

引言 INTRODUCTION

Today, we come to chapter 3 in the book of Ruth. A Moabite lady named Ruth followed her Jewish mother-in-law Naomi and returned to Judah. Ruth had determined to make Jehovah her God. She obeyed the local custom and went to the field of Boaz to pick grains. That was the only source of food for her and Naomi. However, the harvest season only lasts for a few months. There must be a more stable source of provision for the family. Naomi put her hope in God. In the subsequent stories, Ruth gradually learned to trust God too. How was Jehovah different from the pagan gods she worshipped in her homeland? This one true God does not receive offerings like bribes from His followers. Rather, He graciously blesses those who put their trust in Him. He is not angry and unapproachable. Instead, He welcomes people with love. He does not do things in random. But He wisely fulfills His plans in our lives. Like Naomi did, Ruth must submit herself to God and wait for His guidance. What follows was a story of love. Boaz and Ruth expressed their love for each other. But their love was deeper than what we see in a romantic novel or movie. We shall see elements such as faith, commitment and patience. Those are the same lessons we need to learn today. You complete your tasks diligently as a student, a parent or an employee. You hope that there will be favorable outcomes in your effort. You do all you can, but you must depend on God for the results. Let Ruth's experience be our encouragement. God will give us His best when we hope for His best.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 暗中的計劃 Secret Plan

Some time had passed since Ruth started working in Boaz's field. Naomi, being a caring mother-in-law, thought about the future of Ruth. She presented a secret plan to Ruth. Listen to verses 1-4: 1 ... "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? 2 Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. 3 Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do." Naomi was concerned about two things. First, someone had to redeem the land that belonged to her late husband, Elimelech. Otherwise, the ownership right would be lost. Second, Ruth could not remain as a widow forever. She must remarry, so that a man would provide for her. Boaz was the most ideal candidate that could resolve both issues. He was close to Naomi's family. He was a wealthy and compassionate person. Naomi knew that Boza would be spending the night at the threshing floor. It is simply an open space. After a crop is harvested, the stalks will be crushed to separate the kernels from the husks. The next step is called winnowing.

The mixture is tossed in the air. The grains will fall to the ground, while the lighter chaff is blown away by wind. The final product will be stored in barns. Boaz would sleep at the threshing floor that night, possibly to protect the produce against thieves. Naomi asked Ruth to meet with Boaz after he fell asleep. Ruth had to lift up the blanket covering Boaz's feet, lie next to him and waited for his further instructions. Everything must be done in secret, lest the reputation of both families would be ruined if the plan was exposed. Ruth responds in verses 5-6 after hearing Naomi's plan: **5 And she replied, "All that you say I will do."** **6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her.** Once again, Ruth showed to be a submissive daughter-in-law. She obeyed Naomi without hesitation. In the ancient world, marriages were arranged by parents. Much like her decision to follow Naomi back to Judah, Ruth could not predict what would happen that night. That takes faith! I can think of another lady in the Bible who reacted by faith and participated in a secret plan. Her name is Mary. Angel Gabriel told her God's plan. She would conceive a baby boy, not through a marriage, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. God chose her to bring Jesus into the world. Mary could not make sense of Gabriel's message. But at the end she submitted to God. She responds in Luke 1:38 – ... **"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."** **And the angel departed from her.** Mary used actions to verify her trust in God. Just like Mary and Ruth did, today we believe in the same God. You cannot foresee what future plans God has in store for you. Our faith in Jesus should not be in perfect tense, but it should be in continuous tense. In other words, we walk with Him by faith every day. We conduct our lives based on Biblical principles. God will take us to the next step in due time. Perhaps you have to decide what major to study, which job offer to take, whom you should date or whether or not to retire now. Pray to God for peace after you have done your preparation. Ask Him to show you the way you should go. Say to God the way Ruth replied Naomi: "All that you say I will do."

2. 神聖的請求 Sacred Plea

Soon night fell. Boaz used a pile of grains as a mattress. Ruth quietly sneaked up and lay next to him. Suddenly, Boaz realized that a lady was there. Ruth then presented her sacred plea. Listen to a conversation between them in verses 9-10: **9 He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer."** **10 And he 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 young men, whether poor or rich."** Let me caution you: do not let your imagination be carried away by Hollywood! Boaz and Ruth stayed pure that night. Pre-marital relationship was punishable by death in the Biblical times. What was Ruth's plea? In the Old Testament custom, to spread someone's wings over another person is an implicit way to propose a marriage. It was bold for a woman to make the move three thousand years ago! Ruth did not say: "You're a great man and I'm available. Let's get married." She could have looked for a younger man. But she intended to marry a redeemer. The future son born into the marriage would inherit Elimelech's estate. Boaz praised Ruth for taking care of Naomi, that was her first kindness. Now she put the welfare of her father-in-law as the top priority, that was her last kindness. Boaz was willing to fulfill the obligation as a redeemer. But there was a hurdle. Continue to

