

## Winter Conference 2013

Godwin Sun

Message 3 of 4

Ruth 3:1-11

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight. Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do." She said to her, "All that you say I will do."

So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her. When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down. It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative." Then he said, "May you be blessed of the Lord, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich. Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.

Ruth 3:14-15

So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." Again he said, "Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it." So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.

Ruth 3:18

Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today."

Romans 6:3-6

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified

with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

I have shared with brothers and sisters today we are in a time like the time of the Judges. We can see the churches on earth have fallen into a very dark and chaotic condition, full of famine. Everywhere, many children of God are trying to find a way out. How can we get out of this condition of darkness, chaos, and famine? We thank God that He puts the Book of Judges and the Book of Ruth together in the Old Testament. When we pay attention to the Book of Ruth we see the way out. We have mentioned the Book of Judges emphasizes on gifts, while the Book of Ruth talks about living and emphasizes on life.

Brothers and sisters, often we put our focus on gifts and we easily neglect life. I remember when I was young, many brothers among us liked to share on the Book of Judges and few liked to share on the Book of Ruth. One time, a brother gave a very good sharing on the Book of Ruth. After we listened to him, all we could remember was that his sharing was very good but we forgot what he shared soon after. Our brothers shared on various judges; and all the great and exciting things they had done. The ones who shared wanted their lives to be great and exciting; likewise, the young brethren who listened also wanted their lives to be great and exciting. I do not know if brothers and sisters want great and exciting lives. We want God to give us gifts so that we can be like the judges, so we can live a life that is very exciting and colorful. But of course, there are many Christians who feel that they do not have such ambition. We just want our lives to be peaceful, to be abundant, and if possible to live a rather colorful life. Even without great fame, we are happy with just a little fame. Or, we can follow those who are famous so we can share their glory. Many of us have this kind of thinking. Later on, the Lord reminded me that the most important thing for us Christians is that we can live a meaningful life. There are not many who can live a great and exciting life.

It is good if we can live healthily, peacefully, and happily, but this does not mean we can live meaningfully. The most important thing for Christians is to live a life that is meaningful. Thank God the Book of Ruth is such a book. It teaches us to live meaningfully. We are all ordinary people, right? But we can live a life that is very meaningful.

Just like the characters in the Book of Ruth: They were very ordinary people yet their lives were very meaningful. The Book of Ruth tells us if we want to live a meaningful life, we need to be filled and satisfied in our spirit. We must pray to the Lord to draw us with His love so we can have a desire to love spiritual matters. We also need to ask the Lord to keep us so that we have a pure appetite for God. Just as Peter said, we should desire the pure spiritual milk. This means not to ruin our spiritual appetite. Today, the reason why many children of God are living an unhealthy spiritual life is because their spiritual appetite is ruined. They do not have a desire for pure spiritual things. They like all kinds of mixtures. For those who have children, we know

that once the child's appetite is ruined, the child's growth will not be healthy. We all hope that our children will eat food that is pure from a young age. We know if we want our children to grow healthily, they need food that is pure.

We feel in Christianity today, most of God's children's appetite is ruined. They do not have a desire for pure spiritual matters and they reject them. How can their lives be healthy? If we want to live a meaningful life before God, we need to seek after true satisfaction in our spirit. This is something you can seek before God in your individual life. Because the life of the Lord is in you, He already abides in you; you can fellowship with Him every day. You can be nourished by His words. Your life can be provided for by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord help us to be ones who are well-fed in our spirit. Just as David said, "My cup overflows." You can see the life of a Christian is a life that overflows. How restful and joyous it is! Their lives will have strength. Therefore, brothers and sisters, in order for our Christian life to be meaningful, the Book of Ruth tells us we must first seek after the abundance in spirit.

Also, we have already mentioned about it yesterday, we need to accept the guidance of God in our daily lives. And of course, sometimes, the Lord uses man to guide us just as Naomi guided Ruth. Naomi was an experienced mother-in-law and the guidance she provided for Ruth was based on God's will. Today, servants of God or many brothers and sisters can provide guidance for us in the word of God and we ought to listen to them. But more importantly, we need to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit from within. In the last days of John, he mentioned the teaching of the anointing. Every brother and sister have this teaching of the anointing. Even right after you are saved, you receive the teaching. I often reflect on my salvation when I was young. I did not read the Bible, and I had very little knowledge on spiritual matters, yet the guidance of the Holy Spirit was very clear in my daily living. Brothers and sisters, we cannot depart from this life of the teaching of the anointing all the days of our lives.

