

When You're Waiting on God | Ruth 3:10–18 | Ruth Waits, Boaz Works

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[0:00] It's good to see you. I'm going to pray real quick and we're going to get straight into God's Word. Is that okay? Father, thank you for your Word. Lord, we come to it in our hearts. Lord, we submit ourselves to you again, Lord, and ask, Lord, that you would just work on us.

Lord, we are so very aware, Lord, that we don't lack knowledge. Lord, we don't lack information. Lord, we lack heart of obedience. Lord, willing to follow you.

And Lord, so this morning we pray, Lord, that you would help us to be obedient people. Lord, to have our trust placed firmly in you and you alone.

Lord, and help us, Lord, we pray to respond to you in the way that you want us to, Lord, by faith. Lord, we come to a familiar story.

And Lord, we pray that the familiarity of it would not lessen the impact of it. And so, Lord, we ask that you would just do your work here, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

[1:10] Have you ever done anything where you've done everything that you possibly can do and you've then had to wait? I remember moving house and we had done everything that we had supposed to have done.

On time. Before time. And the frustration of then not being able to do anything else.

We just had to wait. Or maybe you've been in a job interview and you've nailed it. You thought it was great. You've come away. Everything that you should have done, you had done.

You prepared. You answered the questions intelligently. They were nodding profusely. You came away thinking, it's in the bag. And then you've had to wait.

Maybe you've made the phone call. You've sent the email. You've had the conversation. You've made the decision. And you've prayed. And now you've come to the end of your to-do list. And you're forced to wait.

[2:22] Most of us think that the reason that we struggle with waiting, especially when we feel like we've done everything that there is to be done that we've done, we think that the reason that we struggle with that is because we're impatient.

And I'll put my hand up and say, I'm impatient. Like if I think something should have happened by now, I'm like, it should have happened by now. And I'm impatient.

And I know that there is a part of that that is impatient. And I think there is some truth in that. But I think the Bible, and I think especially in this section of the Bible, gets underneath impatience.

And actually exposes something a lot deeper. Back in Genesis chapter 1, 2, and 3, we know that the creation story, God asked Adam and Eve, he said to them, go and have dominion over everything.

You are in control. You are in charge. You do what you need to do. And then, of course, in Genesis chapter 3, the fall came and altered our relationship with the things that we are supposed to do and the product of what we think should have happened by now.

[3:30] And so part of our struggle is the struggle of the fall. But waiting is difficult, not simply because of impatience.

But waiting is difficult because waiting forces us to surrender control. Adam didn't have that problem in the Garden of Eden.

Surrendering control. The fall happened. And we have a problem with surrendering control. And there's enough nods around the room to suggest that there is something, there's some truth in that. We have an issue of giving up surrendering control. We've done everything that we know to do. And then there comes a moment when there's nothing left to fix, nothing left to do, nothing left to

arrange, nothing left to happen.

And that's when waiting becomes really, really uncomfortable. Because as long as I'm doing something, I can convince myself that I'm in control. Right? You made the phone call?

[4:32] Make another phone call. You sent the email? Send another email. Even better, send it on schedule send. Work harder, do the extra hours.

In fact, do the overtime that no one sees and you don't get paid for. Try another strategy, make another plan. But eventually, God brings us to a place where there's nothing left for us to do except trust Him.

And our hearts naturally, because of the fall, our hearts naturally don't like that very much. We want God to come through, but we want Him to come through on our timetable, according to our plan, and in a way that we think He should.

So underneath our frustration of impatience is this much deeper question, can I trust God enough to stop trying to control the outcome?

That's a crazy good question, isn't it? Can I trust God enough to try stopping to control the outcome? Because that's where the real battle is of waiting.

[5:52] Waiting isn't simply about time. Waiting is about trust. It exposes what we really believe about God when we can no longer manipulate the circumstances.

Do I believe God is good when I can't see what He is doing? Do I believe God is working when nothing else appears to be happening? Do I believe God that He's faithful when His timing doesn't match mine?

Because sometimes God allows us to reach the end of our own ability, not because He has abandoned us, but because He is inviting us into a deeper experience and deeper dependence on Him.

And the uncomfortable truth is that we don't often just want God to answer our prayers. We want to remain in control while He answers them. And God in His kindness sometimes brings us to the place where we can't, where all we can do is look to Him and trust Him.

And that's where faith begins to look less like doing something for God and more like entrusting ourselves to God. And the question in waiting isn't simply how long until God comes through.

