# A Threshing Floor Proposal

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 05 November 2025

Preacher: Joey Snodgrass

[0:00] Well, as always, I'm thankful for our worship team. Give a hand for our students to help with that. Thankful for the work they put in, Kashawn's leadership in that group.

! They spend a lot of time here on Sunday evenings and get here early on Wednesday afternoons. And so I'm grateful for the time they put in and for leading us so well in praise of our Savior.
Open with me to Ruth chapter 3. We're continuing our study through this great book starring a Moabite woman who is a widow.
And tonight in chapter 3, this story really comes to its climactic moment. At the climax of any story, there's high emotional stakes, there's high drama, there's massive potential for something going wrong.
Think, you know, Simba fighting Scar on Pride Rock. Think Tarzan defeating Clayton once and for all. Like, the climactic moments where our emotions are kind of caught up in the story.
[1:09] The climax isn't necessarily the final moment, but it is the most intense moment. And as I mentioned last week, at the end of chapter 2, there's been a lot of things that have gone right for Ruth and Naomi.

But at the end of the day, there's still just two widows living in Bethlehem all alone. But we've seen traces of Yahweh being on the move.
And chapters 2 and 3 are actually identical in their overall structure. Both scenes open and close with a conversation between Naomi and Ruth in the house of Naomi.
And in between those two conversations, Ruth and Boaz have a lengthy interaction with one another. And both chapters focus on what these women lack.
What was it that they lacked? They were empty when they came back. They needed food. And one of them needed a husband to provide for them, to continue on their family line. And in chapter 2, Boaz has provided for that shorter-term emptiness by giving them food.
[2:18] And in chapter 3, their longer-term emptiness is addressed. And the story in chapter 3 slows down dramatically.

All of chapter 3 covers about 12 hours. And so if you think about chapter 1 kind of being the introduction and background details, and the end of chapter 4 being the conclusion to this story, chapters 2, 3, and over half of chapter 4 cover two days of Ruth and Naomi's life.
The day she went to work in the fields, and this day that starts here in chapter 3. And so we'll cover this in three points. Again, a pretty identical structure to last week. Number one, we see Naomi's risky plot.
Naomi's risky plot. We see this in verses 1 through 5. Ruth is continuing to live with Naomi in her home. As you see in chapter 2, verse 23, the very last sentence, she lived with her mother-in-law.
And I imagine this scene, these opening five verses, happening kind of around the kitchen table in Naomi's house. It says, Naomi's desperation is mounting.
[3:45] She recognizes she won't live forever. There had been hope that maybe something would work with Boaz during the harvest, but now the harvest is over. And Naomi wants to see Ruth taken care of.

She wants to live to see her wedding day. And so chapter 2 ended with some low-grade disappointment of what we hoped had worked out, maybe between Ruth and Boaz.
We had hoped that somehow these two would end up permanently related to one another. But now the harvest is over. But based on Naomi's planning here, if it won't happen organically, she's willing to make it happen.
And she's willing to try to force it. Verse 2, she says, Is not Boaz our relative with whose young women you were?

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

It's been a couple of months since Ruth first met Naomi. Or excuse me, since Ruth first met Boaz and worked in his field. And the generosity that he showed to these women has kind of thawed Naomi's frozen heart and has given her an idea.
[4:57] It's gotten her wheels turning. She's been scheming. And she says, Shall I not seek rest for you? In verse 1. And if you remember back to chapter 1, verses 8 and 9, she gives a blessing to her two daughters-in-law.

And she says to them, May Yahweh give you rest, each of you, in the house of her husband. And so now Naomi's going to try to address through her own scheming, through her own plotting, to provide this rest that comes through marriage.
And she suggests Boaz. Remember him? He's in our family, right? And she says, See, or look, he's winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.
And so winnowing would take place kind of at the end of the harvest. So they would go through and cut down all the grain. They'd bind it into bundles. They'd put it on a cart or just carry it to a location. And then at the end of the harvest, they would take all of the grain down to the threshing floor. And the threshing floor would be a circular place of hard ground. Maybe a stone was in the ground, or they had just stamped it down to where the soil had been compacted to where it would give them a hard kind of concrete-like surface.
[6:11] They'd spread all this grain out, all these stalks out. They'd have an ox walk around it. And what they're doing is they're trying to separate the grain from the rest of the plant. And so once they do that, they then take something like a pitchfork and kind of toss it up in the air.

