

SERIES: BOOK OF RUTH

“Turn Aside“

Ruth 4: 1

There is a scene and song in *My Fair Lady* that says “I’m getting married in the morning! / Ding dong! the bells are gonna chime. / Pull out the stopper! Let’s have a whopper! / But get me to the church on time!” That’s where we are in the story of Ruth. We come now to Ruth 4, the chapter in which we find Boaz in court, getting the marriage license, arranging for the wedding, and then skipping forward a year or more and finding the fruit of the marriage. The chapter closes with the genealogy of King David. Turn there with me.

I. PRELUDE TO THE INVITATION

In Ruth 3:15 the Hebrew text says “he went into the city”. Ruth had departed for Naomi’s house after Boaz gave her a great grain gift. Soon after she left, he left and 4:1 tells us he “went up to the gate and sat down there”. Indeed! He wanted to get to the city gate as early as possible to gather the needed men for the court session. He also wanted to have everything ready when the nearer kinsman came by. Boaz did not want to miss the man and have to spend extra time looking for him. Boaz wanted to be first on the “court docket” that morning. He was early, emancipated, emboldened, employed, engaged, enlivened, emotional, ebullient, exuberant, energized, eager, ecstatic, elated, electric, effervescent, euphoric, excited, enthused, equipped, and efficient. The mood of the man was high! He was about to marry the most gorgeous Moabitess in the country and didn’t want to waste a second getting to it. So he came to the gate, sat down, as best he could, and eagerly waited for the nearer kinsman “so that he might waylay him”. (McGee, p. 93)

Boaz unquestionably knew this man’s name, but this “nearer relative” is never named in the text. His name is purposely withheld. I think the reason his name is withheld is another indication of the graciousness of Ruth and Boaz. The law concerning the Levirate marriage was quite clear on the process to be followed. The law says: **But if the man does not want to marry his brother’s widow, then she must go to the elders at the town gate and say, “My husband’s brother refuses to preserve his brother’s name in Israel; he is unwilling to perform the duty of a brother-in-law to me!”**<sup>8</sup> **Then the elders of his city must summon him and speak to him. If he persists, saying, “I don’t want to marry her,”**<sup>9</sup> **then his sister-in-law must approach him in view of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, and spit in his face. She will then respond, “Thus may it be done to any man who does not maintain his brother’s family line!”**<sup>10</sup> **His family name will be referred to in Israel as “the family of the one whose sandal was removed.”** Deuteronomy 25:7-10 (NET) I think Ruth approached Boaz at the threshing floor in an attempt for love to find a better way than publicly “going to court” with this nearer kinsman. She thought Boaz might know this better way. He did. He himself, instead of Ruth, would take the matter to the nearer kinsman. This would avoid a potentially nasty woman-man confrontation. If this man declined the right of redemption with Boaz, instead of Ruth, there would be no forceful removal of the sandal, no spitting in the face, and no derogatory label placed on this man or his family. The right of redemption would quickly and quietly pass from one *goel* to another. The man’s name is graciously withheld “to protect the innocent” or, as here, the one who didn’t want to be involved.

When Mr. Noname passed by, Boaz hailed him with an enthusiastic “Turn aside, Mister, sit down here”. So the man turned aside and sat down. I’m sure the curiosity was rapidly building.

Boaz was on his way to a wedding. Mr. Noname was on his way to do something. Both men were pursuing other activities when the phrase “turn aside, sit down here” interrupted their journey. It is that same short statement that interjects itself into our study while we are on our way through the book of Ruth. This statement also interjects itself into our lives with a two-fold message. The first part is an irresistible invitation to change course at least for a few moments. The second part is an invitation to pause, linger, and stay awhile. Turning aside has to do with an initial action; sitting down has to do with a continuing action. A positive response to “turning aside” will initiate a relationship with the caller; “sitting down” will develop that relationship.

## II. “TURN ASIDE” IS AN INVITATION to initiate a relationship.

When Boaz called out to Mr. Noname, I’m sure it was with a warm, engaging smile and a hearty voice. It was obviously an invitation that carried the force of a command. It is the kind of invitation you don’t say “no” to without incurring consequences. You just smile and do as you are requested. So the man turned aside and sat down to see what the invitation was all about. I’m going to leave them at the city gate so we can take a few minutes to think about how this invitation to “turn aside, sit down here” touches our lives.

In this invitation I hear Boaz sounding like Jesus. While we are on our way through life, Jesus calls out to us “turn aside, sit down here”. It is His invitation to enter into a personal relationship with Him. He uses different words but the invitation is the same. Listen to how He called out “turn aside, sit down here” to a few folks:

1. Perhaps the most dramatic is found in **Exodus 3:1-4**: “Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. <sup>3</sup> So Moses said, “I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.” <sup>4</sup> When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” And we all know the rest of that story. Now, listen and watch Jesus.

2. At the beginning of His ministry He called out: **John 1:37-39**: The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi... where are You staying?” <sup>39</sup> He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day....

**John 1:42**: Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter). [And he stayed with Jesus]

**John 1:43**: He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, “Follow Me.”

**John 1:47-50**: Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” <sup>48</sup> Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” <sup>49</sup> Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.” <sup>50</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe?” [The answer was a resounding “yes”.]