[7:08] It's can I trust God while I wait for Him to come through? Because the goal of waiting isn't merely to get us to the other side of the situation. Sometimes God is using the waiting to get us to the other side of our need for control.

He's dealing with control. He's dealing with the issue of surrender. And this is why the issue this morning is so prevalent.

And this is why Jesus is so important in this. Not simply because He gives us something to wait for, but because in Jesus we finally see what complete trust in the Father looks like.

And that's where we find Ruth this morning. She has done everything that she could have done. Do you remember last week? Like she's obeyed.

She's taken the risk. She had this weird, we think, weird moment where she is laying, uncovering Boaz's feet and laying down at his feet.

[8:16] Weird, right? But she'd done everything that she could have done. And we left it on the cliffhanger last week. Boaz is willing.

She is looking for a redeemer. And Boaz is that willing redeemer. But there's a problem. Let's read about it in verse 10.

Boaz said, May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after younger men, whether rich or poor.

And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask. And all my fellow kinsmen or townsmen know that you are a worthy woman. And now it is true that I am your redeemer.

Yet, there is a redeemer nearer than I. So, what Boaz is saying is that I am willing to be your redeemer.

[9:17] But there is another relative that is a closer relative than I am. And he should be the redeemer. He should be your kinsman. And so, the tension that Boaz is bringing is that Boaz is indeed willing to be the redeemer for Ruth.

But he can't. And so, just skip down to verse 18 because I think Naomi says something extraordinary to her at the end of the chapter. Naomi says, Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out.

For the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today. And I love that sentence because Ruth is going to have to wait. She has done everything that she can do.

There is nothing else to be done. And Naomi says, Wait. And Boaz is going to have to, excuse me, Ruth is going to have to wait while Boaz works.

That's an interesting tension, isn't it? We have to wait while the Lord works. And we trust that the Lord is working while we are waiting.

[10:27] Ruth is called to trust God whilst Boaz acts. And Ruth is going to have to do that even though she can't see the outcome.

Even though Boaz is already moving in it. And I think like, as I was preparing this, I think this is where I want us to live this morning. Because some of us may be in like the Ruth verse 18 moment, right?

You've prayed, and you've prayed, and you've prayed, and you've obeyed, and you've obeyed, and you've obeyed. You've taken the steps that God has given you, and now you're waiting for something that you cannot control.

And the temptation is to think that nothing is happening. But Ruth's story reminds us that waiting doesn't mean that God is doing nothing. Sometimes the most faithful thing you can do is to stop trying to control the outcome and trust the character of your Redeemer.

So Ruth waits, and Boaz works. And as we'll see this morning, we are called to trust God in the waiting. And so the first thing I want us to see, and it's coming on the screen, is that faith trusts God when we can't control the outcome.

[11:45] Faith trusts God when we can't control the outcome. Go back to verse 10. Boaz says, he said to Ruth, may you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter.

You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. And so Boaz's first response to seeing Ruth laying at his feet while he is asleep.

And he wakes up, and there she is. It's not an accusation, suspicion, or exploitation. It's blessing. He blesses her. He says, you have made this last kindness greater than the first.

What's this first kindness? Well, it's likely to be Ruth's loyalty to Naomi. You remember the story that Naomi took Ruth and Orpah and her two sons and husband, they went to Moab and the three men died and just left them.

And Orpah went away. And so then, now you've got just Naomi and Ruth. And there was famine. They returned to their home in Bethlehem. And Ruth says to Naomi, like, wherever you go, I'm going to go.

[13:00] Whatever you do, I'm going to do. Whoever your God is, he's going to be my God. And it's probably this, this first act of loyalty that Boaz then sees. She has become a woman of that kind of reputation.

And the second kind of, second kindness is, is that Ruth hasn't pursued other men. She has pursued redemption and covenant faithfulness.

And I really want us to see this story is not about Ruth finding a man. Right? Like, this isn't a case study for a singles retreat. Right?

Like, like, you go on a singles retreat. What are we going to study? We're going to study Ruth.

Here's how, here's how to bag your man. Like, uncover his feet and lay at his feet.

Like, that's, that's not going to happen. This isn't about the catch. This is about pursuing redemption and covenant faithfulness.

[13:59] one of the hardest parts of following Jesus is actually learning to choose what God wants for us over what we want for ourselves.

There's always that tension. Because, look, we all have desires, don't we? Don't we? Okay, good. It's not just me. All right. We all have desires.

There's all, there's all of us. We have things that we want and we have things that we want to happen. People we want, opportunities we want, a future we want and sometimes we want and what God wants, they line up beautifully and sometimes, quite frankly, they don't, do they?