And what that does, the wind will blow away all the lighter stuff and the seed, the grain will fall back to the ground so they can separate everything from what they need to survive or to sell or whatever. And so they would need kind of a breezy night for this to work. And Naomi somehow knows or predicts that Boaz will be at the threshing floor this night. And so she tells Ruth, verse 3, wash therefore and anoint yourself and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor.
She gives her several commands here, wash, anoint, put on. What she's really telling Ruth here is make yourself appealing. Look pretty and smell good. And widows would have dressed in a certain way in this culture to reflect their mourning.
In many ancient cultures, widows would have worn just kind of plain, simple clothing that would have been dark in color just to represent the mourning and the grief that they were feeling.
[7:27] And so Naomi's telling her, hey, let it be known that your period of mourning is over. Let people know that you're available. Let the people know that you're looking to be married.

And so the women who were available looking to be married would have dressed maybe more fashionably or more brightly. And so Naomi's telling her to dress herself like an available young woman and go down to the threshing floor.
She's like, take your sweats off, put on a dress, smell good, and go down to the threshing floor. Now this command here, go down to the threshing floor, the original readers of this would have gotten really uncomfortable with this command.
Why would she go there? She shouldn't, no, she shouldn't do that. In the ancient world, during harvest time and at the threshing floor, this was a place where sexual immorality took place and was participated in.
Certainly throughout other countries and even in Israel itself during this time. This isn't a good place for a lady to go. And so just the mention of the threshing floor during harvest time and sending a young woman down there, this would have made the original readers pretty uncomfortable and uneasy with this suggestion.
[8:47] When I was in high school, the old Wild Hero location used to be a Taco Bell. That's where Taco Bell was. And anyone who wanted to get in trouble or do bad stuff went behind the Taco Bell over the weekend.

I don't know how that developed or why that happened, but be like, hey, what'd you do this weekend? They're like, we were just kind of hanging out behind Taco Bell and it was like, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Hey, you shouldn't go there. Or it's like, I got in trouble this weekend. What'd you do? Well, it started, we were just hanging out behind Taco Bell. So that location just had a negative connotation for anyone who was listening and anyone who knew what was going on. That's kind of how the threshing floor would sound to them when they're sending, they think of the prospect of sending a young lady there. Nothing good's going to happen there. And she says, but

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

do not make yourself known to the man until he's finished eating and drinking.
So make sure he doesn't see you. He's finished his food. He's happy during harvest time. This is a time of celebration in their national calendar. And ultimately, wait until he's asleep.
[9:53] Because verse four, she says, when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. So make sure you've got the right guy. Don't go up to a stranger here. Make sure you're actually approaching Boaz.

Don't go up to the wrong guy. And we think like, okay, this is a weird situation, but maybe it's not as bad as it seems. But Naomi's language, the word she uses, don't put us at ease here.
She says, then go and uncover his feet and lie down and he will tell you what to do. Now I've mentioned, I mentioned last week that as the plot thickens, the author loves to use kind of vague words.
We saw this last week when Boaz is asking, hey, whose young woman is this? Is he asking if she's married? Is he asking who her father is? Is he asking who she works for normally? We don't really know.
And so this is the thickest point of the plot. This is the climax. And so these vague words will just abound in this passage. And we're kind of like, what? Surely she's not implying something here.
[10:58] But all of these words she uses here are words that the Bible uses in an indirect way to describe immorality or sexual intimacy.