read verses 12-13: 12 “And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. 13 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, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning.” Boaz did not respond with a resounding “yes” simply because a girl offered herself to marry him. He must play by the rules. Boaz did not want to jump ahead of God’s plan. He promised to marry Ruth only if the other guy closer to Elimelech’s family refused to be a redeemer. Both Ruth and Boaz appeared as godly people. The author uses the same word to describe them. Verse 11 says Ruth was “a worthy woman.” Boaz is also called “a worthy man” in 2:1. The same word appears in Proverbs 31:10 that depicts “an excellent wife.” Other Bible translations render the word “noble.” A noble person proves to be godly through his/her conducts. Worthy people see God’s interests as more important than their personal preferences. Both Boaz and Ruth put God first in their marriage. What factors do you consider when evaluating a potential spouse for yourself or for your kids? Appearance? Income? Love? Unfortunately, many husbands are disappointed when they realize that their cover-girl becomes less attractive later. Some wives are sad because their ATM machine is too busy making money. However, you will not regret if you choose what God sees as the best. Marriage is actually a form of ministry. You and your spouse may not be serving in a Christian organization. However, your family is a platform to witness for God. People will tie in your title of “Christian” with your marriage. They want to see how your faith affects your spousal relationship, parenting and priorities, etc. Parents: pray for your kids that they will become worthy people and God will prepare a worthy spouse for them. She may not win Miss Cordova. He may not produce money like a copying machine. Those are less important compared to their love for God. It will be a true blessing if they love God wholeheartedly.

3. 堅定的承諾 Secure Pledge

Naomi’s secret plan was going well so far. Boaz accepted Ruth’s sacred plea, although it was not a done deal yet. Ruth stayed till almost sunrise. Boaz urged her to leave, for fear that someone might see her. She returned home with a secure pledge in her heart. Boaz would reach a resolution the same day. Naomi assured Ruth the same thing after hearing her report. We will finish the reading from verses 16-18: 16 And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “How did you fare, my daughter?” Then she told her all that the man had done for her, 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.’” 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.” The barley served multiple purposes. It was a proof that the meeting did happen. It could be used as a decoy if someone saw Ruth at the threshing floor. It was also a gift to appreciate Naomi and Ruth for the marriage offer. Naomi was confident that Boaz would get an answer that very day. A noble person would follow through his promise, not to mention that Boaz made an oath in God’s name. We can imagine that the next few hours would be an unbearable suspense to Boaz, Naomi and especially Ruth. Would the other redeemer agree to marry Ruth? Would there be a happy ending between Boaz and Ruth? Read the last chapter if you want to find out! All three characters did all they could and should. They left the final outcome to God. The Lord does things according to His perfect timing. He is infinitely wiser

and more patient than us. He teaches us to wait for the hope He promised us till it comes to past. Romans 8:25 says: **But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.** Paul is talking about Jesus' return in the context. God will redeem our bodies when Jesus comes back. Our souls have been redeemed the moment we received Him into our hearts. However, we still live in this mortal body. God will give every believer a glorious and imperishable body when Jesus returns. You can refer to 1 Corinthians 15 for detail. Paul describes in the Romans passage that the whole creation groans due to the devastating effects of sin. Our physical bodies will age. New phones and new cars will eventually worn out and become outdated. We will get bored about the latest fashion or technology because they are all temporary. We are created for eternity because God made us according to His image. Therefore, while we are content with God's blessings in this life, we must also wait for Jesus' return with hope. All the prophecies about Jesus' first coming had been fulfilled. There is no doubt that His second coming will also come true. We should faithfully complete the tasks God entrusts us. Then we wait for the final fulfillment of His plan. You share the gospel with family members and friends. Only God can convict their hearts and make them believe. You prepare the next exam or job interview the best you can. God is in control of the outcome. The same principle applies when you look for a future spouse, bring up kids according to God's commands or seek the best medical help for a disease. Believing in God's promises does not take away our duties and efforts. You may ask: what if the results do not turn out in my favor? Then it is possible that God has a different plan for you. Do not give up. Keep praying, searching and trying until God gives you an answer.

