

Ruth

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[0 : 00] So, growing up, I had a fixation with happiness.

What can you say? And some of you will know the stories that go with that. I waited years staring into the mirror to get hair on my face.

I would jump off bridges 100 feet and build tree forts and then burn down the woods around them. I would swing from vines and hammer my fingers on purpose.

Sometimes, sometimes it wasn't. And I would go to Walmart, because you could do this in the States, and stare at the gun cabinets next to the cosmetics aisle. Whatever you think of it, you could do it.

And I would do that. And I would shave without shaving cream, because I thought that would speed up the process of becoming a man. And I had some weird idea that manliness was most fully embodied in the lumberjacks of Canada.

[1 : 09] Big and burly and bearded and covered in plaid. What can you say? See, then I haven't totally grown out of those silly notions.

Today, you can see it when I play with my kids. You can see it on my face. And at some point, I saw Braveheart. And at that point, I was rudely awakened that manliness is so much more.

It's so much more than I ever thought before. If you want to be a man, you've got to be man enough to wear a kilt. And so part of coming over to Scotland was to see if that was true.

And I think I found that sometimes I believe that it is. If you want to be a man, you've got to wear a kilt. Okay, so what? So my Neanderthalic idea of manliness has become wrapped up in these common qualities.

Wearing some sort of plaid or check or tartan. Having some overgrown, unkempt body hair. Get the girl. Get the baddies. And get on to the next adventure.

[2 : 21] And I think I'm not alone in this. At the guy's Bible study, if you were there on Thursday, if you waited long enough until all the Bible study pieces were done, you would have heard a trail of guys leaving the church as they went off to a Red Bull-induced referendum party.

And if you were there, you would have heard fading with them the song on their departure. When I wake up, I know I'm going to be the man who wakes up next to you.

When I go out, I know I'm going to be the man who goes along with you. And I would walk 500 miles. And I would walk 500 more just to be the man who walked 1,000 miles to fall down at your door.

A fixation with manliness. Get the girl. Get the baddies. Get what you want out of life. And leave the mess for someone else to clean up.

And I wonder if it's just a warped sense of identity. A warped vision means to be worthy. To have earned your worth.

[3 : 36] Or maybe not earned it. Maybe just to have proved it. And perhaps in our day and age, people can be divided very clearly between those who are trying to earn their worth as a man or as a woman.

And those who have rejected their worth. Or at least gotten tired of trying to find it so they've redefined it. What it means to be a man. What it means to be a woman.

What it means to be human. To be fully human. To have reached the essence of what you were made for. What does it mean to be a man? We lived in a world of confused identities.

What does it mean to be a woman? What does it mean to be worthy? Tonight our question is this. How is faithfulness supposed to be worked out in our lives?

What does it look like? What's the standard against which we can tell if we are measuring up? If we are worthy? And where our attention has been primarily on Ruth and Naomi, our attention is going

to shift to this man named Boaz.

[4 : 48] And we're going to find that one's worth as a man or worth as a woman is fundamentally connected to one's faithfulness.

And far from Canadian lumberjacks or kilt-dawning warriors, we're going to see that the worth of a man is not in the girls he gets or the games he wins, but in the extent to which he reflects the heart of God.

A woman's worthiness is in the extent to which she has reflected the heart of God. So tonight our focus is on Boaz. And seeing how the heart of manliness, and it is very easily translated into that realm of what it means to be a woman, is wrapped up in the heart of God as the faithful one.

And it's my hope that by turning to look at this man Boaz, that we men would be freed from our tiny notions of masculinity. And those of us who are married would be given a vision of what it means to lead and live as God's men in our families.

And those of us who aren't would walk away with a vision of what it means to lead and live in the world and in God's church. And that the younger women here would be given a vision of what you should be looking for in a husband if that's what the Lord has for you.

[6 : 15] And that all of us would be given a vision of what, that frees us from the confused identities that are pitched to us every day in every sphere of the lives we live here.

That emasculate what it means to be a man and undermines, erodes our vision of womanhood.

And that this would be replaced by a God-sized vision that teaches us to sacrifice and teaches us to serve and teaches us to be faithful.

So we're going to look at this as layers, peeling back one built on top of the other, getting closer and closer to the heart of God and what it means to be faithful.

Layers, and we'll see five or six of them depending on how you count. Just five. We're not going to fill them out. We're not going to have a lot of time to dwell on any one of them. Just five or so layers, peeling back to get to the heart of God as the faithful one and what it means to be worthy.