So looking first at the word no, do not make yourself known to the man. that's a word used in Genesis 4.1.
Adam knew his wife and she gave birth to a son. The word uncover usually used in reference to uncovering nakedness.
In Genesis 9 this is used to describe Noah and his drunkenness. Leviticus 18 all these laws about what it looks like to live a pure life uses this word over and over again as what to avoid.
The word feet here is the word feet can also mean legs. She says to lie down. She tells him to, she tells Ruth to lay with him. And upon initial reading this may not like seem that big of a deal to us because the language is so indirect but if we use similar words in English we get the uncomfortableness the original audience would have felt with this suggestion.
[12:19] she's saying you know hey once once he lies down then make yourself known to him and then remove his blanket and sleep with him.

That's effectively the language Naomi's using. And it's indirect speech it's indirect language but the original audience is thinking what is Naomi she's sending her to the threshing floor and this is what she's saying and then she says he will tell you what to do.
Do whatever he tells you. What exactly is Naomi suggesting here? And I think I think it's as bad as it sounds. It seems like Naomi's trying to force Boaz into being the redeemer for their family.
I think she's trying to force Boaz's hand here to step in and to save their family. And this may seem dark this may seem super sinful and it is but remember when this book was taking place in the days when the judges ruled and if you've read the book of Judges there were far darker things that happened during that period and in addition to that where have they lived for the past decade in Moab and just Sunday school last week you guys remember how Moab got started?
That's where that's where Moab came from and so this is a place marked by sexual immorality and so I think this suggestion is as bad as it sounds and in addition to that Naomi hasn't exactly proven herself to be a good character in this plot she all but cursed God in chapter 1 and so I don't think we automatically have to read her positively here and this also wouldn't have been unprecedented in Israelite history in Genesis 38 some sexual immorality takes place in a similar manner a woman trying to force a man's hand in redeeming her from her poverty and from her difficult situation but even if you want to read Naomi more positively than I do I think that's fine what we can all agree on is that this plan would have put Ruth in a very dangerous situation this would have been very very dangerous for Ruth to carry out why would it have been dangerous?
[14:37] well she could go up to the wrong guy first of all that's a huge major danger there are multiple people down there winnowing multiple workers for Boaz himself that are down there Boaz may not treat her kindly Boaz might just reject her her reputation might be ruined forever in Israel she may have to go back to Moab or worse and then what does God think of this?

most importantly is this something that God would approve of or is this going to end up like Abraham and Hagar in Genesis 16 where they tried to kind of manipulate their way into forcing