結論 CONCLUSION

God will give us His best when we hope for His best. Naomi, Boaz and Ruth had the same hope. It would be a perfect ending if Boaz could marry Ruth. In doing so, he would redeem the land from Elimelech. A future son of this new couple could continue the family name of Elimelech. You see, the interaction between Boaz and Ruth was more than a romantic story. It was actually a redemptive story. A kinsman exercised his privilege to redeem the property of a close relative. Ruth had no control of the result. She could only present herself to Boaz by saying: "I'm your servant. Spread your wings over me." The rest was up to Boaz. We need to keep the same mentality in mind as we come to Jesus. He is the Lord and we are only His servants. Jesus is also our ultimate Redeemer. Only He can redeem us from sin. We humbly go to Him and seek His mercy. There is nothing we can exchange for His grace. Our wealth, knowledge, social status and everything else do not matter. If Jesus is not your Lord, you need to come to Him with a broken heart. You admit that you are a sinner and look to Him for forgiving grace. You then ask Jesus to cover your sins with His blood. Receive Him by faith and you will be saved. If you are a follower of Jesus, you need to surrender your will before Him too. Express your wish to Him by telling Him: "Lord, this is what I have in mind. But I look forward to Your best for me. Lead me to where you want me to be."

引言 INTRODUCTION

今天我們來看路得記第三章。摩押女子路得跟隨她的婆婆拿俄米回到猶大。路得決定要以耶和華為她的神。她遵照當地的風俗，到波阿斯的田裡去檢食物。這是她和拿俄米唯一的食物來源。然而，收割的季節只持續幾個月。這個家庭必須有更穩定的供應來源。拿俄米把盼望寄託在神身上。在隨後的故事中，路得也逐漸學會了信靠神。耶和華與她在家鄉所敬拜的異教神明有什麼不一樣？這位獨一的真神不會接受跟隨者的供奉作為賄賂。祂卻以恩慈祝福相信祂的人。祂沒有充滿怒氣，難以接近。祂反而以愛接納人。祂做事不會雜亂無章。祂以智慧實行祂在我們生命中的計劃。像拿俄米一樣，路得必須順服神並等候祂的指引。接下來是一個愛情故事。波阿斯和路得表達了對對方的愛。但他們的愛情比我們在浪漫小說或電影中看到的更深。我們將看到信心、承諾和忍耐等素質。這些美德也是我們今天需要學習的。作為家長或員工，你忠心地完成自己的任務。你希望你的努力能有美好的成果。你竭盡所能，但你必須把結果仰望神。讓路得的經歷成為我們的鼓勵。當我們盼望神最好的祝福時，祂就會把祂看為最好的賜給我們。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 暗中的計劃 Secret Plan

自從路得開始在波阿斯的田裡工作以來，已經有一段時間了。拿俄米作為一位慈祥的婆婆，她為路得的未來著想。她向路得提出了一個暗中的計畫。請聽第 1-4 節：**1 ... 「女兒啊，我不當為你找個安身之處，使你享福嗎？2 你與波阿斯的使女常在一處，波阿斯不是我們的親族嗎？他今夜在場上簸大麥；3 你要沐浴抹膏，換上衣服，下到場上，卻不要使那人認出你來。你等他吃喝完了，4 到他睡的時候，你看準他睡的地方，就進去掀開他腳上的被，躺臥在那裏，他必告訴你所當做的事。」**拿俄米關心兩件事。首先，必須有人贖回她已故丈夫以利米勒的土地。否則，那個權利就會喪失。其次，路得不能永遠守寡。她必須再婚，找一個男人供養她。波阿斯是能夠解決這兩個問題的最理想人選。他是拿俄米家一個至近的親屬，他也是一個富有且有同情心的人。拿俄米知道波阿斯會在打穀場過夜。那只是一個開放的空間。農作物收成後，禾稈將被壓碎，使穀粒與殼分開。下一個程序是簸揚。工人把收成品拋在空中。穀物會落

