



Daily Devotionals

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RUTH 3:14-18 THERE IS A PRICE

Written by Rev. Dr. Charles D. (Chuck) Alley, Ph.D., Rector of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Richmond, Va.

¹⁴ So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, "Don't let it be known that a woman came to the threshing floor." ¹⁵ He also said, "Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out." When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and put it on her. Then he went back to town.

¹⁶ When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, "How did it go, my daughter?"

Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her ¹⁷ and added, "He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

¹⁸ Then Naomi said, "Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today."

By an oath, Boaz has vowed to redeem the property of Elimelech and arrange for the marriage of Ruth. But he goes even further in his provision for the widows by providing grain in abundance for the women. His generosity transcends the letter of the law and is a witness to a heart that is truly generous and loving. He is even interested in protecting Ruth's reputation by sending her out, not in the dark of night, which would place her in great danger, but in the dim light before dawn when she could move unseen and with little risk of assault. Boaz also makes Naomi, who returned to Bethlehem empty, now full through the agency of Ruth. By this event, Naomi is assured that Boaz is a man of his word and will act on their behalf.

Redemption is not an easy matter – it always comes at a cost to the redeemer. Most obviously in the interactions of the world the act of redemption has a financial cost, whether one buys back a person or property. But redemption also has a personal cost. The redeemer does not simply declare it so, but rather must turn from the path of his normal routine and make arrangements that are out of the ordinary. To fulfill the role of the kinsman-redeemer, Boaz has to leave the threshing floor at the very time that the true harvest is being realized – a time when the owner's presence and supervision can make the difference between a mediocre and grand yield and whose presence is a hedge against thieves. His motive in spending a day in the city and away from the harvest is not one of self-interest, but of concern for the well-being of others – in this

case, both the living and the dead. And this work will entail careful negotiation with another potentially interested party.

As the recipients of God's redeeming love and providence, we must never forget that our Redeemer paid an unfathomable cost for our redemption. The Son invested in us by becoming a finite human being so that he might act as our kinsman-redeemer. The Son invested in us by taking on the "debt" of our sin and paying it off with his blood. The Son continues to invest in us by interceding for us in the throne room of heaven. In light of that investment, how can we live as if we are not owned by Another?

Lord Jesus, you have redeemed me at such an unbelievable cost and yet I live as if I am the master of my own life. Cure me of my ingratitude and the illusion under which I function. Bring me to a greater and more constant realization of just what you have done for me and translate that into a willingness to share that kind of gracious sacrifice with those in need – physically and spiritually. Amen.

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