So verse one opens. Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing. That's the phrase that we're focusing on, what the NIV translates as, a man of standing.

[7 : 39] Interestingly, the last time this word was used in the Bible was in Judges. And we've already seen the connection between these two books. It was in the days when the Judges judged that the story of Ruth unfolded.

And this is the word that's used when an angel shows up to a guy named Gideon. And some of you will know that name, and some of you won, and some of you will either have just studied it in neighborhood fellowships or maybe next week.

I'm very interested to see what it has to say about Gideon. But the people of God in Gideon's time, the people of God, as was their habit, had wandered from the hands of foreign nations and called out for help.

An angel shows up to this guy named Gideon while he's hiding in a winepress. He's beating out wheat in a winepress because he's afraid of being caught by the enemy.

And the angel says to this guy, The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor. You who's hiding here. O mighty man of valor. It's the same word.

[8 : 47] O worthy man. O mighty man of valor. O man of great standing. And Gideon would become a man of standing in most of our opinions. He would be a judge over God's people and become a man of valor on the fields of battle.

Getting the baddies. And eventually dying, having gotten the girls. Having many wives. And the only son who is of any note comes from his concubine.

And I can't help but think that we're meant to hear the story of Gideon as one with tongue in cheek.

A man who would be of great standing in the eyes of others, but who would ultimately fail before God, even as God used him to accomplish his purposes.

O mighty man. O man of valor. Worthy man. But in the days when the judges judged. In a backwater town out of the gaze of history, we find a man whose name should have been lost to the annals of the past.

Who never stepped foot on a field of battle. And who had no wife at the time. But who was by chance remembered in the end.

[10 : 11] A worthy man. A real man of valor. A real man of standing. Whose name was Boaz. What does it mean to be worthy? Verse 2.

And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, let me go to a field and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor.

Naomi said to her, go ahead my daughter. So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in the field belonging to Boaz.

It's interesting what the original author actually penned. Her chance chanced upon the field of Boaz.

And while we're looking at Boaz, don't forget God in the midst of all of it.

Don't forget God. Her chance chanced upon, by chance, the field of Boaz. As much as her chance led her and Naomi back at the beginning of the barley harvest.

[11:10] That's ridiculous. That's absolutely ridiculous. And the author knows that, I think. And I think he's painting it that way. So that you ask, really? Really?

Seems a little bit coincidental, don't you think? The guy says, yeah. You might even want to call it providential. Don't forget God behind the story.

Somebody's put it this way. By excessively attributing Ruth's good fortune to chance. Purely by chance.

Natural explanations have faded into the distance. And the reader is drawn in to have a blind view of a God who works through everything.

Don't forget God. Don't forget God. But who is the worthy man? Who's this man of standing? This man of valor? Who's never stood? Or ever wore a kilt?

[12:15] What marks him? Well, just after Ruth happens into the field, verse 4. Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters. The Lord be with you. And it's interesting to see, even in this little exchange between him and his workers.

Here's a guy who apparently lived above the commoner of Israel. He'd made it. He'd made something of himself. He'd made it in life. And maybe he was born into it.

But either way, he's on top, right? He's established himself. He has a field, maybe many. He has workers, at least enough, so that he doesn't have to be around all the time. And he comes riding up.

And this is what he says as an independent man. The Lord be with you. And I wonder about that.

And I don't know if you'd feel the same. For me, the commoners that God's placed under me in life often end up in the worst position. Because they're right at my feet.

[13:18] And I'm a real good kicker. I can kick the commoners really good. Just being honest. Like, I know that of myself. And to look here at a man who has workers underneath him, and yet this is the way he treats them, I'm sort of astonished.

Because listen to his words. The Lord be with you. Now, either, if I was in his shoes, either I don't believe that the Lord is actually, the Lord be with you. If he is, I don't know.

Maybe he's not. But if he's with anybody, I hope he's with you. It sounds like just hot air. Or it's the worst thing you could do. Because as people, we abuse those underneath us.

And if you believe in the God who's created everything, would you actually wish that God, his presence, to be with the commoners who've been placed under your care?

It's like putting a kick-me sign on your back. The Lord be with you. And you watch out for the lightning bolt to come striking back. But look at Boaz. Look at the care.

[14:24] And look at their response. where the stuff is made you walk by ever. So you focus on those. Okay, now let's split. Let me see. Let's use E pies. I will try not to show you my head for you, I guess.

Wait. Let's take him for fifteen minutes.eta