到地上，而較輕的殼便被風吹走。最後子粒會儲存在穀倉裡。那天晚上波阿斯會睡在打穀場上，可能是為了提防小偷來偷農產品。拿俄米叫路得在波阿斯睡著後去找他。路得要掀起波阿斯腳上的被子，躺在他旁邊，等待他的指示。一切都必須在暗中進行，因為萬一被人發現，兩家的名聲都會受損。路得聽完拿俄米的計劃後，在第 5-6 節中回應：**5 路得說：「凡你所吩咐的，我必遵行。」****6 路得就下到場上，照她婆婆所吩咐她的而行。**路得再次表現出一個順服的媳婦的樣子。她毫不猶豫地服從了拿俄米。在古代世界，婚姻是由父母作主的。就像路得決定跟隨拿俄米回到猶大一樣，她無法預計那天晚上會發生什麼事。這需要很大的信心！我想到聖經中的另一位女士，她也是以信心參與一個暗中的計劃。她的名字叫馬利亞。天使加百列告訴她神的計劃。她會懷上一個男孩，不是透過婚姻，而是藉著聖靈的能力。神選擇使用馬利亞將耶穌帶到世界上。馬利亞無法理解加百列的信息，但最終她還是順服神。她在路加福音 1:38 中回應：**...「我是主的使女，情願照你的話成就在我身上。」天使就離開她去了。**馬利亞用行動證明了她對神的信心。就像馬利亞和路得一樣，今天我們相信同一位神。你無法預料神為你預備的未來計劃。我們對耶穌的信心不應該停留在過去，而應該是持續的。換句話說，我們每天都憑著信心與主同行。我們根據聖經的原則來生活。神會在適當的時候帶領我們下一步。也許你必須決定要接受哪一個工作機會、和誰約會或是否馬上退休。當你做好一切準備之後，你應該向神求平安，請求祂指示你當走的路。就像路得回應拿俄米那樣對神說：**「凡你所吩咐的，我必遵行。」**

2. 神聖的請求 Sacred Plea

很快就到了晚上。波阿斯用一堆穀物當床墊。路得悄悄靠近，躺在波阿斯的身邊。突然，波阿斯發現有一個女孩子在那裡。路得隨後提出了她神聖的請求。請聽第 9-10 節中他們之間的對話：**9 他就說：「你是誰？」回答說：「我是你的婢女路得。求你用你的衣襟遮蓋我，因為你是我一個至近的親屬。」****10 波阿斯說：「女兒啊，願你蒙耶和華賜福。你末後的恩比先前更大；因為少年人無論貧富，你都沒有跟從。」**大家請注意：不要讓你的想像力受好萊塢所影響！那天晚上，波阿斯和路得保持純潔。在聖經時代，婚前的關係是會被判死刑的。路得的請求是什麼？在舊約中，用衣襟遮蓋另一個是暗示求婚。三千年前，一個女孩子主動提出要求，真是大膽！路得並沒有說：**「你是個好男人，我目前單身。我們就結婚吧。」**她有權利找一個更年輕的男士，但她打算嫁給一個至近的親屬。將來生下來的第一個兒子將會繼承以利米勒的財產。波阿斯稱讚路得先前的恩惠，指的是她照顧拿俄米。現在她把已故公公的利益放在第一位，那是她末後的恩惠。波阿斯願意履行至近親屬的義務。但是有一個障礙。繼續閱讀第 12-13 節：**12「我實在是你一個至近的親屬，只是還有一個人比我更近。」**

13 你今夜在這裏住宿，明早他若肯為你盡親屬的本分，就由他吧！倘若不肯，我指着永生的耶和華起誓，我必為你盡了本分，你只管躺到天亮。」波阿斯並沒有因為一個女孩主動獻身就馬上接受，他必須按規矩辦事。波阿斯不想超越神的計劃。他答應如果那個更近的親屬拒絕的話他才會娶路得。路得和波阿斯看起來都是敬虔的人。作者用同一個詞語來形容它們。第 11 節說路得是個「賢德的女子」。在 2:1 作者用同樣的字描述波阿斯，那裡翻譯為「大財主」。同樣的用詞也出現在箴言 31:10 中，形容一位「才德的婦人」。我們可以統稱這樣的人是品格高尚。一個品格高尚的人從他的行為表現出他是敬虔的。他把神的利益放在個人的喜好之上。波阿斯和路得在他們的婚姻中把神放在第一位。當你為自己或孩子評估一個適合的配偶時，你會考慮哪些因素？外表？收入？愛情？很可惜，有許多丈夫意識到他們模特兒的太太後來變得不那麼有吸引力時，他們便感到失望。有些太太結婚後難過，因為她們的提款機忙著賺錢。然而，如果你選擇神認為是最好的對象，你就不會後悔。婚姻其實是事奉神的一種方式。你和你的配偶不一定是在基督徒機構工作。然而，你的家庭是為神作見證的平台。人們會把你的「基督徒」頭銜與你的婚姻連結在一起。他們注意你的信仰如何影響你與配偶的關係、養育子女和優先次序等。家長們：要經常為你的孩子禱告，願他們成為品格高尚的人，也求神為他們預備一個品格高尚的配偶。那個女孩子可能不會贏得 Cordova 小姐。那個男孩子可能不會像影印機那樣複製鈔票。那些條件都不比他們對神的愛重要。如果他們全心全意地愛神，那才是真正的祝福。

