

## Stay In This Field – Ruth 2:22

### I. INTRODUCTION – Acts 2:40-47

#### A. *Timing*

1. Right timing is crucial to so much of life.
  - a. It's best not to nap when invited to see the President in the Oval Office.
  - b. Wearing your pajamas to your son or daughter's graduation is probably *not* a good idea.
  - c. When passionately kissing your beloved, it's a good idea to hold back that belch.
  - d. If you're one of the prayer counselors, hold off eating onions until *after* service.
2. Mark accompanied his wife to the funeral of one of her fellow workers.
  - a. It was held at the same time as the last game of the NBA Finals.
  - b. His team was behind by one point with just seconds left.
  - c. The radio was in his pocket, with a tiny earbud in one ear.
  - d. The minister leading the funeral was recounting the events that led to the untimely passing of the deceased.
  - e. Summing up he said, "And so, this last Tuesday afternoon, Margaret departed this life."
  - f. Mark jumped to his feet, pumped his fist in the air, & shouted, "Yes!"
    - 1) He'd not been listening to the funeral.
    - 2) The announcer had just said that at the buzzer his team's shot was good – They won the game.
  - g. Now, every eye was on him with looks that ranged from bewilderment to outrage.
  - h. His wife discreetly scooted away, pretending she didn't know him.
  - i. It was *bad form* to be listening to the radio at a funeral.
  - j. But Mark's outburst was *really bad timing*.
3. In contrast to an *ill*-timed word is **Proverbs 25:11** which says:  
**A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.**
  - a. The right word, spoken at the right moment is like a beautiful work of art.
  - b. As elegant jewelry graces the neck, a wise word graces the soul.

#### B. *Today*

1. I hope today's message is that "fitly spoken word" of Proverbs 25:11.
2. That what we look at today is the right word, at the right time.
3. You see, I believe that the days are coming when we'll need the truth we're about to look at as never before.
4. As your pastor who's called to lead, feed, & protect the flock of God, I often have to say the hard thing.
5. What we're going to look at today will for some of us *be difficult*.
6. Know that I share it because I love & care for you. I want to see you *safe*.

#### C. *Set the Scene*

1. The Book of Ruth is important because as *history*, it's an important link between the time when the *Judges* & the *Kings* ruled Israel.

2. The Book tells us about the ancestors of the royal line of David; a lineage that eventually leads to the Messiah.
  3. But above all, the Book of Ruth is a wonderfully romantic love story that bears several striking parallels to Christ & the Church.
  4. It's fitting that it **would** be a love story since that in essence is what the whole relationship of Jesus & His bride is as well.
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5. Ruth was a Gentile widow who moved with her Jewish mother-in-law, Naomi, back to her home town; Bethlehem, just a few miles south of Jerusalem.
  6. They were poor, so Ruth went to glean in the fields at harvest time.
  7. It just so happened that she went to work in the field that belonged to a wealthy relative of Naomi's named Boaz.
  8. As the story develops, Ruth & Boaz fall in love and marry.
  9. Here at the end of ch. 2, Ruth has just finished her first day of gleaning.
    - a. Boaz has taken an immediate interest in her and loaded her down with grain.
    - b. When she gets home, Naomi is amazed at how much she has & asks what happened.
    - c. Ruth tells her about Boaz & the generosity he's showered on her.
    - d. Naomi then tells her that Boaz is a close relative;
      - 1) Someone who under the law of Israel had the legal right to redeem -
      - 2) Both **her** from poverty & **her fields** that had been taken over by others.
    - e. It's obvious to Naomi from the blessing Boaz had already shown Ruth he was interested in her & would make good on his right to redeem her.
    - f. But Ruth needed to let Boaz know she **wanted** to be redeemed.
  9. So Naomi gave Ruth this important piece of advice as she considers her next steps; as she thinks about where she will go the **next day** to glean.

## II. TEXT

### A. V. 22

**And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field."**

1. Naomi says that it's a wise move for Ruth to go back the next day to the same field she'd worked that day & to stay with the other young women who were working Boaz's harvest.
  - a. When the harvest was ready, every available hand was pressed into service, including women.
  - b. The weather could turn quickly, spoiling the harvest, so when the grain was ripe, everyone but the ultra rich or the infirm went out to the fields.
2. Naomi told Ruth she should return to Boaz's field & stay close to the young women he'd employed.
3. She tells her to make sure no one finds her working some **other** field.
4. What she meant was; Ruth must be **careful of her reputation**.
  - a. As a young & attractive **single** woman, if she didn't exercise care, it would be easy for others to assume the worst about her.
  - b. If she worked Boaz's field one day, then Isaac's the next, & Rabbah's the day after that, it might look like she was on the prowl,
  - c. Trying to line up a bunch of suitors she could then string along & use