Yesterday we mentioned for one to obey the guidance of the Holy Spirit, one needs to learn to deny the self, because our own will is very strong. Many among us are in their middle age or in their old age when we are saved, we are so used to living in our self for many years. This is how I always go about my business and now all of a sudden, another is here to tell me how to do things differently. How difficult it is. For a little child, it is rather easy to direct him when he is still young. I notice when a child is about three or four years old, it becomes very difficult to direct them. They try to direct you, tell you to do this and that. Brothers and sisters, you can see the self is so strong. We need to be like Ruth who is willing to obey the guidance.

There are many places in the Bible that describe the self. I would like to point out a few important matters that we ought to learn before the Lord. First, we should never be conceited. It is so easy for the self to be conceited. Anytime you are conceited, it will be difficult for you to accept guidance. Second, we cannot be stubborn. Some people are stubborn until the end. Even though we clearly know we are in the wrong, we rather stay wrong until the end. This is very sad. In our hearts we know it is wrong but we continue with what we are doing. This is a great tragedy. Forgive me for saying this, sometimes when I attend memorial services, I feel envious of some of those who died, while I feel sorry for others. Some clearly had the opportunity from the Lord to repent but they were so stubborn, so they did not change even until they died. How sad this is. This is the influence of the self.

We must be those who can repent once we realize we are in the wrong. Repentance is a blessing. This is a life-long lesson. Brothers and sisters, at any moment, for any matter, when the Holy Spirit shines upon us and tells us we are wrong, we have to turn around immediately. It is then we can live a meaningful life. Otherwise, it will be very difficult. Some of the words in a hymn put it very well when it says, "Because of the love for the Lord, I am willing to submit to the smallest command from the Holy Spirit." This is truly one who knows God, one who truly knows how to live before God. So, the second important matter the Book of Ruth tells us is to accept the guidance from within.

The third matter, which is what we are going to share this morning, is that there is one thing we need to seek in our daily living and service: How do we let the Lord accomplish what He wishes to accomplish in our lives. In chapter 3 of the Book of Ruth, this path is clearly laid out before us. We know clearly that the work of God can only be accomplished by God Himself.

It is true that the Bible tells us God wishes to accomplish His glorious will with man. But in fact, God's work can only be completed by Himself. So, what are we seeking after today? It is how we can let God accomplish His work in us. Wonderfully in chapter 3, this truth is revealed very clearly to us. Brothers and sisters, there are two very important points in this chapter. The first point: God is responsible in completing His work. We are only responsible to unite with Him in His death. This is a general principle of Christian living and work. We often think that God calls us to co-work with Him. We know it is wrong to think that we are to work for God. But we think that we are called to co-work with God and we roll up our sleeves and tell God that we are now working with Him. We strive, giving up our time and energy. Brothers and sisters, what does it mean to co-work with God? It means your responsibility is to die to yourself. The more thoroughly we die, the easier His work will be, and the more He can accomplish.

Therefore, in chapter 3 of the Book of Ruth, this story is illustrated. We are not working for God by our own strength today. Many times, we truly do not understand how great our God is. Because our Lord Jesus was the Word became flesh and came to this world, we see Him as a man and we even think He was a man of Nazareth. It seems like we are even smarter than Him, so we try to help Him out, and we often want to do something for Him. Brothers and sisters, God does not need you to do His work. Do you know how great our God is? Even heaven and earth cannot contain Him. His greatness is beyond your imagination. I truly appreciate the prayers of Nehemiah and Daniel in the Old Testament. When they prayed, they called God as the great and awesome God. Their hearts touched the unfathomable greatness of God. The authorities on earth are nothing before Him. Brothers and sisters, we need to understand how great our God is and we can never be His counselor. We cannot offer Him any help either. All we can do, as told in the Book of Ruth, is to die to ourselves. It is good enough when you do not stand in His way and let Him accomplish His work in you. How important this is. We thank the Lord that He continues to use His words to remind us.

