

Do you remember the story of Ruth and Naomi? A famine in Bethlehem had forced Naomi's husband to move his family to Moab, on the other side of the Jordan River. The sons grew up and married Moabite women and then tragedy struck the family. Naomi's husband and two sons passed away leaving the women on their own. When Naomi heard that the famine was over, she decided to go back to her homeland. Her daughter-in-law, Ruth went with her.

Ruth was a Moabite, a foreigner, new to the community of Bethlehem, she was a widow with a widowed mother-in-law, and she was poor. She went out to the harvested fields to pick up any grain that had been left. Naomi knew that the field Ruth had been gleaning in belonged to Boaz, a relative of her deceased husband. The Jewish law was that widows were to be taken care of by the brother of the deceased husband. This was the kinsman – redeemer, a legal term for one who has the obligation to redeem a relative in serious difficulty.

The scripture this morning is found in Ruth 3:1-10a:

³ One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for. ² Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight, he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor.

³ Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking.

⁴ When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."

⁵ "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered. ⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.

⁷ When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down.

⁸ In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet! ⁹ "Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer of our family."

¹⁰ "The LORD bless you, my daughter," he replied."

Naomi is determined to find a place for Ruth where she will be taken care of. So, she sets out to get Ruth and Boaz, together. Ruth is to wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in her best clothes and then go down to the threshing floor to meet her redeemer.

Most threshing floors were usually on top of a hill where they could make the best use of the wind. They would smooth out the ground and pack it down, so there was a hard surface. They would bring the harvested grain to the threshing floor to be trampled upon in order to separate that which is the grain from the chaff. Entire families would come and take part in the process, it was often a time to sing and praise the Lord for the bountiful harvest. If the wind was blowing, they would work far into the night. The men would sleep on the threshing floor to protect the grain from being stolen away from them.

The process of threshing started by spreading the grain on the threshing floor and they either let the oxen trample on it to break it down or they might use a weighted sled to loosen the grain from the inedible chaff that surrounds it. Then Winnowing forks were used to throw the mixture into the air so the wind could blow away the chaff, leaving only the good grain on the floor. It was this good grain that would be sifted to get the impurities out leaving only the best that is used for food.

In the scripture that Sharon read for us, John the Baptist said "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his

hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

This scripture always puzzled me since Jesus was about showing us God’s love, not punishing us. What I have discovered throughout my life is that Jesus, in his loving way, uses the winnowing process to help separate the righteous from the unrighteous. The threshing floor is an important concept for any Christian who is growing spiritually. Both the Old and New Testaments refer to the threshing floor as a symbol of judgment.

Jesus came with a winnowing fork in his hand. In this world today we are being winnowed by the Lord. There is a separating that is taking place right now. Just think about this year!

Protests, riots, setting cars and buildings on fire, looting, people destroying the livelihood of others, hurricanes and flooding in the south, earthquakes and the wildfires in the west, and the world wide pandemic—around and around our nation goes, like the pin ball hitting bumper after bumper as it travels to its goal. We do not even get through one crisis before another one comes—trying to violently shake this nation and the faith of the people.

Back in the 1960’s and early 70’s we saw a similar time; the Viet Nam War protests fueled riots, looting and fires, destructive natural disasters came and people’s faith in God was being shaken. It was out of this chaos that God sent revival! The Jesus Movement had begun with many people being saved and touched by the power of the Holy Spirit. The beaches in California were filled with people who were there to be baptized, new songs were being sung and people were redeemed by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Out of the chaos of today, God is once again sending revival upon our land. Beaches in California have once again filled with people being baptized and in many places like Portland, Seattle, and Chicago people have gathered for worship just a few blocks away from the riots. People are responding to God’s Holy Spirit power and the love of Jesus as they give their life to Jesus Christ, who redeems them out of hopeless chaos into God’s kingdom life. People with spiritual ears to hear are aligning themselves with God and His People.

On the threshing floor there is not only winnowing by the Lord going on but in Luke 22:31-32 we hear these words, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; ³² but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

So now Satan uses the sifter to go over the winnowed grain of the believer to see if there is any way the Christian believer will fail and fall through the cracks. 1 Corinthians 5 that Pastor Keith preached on a couple of weeks ago talked about sexual immorality among believers in the Corinthian Church. The Apostle Paul wrote them saying “⁴ So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, ⁵ hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.”

Folks, Satan may be out to devour, kill and destroy but if you have accepted Jesus as your Savior, God will use our times on the threshing floor for sifting out the impurities within our heart. It is in times of sifting that we realize that our redeemer lives, Jesus is really alive, Jesus paid the price to buy us back from the hands of the enemy of our soul.

The threshing floor is not only for judgment and separating out our impurities, but it will become a place of blessing.

In 2 Samuel 24 we read the story of David who buys a threshing floor from a Jebusite who lives in Jerusalem. This threshing floor was to be the place where the Ark of the Covenant was to reside. In fact, it is the very place where David’s son Solomon built the temple on Mt.

Moriah. Today we call it the Temple Mount in the walled city of Jerusalem. The threshing floor that Ruth's grandson David bought, is where the golden dome mosque is today. It is where Jesus is to come back after he enters through the Eastern Gate. It is where every Jewish believer longs to be, and where one day they will rebuild their temple. The threshing floor continues to be a place of blessing today.

Ruth went to Boaz on the threshing floor to let him know that she wanted to be his bride. When we choose Jesus as our Savior, he picks us up out of the chaos of the shaking on the threshing floor and redeems us. We become part of the body of Christ where the ark of God resides within His redeemed people. The church is called the bride of Christ and we know that our threshing floor redeemer lives. Have you been prepared to be the bride of Christ? The advice Naomi gave Ruth still stands for us, the believers of today. First, Go Wash, cleanse yourself with the reading of God's Holy Word. 2nd put on perfume, draw near to the Lord, let the fragrance of Lord surround you and then get dressed in your best clothes, be clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness.

It seems as if America is on the threshing floor today but yesterday there was a sacred assembly, a day of repentance and prayer in Washington D.C. that was called the Return. I believe that when history looks back at 2020, there will be clear indications that this was a turning point for America. This will mark the day this country turned back to God and we, the redeemed of the Lord, will shout Jesus, Our Threshing Floor Redeemer Lives!