



From Our Vicar

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A Most Intriguing Proposal—Ruth 3

There was a trend among young adults in one of my previous churches to plan elaborate marriage proposals to their girlfriends and for friends to capture these on video for Facebook distribution. I can only imagine the pressure among the group to come up with a sufficiently media-worthy event.

Here, Ruth, under Naomi's instruction, kindly saved Boaz from such heightened anxiety. As in Sadie Hawkins Day in Lil Abner, here the woman asked the man.

It's a strange scene to our eyes, a woman approaching a man in the middle of the night and laying at his feet as he slept. In our media shaped culture that could only be seen as a 'come on'.

The times we live in have reversed the process of courtship and marriage preceding sex. 'Sex sells', and under the reign of Mammon all other morality is rationalised to serve the indulgence of our own passions. Delayed gratification, instead of being considered character building and respectful of others, is seen by some as unhealthy self-repression and foolishness.

There is no biblical precedent to give us further insight into the specific action Ruth takes. Boaz clearly understood it as a proposal of marriage and commended Ruth for 'not chasing after the younger men'. However, it was a custom that the brother of a deceased husband should marry his brother's widow to father children in the deceased brother's name and to provide a home for the widow. So given that Naomi had no other sons to fulfill this responsibility, it fell to the next of kin. Ruth's action was therefore consistent with reminding the next of kin of his obligation.

The concept of the kinsman-redeemer is pivotal to this story. This is another provision in Israel's law that placed a responsibility on the nearest relative to redeem the family member if they fell into trouble.

Help from relatives is also something we might seek at times, or provide, as we have opportunity. The scripture encourages us to good, especially to the household of faith. Jesus is our ultimate kinsman-redeemer, redeeming us from our sins and adopting us as sons and heirs, giving us his Spirit as a foretaste of our full inheritance to come. Indeed, he takes us as his Bride!

Thankfully our responsibility to our kin, whether biological or family of faith, rarely requires such a step.

God bless,

Wayne