When we read chapter 3 of the Book of Ruth, we are amazed to see that before the Lord went on the cross to complete His work, and before the Holy Spirit opened up the meaning of dying with Him, the Holy Spirit already revealed the meaning of this truth through the story of Naomi and Ruth. I believe the one who recorded this history had no idea what the Lord would complete on the cross in the future, yet he recorded this story according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This story has wonderfully illustrated our experience of dying with Christ. Brothers and sisters, if you read the Book of Ruth carefully, you can see that each chapter is a picture, a very animated picture. It seems every character is living before you. The words used by the Holy Spirit are indeed beautiful and there are deep meanings expressed within these words. God has done meticulous work in these ordinary people. No wonder when Paul wrote Ephesians 2, he described us as a masterpiece in God's hand. The original meaning of a masterpiece is a poem. It is a treasured item. I often feel that when it comes to our spiritual work and life, they should be a piece of art in an artist's hands. They should not be the work of an ordinary painter. We know there are many paintings in the world that are very rough. But spiritual matters should be an art. They should be fine art. Sometimes when I read the Bible, I sigh from within. It seems many of the precious matters have been lost and so much of what we come across today are very shallow and rough. You can even feel it when you are singing hymns. Many of the hymns from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries are the results of brothers' and sisters' experience of following the Lord. Today it seems some of the hymns are the result of head knowledge, maybe they are even written while someone is sipping his coffee. They are not the same. Spiritual matters are very fine. Please remember this is the work of God. What kind of God is our God? Will God accept the rough and thoughtless work from our hands?

I remember something that happened many years ago in San Francisco. There was an elderly brother who was very gifted, and he forced me to share a message at the meeting that day. So unwillingly, I spoke that day. After I spoke for an hour, he began to pray and he prayed for an hour. I have never encountered something like this: He prayed using all the words in my message. The next day I went to his home. He loved me very much and said to me, "Brother, the meaning in your message was okay but the message itself was too rough. It was not fine enough." Our brother was very experienced and his messages were very fine. His thoughts on God's words were very deep. The Lord also gave him the gift of eloquence. He told us that the brothers before us often said, "The word of the Lord needs to be pushed out by the Spirit." Even though I still do not understand what this means, the reminder I received at that time helped me greatly in my future services.

It is not only a matter of preaching a message; more importantly, it is about the way we live. Brothers and sisters, Christian living is an art. It is not a rough piece of work of an ordinary painter. God uses very fine descriptions in the Book of Ruth. We know that the truth about dying with the Lord was not revealed until the Lord Jesus accomplished the salvation on the cross about one thousand years later, until the Holy Spirit revealed it through the letters of Paul. But long before this truth was revealed, God already showed us this truth through these pictures. When we put these two things together, we can have a deeper understanding of Paul's letters and we can see this beautiful picture. It is such wonderful guidance from God. When we return to Ruth chapter 3, we must remember this principle: History is only a phenomenon, and a story is only an outward manifestation; behind them is the governing of God's glorious will. This is a great help for us today.

In the beginning of Ruth chapter 3, we see Naomi truly loved her daughter-in-law and she cared much for her. Naomi told Ruth she would seek security for her so it would be well with her. Seeking security means finding a home. We know that once we are saved, we have become children who have returned home. Not only do we have our little homes on earth, we even have

a perfect home now. We know that our home on earth is temporary; one day they will come to an end, and they are not our true homes. Only the house of God will last eternally and that is our true rest. Naomi already had that beautiful thought at that time, and she wished it would be well with her daughter-in-law, Ruth. This is the thought that God has toward us. Not only does God establish His home, He wants His home to be our home, a place of security, rest, and provision for us. Therefore, when Naomi had such a thought, she made a suggestion to Ruth. That was a very special suggestion. Brothers and sisters, this was the Holy Spirit explaining spiritual matters. For those of you who are parents, do not use this as an example for your children. There is no such teaching from God in the Bible and there is no confirmation of such teaching in other books of the Bible. We do not know why Naomi had such a thought as it was a strange thought. Many who study the Bible are interested in this story and try to find out how this came about. Truly speaking, I do not have any idea but I understand one thing: God wants to speak to us and He uses this story to speak to us. He does not want us to pay attention to the outward phenomenon because the spiritual meaning behind it is the most important thing. Naomi had made this very unique arrangement. Do not think Naomi was old, she was very perceptive. Ever since she heard Ruth had encountered Boaz, she knew Boaz was their close kinsman and she understood there was such a law that a close kinsman could be of help to them. And she began to ponder how to get them together; therefore, she paid close attention to Boaz's daily routine. She said that he would winnow barley at the threshing floor that night. I think Naomi had made long observations of Boaz in order to find out any opportunity she could use. I believed this was a result of her careful observation and she told Ruth that Boaz would winnow barley at the threshing floor that night.