And that's where kind of our faith, kind of, the rubber hits the road, it gets real because following Jesus isn't simply saying, God, here's what I want, please bless it. Following Jesus is learning to say, God, here's what I want even when it's different from what you want but I'm choosing what you want.

And see, Ruth had choices. Ruth had choices just as much as we have choices. She could have pursued another man. She could have stayed in Moab but she didn't.

[15 : 19] Instead, she placed herself at the feet of Boaz and asked him to act as her redeemer and Boaz recognizes something in her choice. She isn't simply pursuing what she wants, she's trusting God with what she wants.

Paul says in Romans chapter 12, which we all know and we all love, don't be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind and by testing you may discern what is the will of God.

right? So Paul says, look, we have to discern what the will of God is. Why do we have to discern what the will of God is? Well, because oftentimes it's different from our own will.

And I think if Christianity was simply about kind of changing behavior, this is Romans chapter 12, if it was simply about changing your behavior, that would be one thing. But Christianity is actually about renewal of our minds.

And with that, it's about the renewal of our desires. That we begin to see things the way God sees things. We begin to want the things that God wants.

[16 : 29] And we begin to press into the things that God is asking us to press into. And that's a completely different level of transformation.

Like, we can start complying and behaving. But can we say that our hearts and our minds are being renewed daily? That we want the things that God wants for us, even if they're difficult.

And of course, Jesus himself gives us that ultimate picture of this, doesn't he, in the Garden of Gethsemane. He knows about the cross. He knows about the fact that the cross is coming.

And he prays saying, Father, if you're willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done. And that's not a prayer of weakness, that's a prayer of perfect trust.

And there are moments when every one of us have to pray that version of prayer, don't we? Like, God, I don't know what you're doing, and frankly, I don't really like what you're doing, but not my will, but your will.

[17 : 41] And not just going through the motions of saying that, but really wanting that and believing that, that's transformation. That's why Proverbs chapter three encourages us, and I know that we have this on our fridges, probably.

We know we can probably quote this, verse five, verse six. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. That's what that means. Our understanding is limited, isn't it? I can only see what is in front of me, but God can see the whole story. So sometimes faith means saying, God, I don't understand why you're asking me to let go of this, but I trust you more than I trust myself.

And I think this is one of the greatest challenges of discipleship, isn't it? Because sometimes we don't struggle to know what God wants. We don't, we really don't. If we're honest, most of the time we know what God wants.

Like we don't lack information, do we? Like even if we, even if we want a, a Bible verse, like I was just thinking about this, like this week, like at the touch of a few buttons, and it's more buttons if you have fat fingers like I have, on your phone, you can, you can search any Bible verse in any translation, in any language that you want, and have someone tell you, a dozen people tell you what it means.

[19 : 06] Like we don't lack for information. Most of the time we know what God wants. But the struggle is that we want something different. That's the struggle.

So the question isn't always what does God want. Sometimes the question is do I want what God wants more than I want what I want. That's why Jesus would say in Luke chapter 9, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Jesus isn't saying become miserable. And I think actually, if we're honest, there is some misery in that. There is some misery in laying down our lives.

He's saying stop making yourself the center of your life. And sometimes then following Jesus means saying I will trust God over my feelings. I will trust God's timing over my urgency.

I will trust God's purposes over my plans and his provisions over my control. So maybe if you're a Christian here this morning, the question to ask is this.

[20 : 19] Where am I trying to make something happen that God has asked me to leave in his hands? Or maybe a better one. Where am I manipulating an outcome because I don't trust God

enough to wait?

Or maybe if you're not a follower of Jesus, you're not a Christian yet, maybe the question for you is something more like this. What are you trusting to give you control over your life? Because we all place our trust in something.

And that's where Ruth is such a beautiful example. She has no guarantees. Like if you've read chapter four, like you know the end of the story, but she doesn't. She doesn't know there's a chapter four.

She didn't even know there was a chapter three. She has no guarantee. She doesn't know how this is going to work out. She doesn't know whether Boaz would eventually marry her.

She couldn't see what was next, but she trusted a God who could. And that's faith. Faith is choosing God's will when you can't see the outcome. And so Boaz says to Ruth, we're still in verse 10.

[21:31] Boaz says to Ruth, may you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after the young men, whether rich or poor.

And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you, I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman.

And that word, that idea of worthy means valuable. And now it is true that I am your redeemer. Yet. And that's where the EastEnders theme comes on and you have to come back next week, right? It's yet, it's a but, it's a hold on, a second, there's a problem, right?