- against each other, trying to work herself the best deal in a husband.
5. Earlier in the story we learn that news about Ruth's loyalty to her mother-in-law was well known in Bethlehem.
    - a. Even though she's a Gentile from the despised land of Moab, her **reputation is golden**.
    - b. Naomi is concerned it **stay** that way.
  6. As an older woman who's seen it all, she knows all about how others love to build someone up, just so they can watch them fall.
  7. There seems to be a perverse delight in people that they like to hear gossip & dirt on others.
    - a. That's why the tabloid press sells so many papers.
    - b. Many just love to hear about the failures & foibles of celebrities.
    - c. Maybe it's because when we see the famous fall, we don't feel so bad about our **own** failures.
  8. The other single women in Bethlehem could easily see Ruth as **competition** & were no doubt **gunning** for her, looking for whatever they could spin up into gossip.
  9. So Naomi gives this sage advice to Ruth; she should make sure people see her working in only one field, Boaz's.
  10. And when there, she should hang out, not with the guys, but with the **other young women**, making it clear she wasn't trolling for a mate, She ought to work at building close friendships with the other ladies.
    - a. In v. 21, Ruth **did** tell Naomi that Boaz had told her to stay close to the **men** who were working his field.
    - b. But earlier in the chapter we learn that was for her **provision & protection**;
    - c. Boaz had told her not to simply glean what the harvesters **left behind**; she was allowed to walk right along with them and take of the **harvest itself**.
    - d. Boaz gave the men instructions they were to keep an eye on her for safety's sake.

## **B. The Parallel**

1. As we saw in our study last Wednesday, the Book of Ruth provides a wonderful picture of Christ & the Church.
  2. As the Kinsman-Redeemer, Boaz is a type of Christ, who became man so he could redeem us from slavery to sin & death, and redeem Earth from the curse.
  3. Ruth is a picture of the Church; a Gentile & outsider to the covenant of God who was graciously grafted in & blessed to become part of the royal line.
  4. So **we** can learn from Naomi's counsel to young Ruth about the wisdom of staying in Boaz's field.
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5. As a young single woman, Ruth looked forward to the day when she would be married.
  6. And right now, as the betrothed bride of Christ, we await the day of our wedding when He will come & take us home to heaven, His Father's house where, as it says in John 14, He's built a glorious new home for us.
  7. As Ruth waited, she didn't pine away forlornly, lying lazily on a pillow in the front room.
    - a. She was diligent to take care of business.

- b. Because it was harvest season, she went out to gather what she could.
- 8. In the same way, as we wait patiently for our Groom, we don't don white robes & go stand on some hilltop staring at the clouds for signs of His coming.
  - a. We live in the season of harvest, when the Spirit of God is convicting the lost of their need of Christ. of men & women..
  - b. In John 4:35, Jesus urged His followers to realize that the fields are already white unto harvest!
  - c. Romans 5:20 says that when sins abounds, the grace of God abounds even more.
  - d. There are people all over who are **ready** to come to faith.
  - e. Like Ruth, each of us must be diligent to reap those the Spirit is drawing to faith.
- 9. Naomi's counsel to Ruth was to be **careful** about her reputation;
  - a. That no one catch her in another field but Boaz's,
  - b. And that she maintain her place among the other young women, having a healthy relationship with them.
- 10. Here is what I want us to take away this morning –
  - a. That as we busy ourselves with the harvest of souls,
  - b. And see the signs of the Return of Christ coming to pass with increasing frequency,
  - c. We be careful of **our reputation** –
    - 1) And safeguard it by being sure to **stay in the Lord's field**.
    - 2) That we work hard at making sure our relationships with other believers are vital & healthy.
- 11. Up to the end of Ch. 2, Ruth's reputation in Bethlehem was one of **devotion & loyalty** as she stayed home & took care of her elderly mother-in-law.
  - a. As she went out now into the community to work, Naomi wanted to make sure nothing Ruth did or said betrayed that well-earned reputation.
  - b. As Christians, as those who **say** they believe in & follow Christ, what's our reputation?
    - 1) **Are we known** as people who are devoted & loyal to Jesus?
    - 2) At **work**, is there evidence of our faith in the Lord?
    - 3) At **school**, do we have a good or bad reputation?
    - 4) In our **extended family**, do they know us as those who love God & walk before Him faithfully?
  - c. Sometimes the challenge is put this way; If it was **illegal** to be a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?
- 12. Naomi knew Ruth's reputation would be **protected** by staying in Boaz's field; not running around with others.
- 13. As we follow Christ, we need to make sure we're staying in His field, working His harvest, not running around chasing this or doing that, trying to find **satisfaction** in the things of this world.
  - a. The love we have for Christ must be cultivated & nurtured.
  - b. It can't be watered down or compromised by competing desires.
  - c. John says it this way in **1 John 2:15 . . .**

**Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

- d. In *The Screwtape Letters*, CS Lewis tells the story of an elder demon instructing a novice how to tempt his human assignment.
- 1) Lewis has a rather disconcerting awareness of some of the thoughts that go through your own head.
  - 2) He does because the tactics the enemy uses against us are common to all.
  - 3) In one passage, he has the elder Screwtape telling the younger Wormwood that he wants to try & knock his man off a single-minded, whole-hearted devotion to Christ.
  - 4) As a recent convert, the man is consumed with growing in his faith; he's preoccupied with analyzing his entire life in the light of his new relationship with God.
  - 5) So Screwtape tells Wormwood to suggest to the man he's becoming unbalanced, fanatical, overboard, obsessed, infatuated, over-enthusiastic, & whatever other **negative word** he can bring to bear.
  - 6) He's to suggest the man **moderate** his passion for God by convincing him **his faith is just one part** of a well-rounded life, in which each part has an equal share & claim on his affections & loyalty.
  - 7) What would be even better is if these various other interests stood in **contradiction to his faith**.
    - a) His religion should have no impact on his politics.
    - b) Or his finances, or his clothing style
    - c) Or the books he reads; today we might say, "Or the movies he watched."
  - 8) The elder demon said that by pressing for a such a so-called "balanced" life, the man's loyalty to God would weaken & gradually be lost altogether, overcome by a plethora of other interests.
- e. Now, I'm **not** saying the Christian life should be "unbalanced."
- f. What I AM saying is that **balance** never comes by **moderating** our love for & loyalty to God.
- g. Imagine a husband saying to his wife, "In my desire to be a well-balanced person, I'm going to share some of the love & loyalty I've had for just you, with 5 other women."
- h. That's absurd! Yet in a **practical sense**, that's how many so-called Christians approach their religion.
  - 1) They're as devoted to the things of the world as they say they are to God.
  - 2) When they make decisions about how they're going to live, the world has far more influence than the Spirit.
- i. In **Matthew 6:24** Jesus said:
- "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [the world's values]."**
14. Naomi's counsel to Ruth is so right for us today: Stay in the Lord's field!
- a. Hang out among His people.
  - b. Make it a point to be in regular fellowship with others believers of like mind & passion for God.
  - c. As Ephesians 6 tells us; we are at war with spiritual forces that have control

- of this world.
- d. It's a moral minefield out there; a slick, seductive trap that constantly bombards us with temptation to define life by *its* standards.
  - e. We need to regularly gather together to worship, pray, fellowship, & study the Word of God so we can be renewed in our mutual faith & devotion to the Lord.
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15. Though I haven't done it in years, but I used to scuba dive.
    - a. You strap on a tank of air, put a regulator in your mouth, & go underwater.
    - b. Now, water is not man's natural habitat; we were created to live in the air.
    - c. As long as that tank has air in it, you can stay underwater.
    - d. But when the tank goes empty, you have to get back to the boat or shore where you can refill your tanks.
    - e. No matter how long you dive, you know that you're in an element that's *not* natural, *not* where you belong.
    - f. For the believer, there's the sense that this world is not where we belong.
      - 1) We feel like *strangers* here, travelers who're just passing through on our way to our true home.
      - 2) And *regularly*, we need to come away from the world by gathering together as the Church to refill our tanks with the pure air of the Spirit.
      - 3) Then we can dive back into the alien environment of this world for a few more days.
  16. A few more days? A few more days? That makes some of you uncomfortable because for you gathering with other believers for worship & fellowship is far less frequent than every few days.
    - a. It's more like once every few weeks, or every few months.
    - b. Though you consider yourself a Christian, the fact is, *this* is the first time you've been to church in a *long time*.
    - c. It's often said that going to Church no more makes you a Christian than going to McDonalds makes you a Big Mac.
    - d. While that's true, I'll say that while you CAN be a Christian without going to church, you can't have a mature, vital walk with God *without* frequent fellowship with other like-minded believers.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. Hebrews 10:24-25

1. *Heb 10:24-25* says:

**24** And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, **25** not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

2. The author of Hebrews says that *all believers* of *every age* must *place a priority* on meeting together for mutual encouragement.
3. But the generation that sees the Return of Christ drawing close has to pay *special attention* to that.
4. At the beginning of this year, I spoke about the importance of being committed to one another, & the tangible expression of that by committing to attendance

at church & home fellowships.

5. There are storms on the horizon that will only be weathered by a loyalty to God that forges a devotion to one another.
6. As we approach the mid-point of the year, the trials & challenges are mounting.
  - a. Many of us have been sorely tried; are ***being tried*** this very moment.
  - b. Oh how we need each other, to pray for & encourage one another.
7. In Matthew 24:12, Jesus warned that in the last days, because sin will abound, the love of many would grow cold.
8. One of the best ways to keep our love ***hot*** for Jesus is to ***tank up*** often – to gather for worship & praise, to unite our hearts & minds in fellowship around His Word & Spirit.

### **B. Atrocious**

1. What would you think of an engaged woman who just days before her wedding went bar-hopping, night-clubbing, & dancing ***without*** her fiancé?
2. She dresses immodestly & flirts with every guy she meets.
3. Her friends, family & co-workers see her out running around with different men, none of them her soon to be husband.
4. We'd say that was ***atrocious*** behavior & wonder about the sincerity of her love & devotion to him.
5. Don't Christians do the same thing when they ***say*** they believe Jesus could come back at any moment, but they're seen giving themselves to everything BUT Him?
6. They run here, go there, seeking satisfaction & meaning in the things of the world.
7. Just as it was wise for Ruth to remain in Boaz's field with his young women, it's wise for us to abide in Christ & hang out with His people; people passionate about abiding in Christ too!