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

God's hand to provide for them what is God going to think of this?
if going to the fields to work was risky in chapter 2 this is like some special forces black ops kind of stuff like this is super dangerous for her and Ruth is willing to put herself in harm's way she replied all that you say I will do this is really risky but Ruth once again is willing to sacrifice herself in order to love and provide for Naomi secondly we see a moonlight meet up a moonlight meet up in verses 6 through 15 verse 6 begins so she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her and so with just a few words this story shifts from Naomi's house in the city back to the fields back to the threshing floor and from this point on Boaz is going to take center stage Ruth and Naomi will have a few more things to say but their final words for Ruth and Naomi are both recorded in chapter 3 after this chapter
Ruth and Naomi kind of just fade to the distance they'll still be there but only indirectly and Boaz will take center stage from this point onward in verse 7 says when Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry I don't think he was drunk I think he was just satisfied and was enjoying the celebration of the harvest he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain now why was he sleeping there why was this was a common practice but why would they do this well a couple of reasons one they would sleep there to guard their grain so that no one would come up and steal it and walk off with some of their hard work that had been produced that whole year so one is just a security issue secondly this would allow them to work more so he could work all the way until the sunset he wouldn't have to worry about getting home during light so he could just sleep right there and work longer and in the morning he wouldn't have to lose time with the commute back to the threshing floor he would be there ready to work once the sun came up so security and then just convenience allowing for more work and it says then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down so she just creeps up to him trying not to wake him she still wants to avoid being seen avoid being detected and you can almost hear her heart beating during this sort of been intense and verse 8 at midnight so we don't know how long but a few hours later at midnight the man was startled and turned over and so his legs and feet at least being uncovered would have exposed them to the cold of the night and so partway through the night he wakes up cold he wakes up shivering is what the text says he was startled or he was trembling so he wakes up recognizes his feet are uncovered kind of sits up to throw the blanket back over his feet and behold a woman lay at his feet but Ruth seems to be doing exactly what she was encouraged to do by Naomi but she's not doing anything beyond what
Naomi literally told her to do Naomi seems to be saying lift his blanket and lay next to him and Ruth just literally removes part of the blanket and lays near him and so as I said the cold would eventually wake him up but he wouldn't wake up until everyone else was already asleep this would provide them a chance to talk without anyone hearing or seeing this will produce a private encounter but I don't think the one that Naomi had plotted and so with just these few quick words he's awake now he recognizes there's a woman at his feet and with just a few quick words the author puts us in the middle of this very strange situation a very awkward situation sleeping together alone on the threshing floor and we're kind of we're squirming what's going to happen what are they going to do and so he sees a woman at his feet and these two main characters are now completely alone darkness completely covers the background it's as if there's just a single spotlight on these two characters characters and God himself hasn't been mentioned in this chapter at all it's almost like God himself is turning his face the other way he says a woman he sees a woman at his feet and notice that they both kind of lost their identities he's referred to as a man she's just referred to as a woman it's a good storytelling technique to convey the darkness that was covering them he didn't know who she was he didn't recognize her but it's also kind of a play on the tension that's building in this narrative there's a man and a woman alone in the middle of the night this righteous man went to sleep all alone and wakes up with a woman near him and there might just be a slight glimmer of hope here because this has happened before you remember when Adam got put to sleep and he was all alone and he woke up and behold there was a woman there and so there's just a slight glimmer of hope here that
[20:55] God may be pleased with how this shakes out and he says verse 9 who are you now Boaz has actually asked this question about Ruth before in chapter 2 he says whose young woman is this the question he asked is who is she and now he recognizes it's a woman but has no idea who it is and Ruth identifies herself and says I am Ruth your servant and so she identifies herself and now according to Naomi's instructions she should just be quiet and listen to whatever Boaz tells her to do but Ruth goes off script she says more than Naomi told her to say and she says spread your

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

wings over your servant for you are a redeemer Naomi didn't tell her to say this but Ruth here is appealing to Boaz's righteous character and she's even appealing to him to answer his own prayer for her back in chapter 2 he says may Yahweh spread his wings over you and repay you for what you've done in showing kindness to your mother-in-law and Ruth here is saying you're a redeemer spread your wings over me be the human means that God uses to give me the protection