Yet, there is a redeemer nearer than I. And we all should be thinking, wait, what? Like, I didn't know that was happening. I didn't, I didn't know that was part of the story.

[22:40] So, she's taken the risk, she's made herself vulnerable, Boaz appears to be the answer, and suddenly there's another man? And just when Ruth thinks the answer is here, another complication arises.

But could you just go back to verse 11 for me? Because Boaz says, I will do for you all that you ask. It's worth highlighting that Ruth's problem, again, is not a marriage problem.

Ruth's problem is a redeemer problem. She doesn't need a husband, she needs a man who is willing, able, qualified, and committed to her good.

She needs redemption. And when Boaz says there is a redeemer nearer than I, Ruth's hope ultimately rests not in her ability to make the outcome happen, but on the character and action of her redeemer.

This is not about Ruth anymore, it's about this mystery man. Who is that mystery man? Is he going to be willing, able, qualified, committed to her good? She's not about marriage.

[23:51] She doesn't know who this nearer relative will be. Like, we're not even given a name at this stage. Ruth is like, yeah, but there is this bloke. who's closer to you than I am.

And she doesn't know who that is and she doesn't know if he will act. But she does know something about Boaz. And I think this is really key for us.

She does know something about Boaz, that he is willing, he is committed, and he is already working. And that's why she's able to wait. And as Christians, we may not know what God is going to do next.

But you do know something that Ruth didn't yet fully understand. You know who your Redeemer is. Ruth doesn't. In the tension of the story, Ruth has no idea what's going to happen.

But we know who our Redeemer is. Jesus doesn't merely tell you to trust God. God. He is the proof that God can be trusted.

[25:05] At the cross, God demonstrated that he was willing to go further to redeem you than you could have ever imagined.

And he proved that he can be trusted to finish what he begun. And that's the tension Ruth is now living in. Can her future be trusted with this unnamed Redeemer?

And when we come to Jesus, our Redeemer, we know the answer. Yes, he can be trusted.

Because the cross tells us what kind of Redeemer he is.

And so Ruth at this day doesn't know what's going to happen. Doesn't know who this Redeemer will be. Whether this Redeemer will act as her Redeemer. And so in verse 13 Boaz says remain tonight.

And in the morning if he will redeem you, good, let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then as the Lord lives, and I love the fact that Boaz anchors his commitment in God.

[26 : 22] He doesn't say, I'll make it happen. he doesn't say we can run away together. He says, I will do what is right.

And I'm going to do what is right by God and by you. He says, as the Lord lives, I will redeem you, lie down until morning.

And so Boaz is willing to wait for the right outcome rather than force what he wants. And sometimes in the Christian life, there are moments aren't there when obedience says go, and we saw that last week, go and do this stuff, go and do these things, even if some of them are a little bit like, really? Uncover his feet. And there are other times when obedience says wait. And sometimes that's the frustrating thing, knowing the difference, isn't it?

sometimes faith says, I want you to go and do stuff, and then sometimes faith asks us just to wait and trust God. Ruth has done her part, Boaz has done his, and now the situation is in God's hands.

[27 : 34] And that leads us to the second thing I kind of want to pull out of this passage, and that is this, that waiting doesn't mean God has stopped working. Waiting doesn't mean that God has stopped working.

We could use the example from Genesis 46, when Joseph is found in Egypt by his brothers, and they all moved to Egypt, and we're told in Exodus chapter 1 that 70 moved into Egypt, and they didn't know what God was doing.

And in Numbers chapter 1, we're told that 600 3,000 left Egypt. Like, God was working in the darkness, God was working in the doom, God was working in the misery.

They couldn't see it. And so we read in verse 14, so she lay out his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another.

Again, protecting her dignity, so she rose early. Like she didn't want to be seen, he didn't want to be seen, with people wagging their fingers, gossiping about them.

[28 : 53] So she rose early before anybody else got up, and he said, let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor. And he said, verse 15, bring the garment you were wearing and hold it out.

And so she held it out, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her, and she went into the city. And what I love about this is that the idea of God's provision is sometimes present before God's resolution is visible.

God's providing even in the waiting. Ruth doesn't have the marriage. She doesn't have the provision that she would have if she was married.

That hasn't come yet. She doesn't have the redemption. That hasn't come yet. But she goes home with evidence that Boaz has not forgotten her.

And that's how often God works with us, isn't it? Like, we want the answer. We want the outcome. We want the thing, whatever that thing is. And God sometimes just gives us enough grace to wait for the answer.

