. "lodge." (cf. 1:16).

Word has no sexual overtones whatsoever.

So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another;

May have only been a few hours.

and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."

We're not told who Boaz said this to (seems to be that he wanted her visit to remain a secret). It's grammatically possible that Boaz was saying this to himself.

Translated,

"Boaz thought to himself, 'it must not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor!'"

Whatever t/case, it appears that he is concerned about her reputation.

1. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .

f. Protect the Honor of Others (13b-14)

Boaz did so in 3 ways:

1. He did not send R. home in the middle of the night where she could be seen & either mistaken for a prostitute or assaulted.

2. He did not attempt to do anything inappropriate to her.

As we'll see in chapter 4 ==>

3. He also protected the rights of her nearer kinsman.

For us, protecting t/honor of others is another facet in t/jewel that is loyal love.

As a general principle. Don't defend yourself. Defend your friends // your doctrine // t/Gospel. Don't defend yourself.

Worry less about your honor & more about t/honor of others.

Last point ==>

I. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .

g. Provide for Those in Need (15)

Evident in Boaz's Continued Provision for Ruth and Naomi

Again he said, "Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it."

(1) "hold it" = "get a good grip on it"

Word used of Jacob gripping Esau's heel (Gen. 25:26)

Moses gripping the serpent's tail (Exo. 4:4)

Samson's grip on the city gate (Judg. 16:3)

Joab holding Amasa's beard as he prepares to stab him (2 Sam. 20:9)

Adonijah's grip on the horns of the altar, fearing Solomon's vengeance (1 Kings 1:51)

Grab hold; I'm going to lavishly pour out my blessing on you.

So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her.

Six measures would have been about as much as she could comfortably carry.

Then she went into the city.

Most Hebrew MSS have "he went into the city."

English translations are divided.

Seems that the reading preferred would be "he" connecting Boaz to 4:1 (cf. 3:13a) -- showing that he was intent on taking action.

I. When Righteousness is Risky Business . . .

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Evident in Ruth's Heeding Naomi's Advice

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Living w/confidence that ultimately nothing is at risk because God is in control. For us, risk becomes trust.

Really what it's all about, isn't it? Trust.

Over 100 years ago a family went out for a picnic on the Long Island Sound.

Man, his wife and daughter.

They heard a scream coming from a child who was drowning.

Man jumped in to save him. Wife and daughter watched in horror as he and the child drowned.

Without her husband, t/woman struggled to make ends meet.
But God was there. He provided all their needs in Christ Jesus.

It wasn't long afterward that the woman, Lousia and her daughter,
Lily, moved to South Africa where they became missionaries.

It's not for t/tragedy that she's known // missionary. It's for a single
hymn she wrote after that great tragedy.

In pondering her great loss & God's great mercy ==>

Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just to take Him at His word;
Just to rest upon His promise;
Just to know, Thus saith the Lord.

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him,
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er,
Jesus, Jesus, Precious Jesus!
O for grace to trust Him more.

O how sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just to trust His cleansing blood;
And in simple faith to plunge me
'Neath the healing, cleansing flood!

Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just from sin and self to cease;
Just from Jesus simply taking
Life and rest, and joy and peace.

I'm so glad I learned to trust Thee,
Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend;
And I know that Thou art with me,
Wilt be with me to the end.