3. 堅定的承諾 Secure Pledge

拿俄米暗中的計劃到目前為止進展順利。波阿斯接受了路得神聖的請求，雖然事情還沒有定案。路得留下來，直到天快亮的時候。波阿斯催促路得離開，恐怕有人看見她。她帶著波阿斯堅定的承諾回家。波阿斯會在同一天把事情解決。拿俄米在聽到路得的報告後也給她同樣的保證。我們繼續看第 16-18 節：
16 路得回到婆婆那裏，婆婆說：「女兒啊，怎麼樣了？」路得就將那人向她所行的述說了一遍，17 又說：「那人給了我六簸箕大麥，對我說：『你不可空手回去見你的婆婆。』」18 婆婆說：「女兒啊，你只管安坐等候，看這事怎樣成就，因為那人今日不辦成這事必不休息。」那些大麥有幾重用意。首先，它證明波阿斯的確見到路得。另外，如果有人人在打穀場看到路得，大麥可以用作掩飾的理由。當然，大麥也是感謝拿俄米和路得的禮物。拿俄米相信波阿斯當天就能得到答覆。品格高尚的人會遵守諾言，何況波阿斯還以神的名義起誓。我們可以想像，接下來的幾個小時對於波阿斯、拿俄米，尤其是路得來說，是很難受的煎熬。另一位至近的親屬會願意娶路得嗎？波阿斯和路得會有一個美滿的結局嗎？如果你想知道的話請回家看最後一章！這三個人人都做了他們能做和該做

的事。他們把最終的結果交給神。主按照祂完美的時間做事。祂比我們更有智慧和耐心。祂教導我們等候祂所應許的盼望，直到事情實現。羅馬書 8:25 說：**但我們若盼望那所不見的，就必忍耐等候。**保羅在上下文中談論耶穌的再來。當耶穌回來時，神會救贖我們的身體。當我們接受祂進入我們心中的那一刻，我們的靈魂就得到了救贖。然而，我們仍然活在這個暫時的身體裡。當耶穌再來時，神會給相信祂的人一個榮耀不朽壞的身體。你可以看哥林多前書 15 章的詳細記載。保羅在羅馬書的經文描述，所有受造之物都因罪的影響而歎息。我們的身體會衰老。新手機和新車最終都會過時。我們會對最新的時裝或科技感到厭倦，因為這些東西都是短暫的。我們被創造是為了永恆，因為神按照祂的形象創造了我們。因此，我們在滿足於今生神的祝福的同時，也必須懷著盼望等候耶穌的再來。所有關於耶穌第一次降臨的預言都已經應驗了。毫無疑問，耶穌的再來也將會實現。我們應該忠心地完成神交給我們的任務，然後等待祂的計劃最終實現。你與家人和朋友分享福音，但是唯有神才能使他們知罪並讓他們相信。你盡最大努力準備下一次考試或面試，但是唯有神掌管結果。同樣的原則也適用尋找配偶、教養小孩或尋求疾病的醫治。我們相信神應許的同時也要盡自己的責任和努力。你可能會問：如果結果沒有達到我的期望怎麼辦？那麼神可能對你有不同的計劃。不要放棄。繼續禱告、尋求和嘗試，直到神給你答案。

結論 CONCLUSION

當我們盼望神最好的祝福時，祂就會把祂看為最好的賜給我們。拿俄米、波阿斯和路得也有同樣的盼望。如果波阿斯能夠娶路得，那將是一個完美的結局。透過這段婚姻，波阿斯便可以贖回以利米勒手的土地。這對新夫婦未來的兒子便能夠延續以利米勒的家族。因此，波阿斯和路得之間的關係不只是一個浪漫的故事，它其實是一個救贖的故事。一個親屬履行義務贖回近親的財產。路得無法控制結果，她只能向波阿斯說：「我是你的婢女。求你用你的衣襟遮蓋我。」決定權是在波阿斯的身上。當我們來到耶穌面前時，我們需要抱著同樣的心態。祂是主人，我們只是祂的僕人。耶穌也是我們最終的救贖主。唯有祂才能把我們從罪中拯救出來。我們謙卑地到祂面前尋求祂的憐憫。我們沒有任何事物可以換取祂的恩典。我們的財富、知識、社會地位和其他一切都不重要。如果耶穌不是你的主，你需要帶著破碎的心來到祂面前。你必須承認自己是個罪人，並仰望祂的赦罪恩典。然後你請求耶穌用祂的寶血遮蓋你的罪。憑著信心接受祂，你就會得救。如果你是耶穌的跟隨者，你也需要降服在祂面前。向祂表達你的願望，告訴祂：「主啊，這就是我的想法，但是我期待祢賜給我最好的祝福，並帶領我到祢想要我去的地方。」