[30 : 03] Wasn't it with Paul in 2 Corinthians, he prayed to the Lord for the thorn in the flesh, to be removed from him three times. And God says, no, my grace is sufficient for you.

While you wait, there is provision. And then I think verse 16 highlights the third thing worth thinking about, is that God's, to trust God's character while we wait for God's answer.

Verse 16, we read that when Ruth came to her, Naomi, or when Ruth came to Naomi, Naomi asked, how did you fare my daughter? Literally, tell me what happened, how did it go?

And she told her of the man, all the man had done for her, saying, verse 17, saying, these six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said to me, you must not go back empty handed to your mother-in-law.

Like, what a sweet guy. And then probably the central sentence of the whole passage is found in verse 18. She replied, wait.

[31 : 13] Don't rush, don't panic, don't manipulate, don't take control, don't look for another solution. And this is coming from Naomi. Naomi had set this whole thing up, you remember.

Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out. Why? For the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today. And that's an extraordinary ending.

Ruth has to wait, but Boaz is working. That's the tension. And maybe you can relate to that. Maybe you can relate to the idea, you've prayed, you've obeyed, you've done what you know to do, and now you're waiting.

And the temptation is to think nothing is happening. But don't confuse waiting with God's absence. Ruth is waiting, but her redeemer, her future redeemer is working. And you may not know what God is going to do. You may not understand why he hasn't done it yet. But Ruth couldn't see chapter 4, but we can.

[32:21] We know how the story ends, right? We know that Ruth is redeemed. We know she becomes part of the line of King David. We know that that line eventually leads to Jesus, who is altogether trustworthy.

And so you may not know what God is going to do, you may not understand why he hasn't done it yet, you may not be able to see chapter 4 from chapter 3, but you still know something that Ruth didn't fully understand, and you know your redeemer.

You know what he's already done. At the cross, God has already demonstrated his love, his worth, his trustworthiness. At the cross, God has already demonstrated that he can be trusted.

And at the resurrection, God has already demonstrated his power. It's not that he's just willing, but he also has the power to do it. And so you don't have to control the outcome to trust the one who holds it.

You don't have to know what God is doing to know that he is trustworthy. And perhaps that's what faith looks like for most of us today. Maybe that's the response that God is looking for from us today.

[33:50] Is again to declare our trust in God, to place our trust in God. Not another plan, not another phone call, not another attempt to make something happen, but just surrender.

Saying, God, I don't know what you're doing, I don't know how this is going to work out, but I know who you are, and you are altogether trustworthy. And I may not even agree with what you're doing. So transform me by your spirit. Give me that renewed mind, that I might desire what you want for me. And so as we pray, and as Zach comes back and leads us in a closing song, let the spirit just search our hearts.

are we in a place where we are controlling things, we're holding on to something rather than trusting God to bring about his outcome rather than our outcome.

And is there a tension there? Is there a thing in us that says, well, God, why can't I have the thing that I want? And then maybe to repent of that, and again to place our trust and faith again in God.

[35:12] So let's pray together, let's spend a moment just in some quiet reflection together. Father, thank you, Lord, that you speak to us today from your word through your spirit.

Thank you that we have a true and better redeemer. Thank you that we can trust you, even when we don't know what you're doing. Thank you that you've proved yourself trustworthy, that we can depend on you, and we can rely on you.

Thank you that you know the end from the beginning. Lord, we repent today, Lord, we say we're sorry today for the times when we have wanted our own will above your will and our outcomes above your outcomes and our timing above your timing.

And Lord, we confess we hate waiting, not so much because we're impatient, but because we want control. Lord, help us to see again that control is given by you, it's a gift from you, it's a mandate from you, from creation, but control that is completely dependent and reliant upon you.

Lord, and so we submit again to you and your ways. Lord, we trust you, we put our faith in you, not because we want an outcome, but we want our hearts to be aligned with yours.

[36:52] And the things that we're struggling with today, the outcomes that haven't arrived yet, the things that we're struggling with, Lord, we place them again at your feet.

And Lord, we're thankful for so much freedom in that. Lord, we don't have to carry those burdens, we don't have to carry those weights. It's not our job to control the outcome, thank you for that.

You've relieved us of that. And so we place them to you again. Whether it's relationships that haven't gone well, whether it's our jobs that are uncertain, loved ones that we've been praying for for years that still don't know you, whether it's situations in our workplace or in our home, whether there are things that are just frustrating to us, we give them back to you Lord.

Help us to understand what it means to have grace that is sufficient for us today. Lord, we thank you that you are our good redeemer.

We trust you. we put our faith in you today. Amen. Amen.