I need to alleviate the emptiness that the Lord has brought upon me this is a tense moment and she's really appealing to Boaz to marry her she says will you marry me she's saying will you be the human instrument that God uses to protect me and this is a tense moment I don't know if you've ever seen videos of proposals going wrong a guy gets down on his knee has a ring says will you marry me and she says no there's no coming back from that man like you gotta be really committed if you're gonna propose and there's no like hey if I were to propose to you would you say yes like you can't test the waters at all like you gotta put yourself out there it's a risky moment and so in that moment you're excited and you're like I don't know if I'm gonna sing for joy or like poop my pants I'm so nervous like what's what is going to happen and here there's tension how will
Boaz respond is he just gonna shoo her away is he gonna misunderstand what she's asking and his words alleviate this tension immediately he said may you be blessed by Yahweh my daughter you've made this last kindness greater than the first and that you've not gone after young men whether poor or rich the first kindness she had shown was to Naomi when she came back with her to Bethlehem and Boaz praised her for the kindness that she had shown her mother in law and now Boaz is saying you've made this last kindness greater than the first he recognizes that she is acting on behalf of the family that she's been married into she is still showing kindness to Naomi in this marriage proposal and it doesn't seem like a marriage proposal to us we don't interpret it that way immediately but that's how Boaz understands it he says you haven't gone after other young men whether poor or rich so she could have married for love she could have married for status and she's passed over those options now this isn't a typical marriage proposal this isn't normal for that culture this isn't also a suggestion for you so if there's a guy you like don't sleep on his front porch overnight okay that's weird don't do that but she uses he says in verse 11 now my daughter do not fear
I will do for you all that you ask for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman she has a very good reputation in town and you remember how Boaz was introduced to us in chapter 2 verse 1 as a worthy man now Ruth is described with the exact same word a worthy woman and I want you to notice Ruth's development here in this story she's gone from a nobody a Moabite widow who doesn't know a soul coming into Bethlehem just to support and stick with her mother-in-law and now everyone knows her as a worthy woman a good match in character for Boaz and so at this point Boaz says yes like we can hear the wedding bells ringing now birds are chirping even though it's the middle of night invitations are being sent out the plot seems to be resolved the climactic moment is over but there's a small problem verse 12 says it's true
I am a redeemer that means I do have the ability to redeem you guys out of this situation yet there's a redeemer nearer than I Boaz doesn't have first dibs on acting as a redeemer for Ruth or Naomi it's like we just want them to get married already we just want them to be together but there's one last conflict in this plot and so the responsibility for redeeming widows or redeeming family members fell to the closest male relative which we find out surprisingly wasn't Boaz and so now at this point we have some questions like did Naomi know who this other guy was like Bethlehem was a small town surely she knew she had another living relative who was a male why didn't Naomi go to him first why did she send Ruth straight to Boaz was she sending her to Boaz just to get someone to take action regardless!
[27:02] of who it was why didn't Boaz take initiative if he knew he was a redeemer for Naomi and her family is it because he knew this other guy had the rights to do that we don't know the answer to those questions and so this injects just one last moment of suspense into this story is Ruth going to be the one that got away from Boaz and it's also ironic because when Naomi comes back into town she's completely empty zero male and now she's got one too many it's like oh we needed help but now we've got too much help now it's got to get sorted out in court verse 13 Boaz says remain tonight and that word remain is the same word that Ruth used for lodge where you lodge I will lodge and Boaz says lodge here tonight and in the morning if he you know this other loser that's in the way will redeem you good let him do it but if he's not willing to redeem you then as

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Yahweh lives I will redeem you lie down until the morning and as the narrative presents it they remained sexually pure until their wedding day Ruth is safe in this incredibly dangerous situation why is she safe because Boaz is righteous Boaz is a worthy man and gentlemen we should be a refuge for women girls should not feel endangered around us girls should not feel like objects around us we need to be men like Boaz who are safe because we are righteous and committed to the Lord this night could have gone so wrong for Ruth but it didn't because Boaz is a righteous man committed to the Lord and his standards and so both of them Boaz and Ruth act with the exact same character when they're alone in the middle of the night as they do in broad daylight with people around and so for all of us who are you who are you as a young woman who are you as a young man what do you do when you're alone what do you think about in the middle of the night when no one is watching and that is probably the most accurate picture of our character when we think we can get away with something when we think no one will see or find out what do you do then that's the most accurate picture of your character and
Boaz says as Yahweh is alive as surely as he's alive I will redeem you if he won't and so regardless of how this shakes out tomorrow Ruth will be married but who will her husband be who's going to be the groom we'd all prefer Boaz but the law must!
verse 14 says she lay at his feet until the morning but arose before one could recognize another and so they got up before sunrise and Boaz says to her let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor Boaz recognizes that this is a compromising situation their reputations could be ruined if people figured out what took place in terms of just it doesn't look good and it could complicate the redemption process in the morning people and gossips will assume the worst about what this looks like and they'll start making up stories about what might have happened there that night at the threshing floor in verse verse 15 and bring the garment you're wearing and hold it out so she held it and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her then she went into the city and so Boaz gives her grain for three reasons one is just to provide for them food he's continuing to provide for their short term needs number two this would provide some cover for
Ruth see her empty handed they'll think where are you coming from where did you go but if she's got grain in her hand that legitimizes her being out that early okay she was working either early or she worked overtime last night and thirdly this is a down payment this is a promise Boaz is saying take this as a sign of my commitment take this as a down payment that I will keep my word to either have you married off to this guy or to redeem you myself and so this six measures of grain is really functioning like an engagement ring for Ruth I promise to make good on what I've told you and so she went into the city which is a transition as the scene shifts once again from the threshing floor back to Naomi's home and so number three we're home again home again just like we were last week verses 16 through 18 verse 16 when she came to her mother-in-law she said how did you fare my daughter she's like so how'd it go tell me everything but what she actually asks the literal question is who are you my daughter same question that Boaz asked twice about her and we know that she recognizes
[32:49] Ruth because she calls her my daughter so this isn't a question of who are you like tell me who's approaching my door she's asking the same question that Boaz asked initially who do you belong to what's your identity who are you with now who are you my daughter and we can hear excitement in Ruth's voice she told her all that the man had done for her saying these six measures of barley he gave to me and the report is all about Boaz's action nothing happened between them so she tells of all the righteous and kind things that Boaz has done for them and she gives us some previously unrecorded statements that Boaz made for he said to me you must not go back empty handed to your mother in law what's the primary conflict in this plot these two women are empty he says do not go back empty handed to your mother in law