**Mark 10:21**: Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, “One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

**John 3:7** “Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”

**John 4:7:** There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.” And with a variety of similar statements He called out for people to “turn aside, sit down here” with Him.

3. He spoke some invitations that are still calling out to people today.

**John 3:16:** “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

**Matthew 11:28-30** “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.<sup>29</sup> “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.<sup>30</sup> “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

**Revelation 3:20:** ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

**John 10:27-28:** “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;<sup>28</sup> and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

Every one of us who has become a believer and follower of Jesus were on our way to somewhere else, when Jesus called out to us with some form of “turn aside, sit down here” with Me. And we did. Because Jesus “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” [1 Timothy 2:4], it is my personal belief and conviction that at least once in every person’s life Jesus calls out to each individual with some form of “turn aside, sit down here with Me”. And He wants a positive response.

If you are here this morning and never placed your faith in Jesus to be your savior, He is calling to you right now “turn aside, sit down with Me”. Would you respond with a “yes, I will” or a “here I am” or a statement that indicates you understand your need of a savior and you are placing your faith in Jesus as your savior? [If you made that statement, would you tell me at the close of the service?]

“Turn aside, sit down here” is an invitation to us to develop a personal relationship with Jesus that goes with us all through our lives and to all the places we go. Once we have responded positively to the “turn aside” part of the invitation that initiates a relationship, we now must pause, “sit down here” and develop that relationship. This second part is harder than the first.

III. “SIT DOWN HERE” IS AN INVITATION to develop the relationship.

To sit down with someone means we are willing to pause, linger, and stay awhile. It is in this process of lingering that the relationship is deepened. When we stay awhile we learn all kinds of things about the person: what is going on in the head; what is happening in the life; things to laugh about, pray for, and cry over. During this time of “sitting down with a person” the relationship moves from acquaintance to friend to close friend.

What is the greatest hindrance to “sitting down”? Busyness. We are so intent on charging through life that we scarcely take time to “turn aside” let alone “sit down”. We can all recognize this situation in a common happening. Let’s say we meet on the street. We “turn aside” for a few moments to chat. As long as we are both standing, the chatter continues. But let one person suggest “let’s sit down”, what is the immediate response? “Oh, I can’t, I’ve got to be going”. “Turning aside” is easy. “Sitting down” is much harder.

So it is with our relationship with Jesus. Entering into the relationship with our Savior is much easier than “sitting down” with Him, lingering with Him, and spending some time with

Him. Two sisters clearly illustrate this. The snap-shot is seen in Luke 10. “Now as they were traveling along, He entered [think, turned aside to] a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, [sit down here] listening to His word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.” But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”” (Luke 10:38-42) This is what “sitting down” is: it is knowing how to live a Mary life in a Martha world.

Here are a few things that will help us “sit down” with our Savior.

1. Make spending time with Jesus a **higher priority** than most other things in your life. Until you decide time with Him is more important than reading the newspaper, watching TV, going somewhere, etc. you will never find the time.

2. Decide **how much time** will be involved in “sitting down”, lingering, pausing, staying awhile. Reading *Our Daily Bread* over a hasty breakfast will not qualify. You will need a little larger time frame. I find it takes at least 30 minutes to quit thinking about everything else and just focus on Him with my time. Sometimes an hour or more is necessary. The time flexes just like it does with a flesh-and-blood friend. Some days there is more time than other days. The point is to get away from the hurried, one to five minute devotional, even as good as they are. “Sitting down” is to be less hurried.

3. Use a **consistent place**. I find it is easier if I go to the same place for some “sitting down” time each day. I actually have a couple of places depending on what kind of time I plan to have with my LORD. A desk with good lighting and pencil and paper if I want to make some notes or write out my prayers. If I just plan to read a longer portion of Scripture a more comfortable chair is sometimes desirable, but then I’m more in danger of falling asleep than just “sitting down”.

4. **Select a favorite Bible**. I really like using the same version for my “sitting time” with the LORD. If I want to do extensive Scripture reading I may pick one translation to read this year and a different one next year. But I find using one Bible for my *main* “sitting time” is very helpful. Read extended portions at a time.

5. **Spend time with the LORD**, not with things *about* the LORD. Read the Bible, not books *about* the Bible. Pray [talk to the LORD], not books about praying. I so agree with noted author Jill Briscoe when she wrote about *holy substitutes*. She said, “It’s so easy to be friends with Jesus’ friends rather than friends with Jesus!”...We substitute aids to spiritual reality for the reality itself...Often, I have had people ask me, “would you mentor me, Jill?” I usually answer, “No, Jesus will mentor you, but I will meet with you a few times to show you how to let Him do that. And once in a while, we can meet to share the lessons He is teaching us both.”...So...walk into the throne room early in the morning, all by yourself, and just talk! Learn to listen, too...to discern the still small voice of God above the cacophony of noise around you. Don’t just watch others do it---*you do it!*”<sup>1</sup>

Jesus is speaking through the words of Boaz in the Scriptures to us today. He is inviting, even beckoning, us to **turn aside, sit down here** with Him. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Jill Briscoe in *Just Between Us*, Spring 2009, p. 3