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Part Eight – *The Sheltering Kinsman*

11 And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman. 12 And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. 13 Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning. (Ruth 3:11-13)

Two remarkable points need to be mentioned from Chap 2:

1. The Lord of the Harvest (Boaz & Jesus Christ) seek busy hands – not idle ones;
2. The Lord of the Harvest comes to us among the life of the Garden scene just as Jesus came to Mary Magdalene at the Garden Tomb, and Boaz at the field of harvest.

Though Ruth is of no blood kin to Boaz, he still considers her as the daughter of Naomi (his kin) and will redeem either if the nearest kinsman cannot, or will not. That is very much like those sinners called by God and reconciled to Him. They are not, by nature, related to God; but they are so considered through the willingness of God to adopt them into His family to share in the glory of His only Begotten Son who died for them.

Ruth, being an obedient daughter to Naomi, hears and complies with her directions: *Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor. Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do. (Ruth 3:1-5)* This is the means by which Naomi intends to procure a kinsman husband for her dear Ruth in the place of her deceased son, Mahlon.

There are parallels to the proper means of worship in Church contained in this instruction. The Prayer of Humble Access of the Holy Communion Service of the 1662 and 1928 Books of Common Prayer is positioned before the Communion in the place of the Brazen Laver in which the priests of old washed their hands and face prior to approaching the Holy Place:

WE do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. *Amen.*

(1662 English & 1928 American Book of Common Prayer)

As Ruth would approach Boaz, the Lord of the Harvest, so should the Christian approach Christ – the Lord of the Great Harvest – with washed hands and face; clean and delightful apparel, and anointed for worship. We go down to our knees in worship and prayer as Ruth went down to the threshing floor. We remain quiet and reverent before Him until it is time for the Supper. We symbolically lie down at the feet of Jesus just as the sweet lady of Bethany, Mary, did in hearing all that Jesus would say to her.

“He will tell thee what thou shalt do” The Hebrew Targum reads the clause thus: *“Thou shalt ask counsel from him, and he shall tell thee what thou shouldst do.”* This was the rabbinical explanation of the meaning of that line of Naomi in the common vernacular which was, at that time, predominantly Aramaic. This explanation comports nicely with the very words of Christ to His disciples: *“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”* (Matt 21:22)

Being the virtuous young woman that she was, *“And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.”* (Ruth 3:6) When an elder family member counsels us out of love and concern for our well-being, we are wise to heed that counsel, as does Ruth here.

“And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down. And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou?” (Ruth 3:7-9) When we are separated from Christ by either sin or faith, we are strangers of the Kingdom, but when we have come to lie at His feet, we have cast all of our burdens – and the stigma attached to our names – on Him. Ruth’s stigma was that she was Ruth, the Moabitess, but she yearned to take upon herself the name of Boaz in the same way repentant sinners assume the name of their Lord Jesus Christ. When we come to Christ, He may ask, *“Who are you?”* Of course, He knows all about us, but He desires to hear us profess His Name with our own mouths.

“And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.” (Ruth 3:9) Ruth’s answer left no doubt of her intentions. She admits to being the servant of Boaz, and soon to be very wife. Becoming a Christian is the same as becoming a member of the Bridegroom of Christ in His Church. The phrase Ruth uses, *“spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid,”* has the meaning of *“spread your wings over me to protect me.”* It is yet a custom in traditional Jewish marriages for the groom *“to throw the skirt or end of his talith over her, to signify that he has taken her under his protection.”* (Adam Clarke’s Commentary)

It may seem out of character that Ruth and Naomi would be so brash as to

execute such a plan, but, remember, in Naomi's thoughts, Boaz was the Redeemer Kinsman and, therefore, the legitimate husband to Ruth according to Deuteronomy 25:5 - *"If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her."*

Boaz answers: *"And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman."* (Ruth 3:10-11) Evidence of Ruth's virtuous conduct is revealed in the very words of Boaz. Boaz is at least old enough to be Ruth's father, yet, she has not followed after young men, and her reputation has been held high as one of virtue by all of the good people, and even gossips, of Bethlehem. Boaz tells Ruth, as the Lord tells us, *"Fear not!"* He also promises to do all that Ruth needs for her soul's benefit. Does it not sound familiar of Christ?

Next comes a comment of profound application to all who were lost and have come to Christ: *"And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I."* (Ruth 3:12) Who was your nearest kinsman prior to the call of Christ? Was it not Adam of the Garden Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil? There are, in the last resort, only two fathers of men – one is Satan, and the other is the Lord. If we are not the children of God, then we are children of our father the devil. (see John 8:44) The nearest kinsman had the obligation, and the RIGHT, to redeem the wife of his kinsman, Elimelech. You have belonged to Satan before you belonged to God by adoption. He was your NEAREST kinsman. But he is both unwilling and unable to redeem you. Only Christ (Ruth's Boaz) is willing and able to redeem. God is a Lord of complete justice. He will follow the terms of the law in redeeming us, just as Christ paid that legal penalty on the cross for us:

"Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning." (Ruth 3:13) It is true that often the most difficult part of a Christian's walk is waiting upon the Lord. *"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."* (Psalms 27:14) We all must tarry during the Wilderness Night on earth. The eyes of the Lord are so much higher than ours, and far reaching. His time-table may not coincide with ours for a reason. During summers, I used to fly along the coast of Panama City Beach to alert the swimmers to the presence of sharks. The swimmers did not like to heed the warning relayed through the lifeguards to exit the waters. Little did they know that we had spotted sharks swarming near the beach. Once they understood the danger, they fled the beach.

It is likely in my mind Boaz knew his relative (who was near kinsman) well enough to suspect that he would never redeem Ruth. Interestingly, Boaz never introduces Ruth to the nearest kinsman redeemer when the time comes as we shall see in a later devotion.

These words of Boaz are often times of doubt and wonder: *"lie down until the morning."* Lie down in the darkness of the night by faith until the morning light comes and disperses all darkness.

Have you had such moments of doubt that were followed by the brilliant light of day, friend?