Boaz has completely solved one aspect of their emptiness he's completely solved their hunger now is there anything he can do about their longer term emptiness of needing a man in the family Ruth will have a husband Boaz will make sure of it but who will it be maybe it'll just so happen that Boaz can take Ruth to himself as a wife the author once again keeps our attention and hooks us for scene four and with these words with this report Ruth fades off the scene she'll come back at the end of chapter four she'll be talked about she's involved in this story but only indirectly she never speaks again in this story and Naomi says in verse 18 she replied wait my daughter until you learn how the matter turns out for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Ruth has needs to wait Naomi says he's going to take care of this today why a couple of reasons one it's his duty as a redeemer to take care of this secondly because of his delight he wants to marry Ruth he is honored by her request and with this statement verse 18 Naomi also walks off stage until the closing scene these are her last words she will also continue to be involved she'll continue to be there but only indirectly and with this we're set up for the final scene more has happened in this one night than has happened in the previous ten and a half years that this book is recorded more has happened in this one night to advance the story that's being told than the previous decade in Moab and back and Ruth here is instructed to wait she's received promises but she's waiting for the fullness of them to be completed what is she thinking about what is she praying about on that day as she waits and we as believers as the church are in really a very similar situation that

Ruth was in at the end of chapter three we've received promises the church is waiting for her husband Christ to return and make a full end to the promises that he's spoken and he's given us the Holy Spirit as a down payment for the future reward that will be ours Yahweh is on the move in this book but what does the future hold for Ruth what does the future hold for Naomi at this point they have no idea Ruth knows she'll be married the next day but she doesn't know to whom she will be married and so how do you come to grips with an unknown future like that I want to read a quote from Corrie Ten Boom she was a believer in Nazi controlled territory during World War II and her and her husband would hide Jews to keep them safe from the Nazis and would try to find safe passage for them to safer places and so the anxiety that would come with that the anxiety that would come with wondering if you're going to get caught today if today is going to be the day that your life is ended because of your treason according to

Nazi Germany and she had this to say she said never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God Ruth doesn't yet know what God has in store but she knows God and many of you are in a somewhat similar situation if you're a senior you know this time next year you'll be off to somewhere else and many of you don't have a clue what that looks like yet and if you're a junior your time is coming very quickly and ultimately none of us know what the future holds and so that can be a scary thought to think and here's the question do you know God you can overcome a lot of unknowns in the future by knowing who [38:27] God is and God has declared his love for us and sending Christ his son to die for our sins and purchase us to redeem us out of our slavery to sin and it's through acknowledging who the son is that we understand who God is and through knowing him we can advance through a lot of unknowns in the future and so I would encourage you that if you're struggling with anxiety if you're struggling with not knowing what to do or if you don't know who God is at all I'd encourage you to look to Christ it's in him that the father's character is fully and truly revealed and following Christ will not make the future known to us in terms of our individual lives but it will help us cope with the difficulties in this life by knowing who our God is and who has created us our father we thank you for this beautiful chapter of Ruth three I pray that we would take application in our own life and understand that

Lord even when you are working behind the scenes and we can't see you you revealed yourself to us in your word and through your son and so we can know that you are always working even if we can't see you working out the details in our lives so I pray for these students as they go to small groups that would be a time of edification and help as they process through some application from our text tonight in Christ's name we pray amen

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host