When we read this, a picture easily comes to mind. When the Bible mentions the field of Boaz, it refers to the place where the Lord Jesus did the work of separation. The Gospel Books mention the Lord will thoroughly clear His threshing floor. We understand the meaning of winnowing barley. Because when the crop is gathered, it is mixed with dust and chaff. When the wind blows in the evening, people use a fork to lift up the crop and to winnow the barley. The chaff is blown away and the wheat grain is left. What do we see in this picture? First, God is separating the one with life from the one without life. We know that this is still the work of God in the church today. The Lord is to separate that which has life from that which has no life. And the work of the cross is to separate the old creation from the new creation. Therefore, the verse "He would winnow barley at the threshing floor tonight." tells us the important work of the Lord Jesus.

And Naomi said to Ruth, "Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes." Brothers and sisters, we can understand some important principles of drawing close to the Lord from these words. These were the ways of the priests in the Old Testament. Every time when the priests entered into the Tabernacle to serve, they had to wash their bodies, anoint themselves, and change their clothes. Today when we come before the Lord, the first thing we need is to be cleansed. We are forever grateful to the Lord, as we are earthly and full of filth and corruption. How could we draw near to our God? It is through the cleansing by His blood. Today, we know that without the blood of Jesus Christ, we cannot draw near to God. But in our experience, many of us do not value the cleansing by Jesus' blood. We come before God with our filth. This is not acceptable to God. As for the anointing, we know that we need the anointing of the Holy Spirit. As for changing of clothes, it means to clothe ourselves with Christ.

These are some basic teachings of the truth in the New Testament. Therefore, brothers and sisters, first we need to consecrate ourselves. This is something we need to do every time we come before God. I often feel that we are so used to coming to the gathering, and on Sundays we rush to the gathering place right after breakfast. After we sit down for the Bread Breaking service, we begin to eat and drink. Brothers and sisters, let us remember these words. Every time we come before the Lord, we must be cleansed by His blood; He will anoint us, and we need to clothe ourselves with Christ. Even though I have been serving the Lord for quite some time, I need to continue to remind myself because sometimes, unavoidably, we get contaminated in our daily lives.

When we encounter misfortune, sometimes we become discouraged and sorrowful, but we cannot stop coming to meetings. It is especially true for us who are serving. Some brothers and sisters may stay home and not go to meeting because they are not in a good mood. But even if I am in a bad mood, I cannot stay home. Before I go to a meeting, I have to prepare myself while I am at home. I said to the Lord, "Lord, I am truly sorrowful today. I feel much pressure. I have been contaminated. I cannot go to worship under this condition. May you have mercy on me. Cleanse me, anoint me with your anointing, and let me be clothed with Christ." When I go to a meeting, I want brothers and sisters to see my smile. Some brothers and sisters say, "I am a true Israelite. If I am sad, I will let you see my long face." This will not do. This does not mean hypocrisy. This is your preparation before the Lord. Brothers and sisters should always see my smiling face. This can bring encouragement to others. So, you see there is a secret to the life that draws close to the Lord, just as Naomi said to Ruth, "Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes."

Thank the Lord Ruth was truly obedient. Ruth had no doubt at all. She did not ask her mother-in-law whether that was appropriate. If the matter did not work out, her reputation would be ruined, and both of them would be shamed and even be stoned to death. But Ruth did not question and she said, "All that you say I will do." So, Ruth went and washed, anointed herself and put on her best clothes and went down to the threshing floor. Not only did she trust her mother-in-law completely, she submitted. While it was dark, she went to the threshing floor and found where Boaz was lying. Now the Bible described the conditions of Boaz, "When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain." Brothers and sisters, I do not know what you see when you read these words. Do you see the story of the Lord Jesus behind this scene? When our Lord was on earth, His satisfaction was obeying God's will. When our Lord went on the cross, He was completely willing. He said that His heart was full of zeal because He had not yet gone through the baptism which was ahead of Him. He said this was the reason He came. At the end, He was led to the cross. Of course, it was a painful experience for the Lord, but the Holy Spirit depicts a different side of the story for us. After Boaz had eaten and drunk, his heart was merry. So, the Lord Jesus cried out on the cross, "It is finished." Even though the price was immense, His heart was joyous. The experience was painful but the Lord Jesus had this joy within His heart.

And Boaz slept at the end of the heap of grain. In the Bible, sleep and death often have the same meaning. We often say that when a Christian dies, he is asleep. Of course, it is a type in the Old Testament. So, when it said, "Boaz was asleep at the end of the heap of grain," it meant he was dead. Next to him was a heap of grain and he lied next to it. What does it tell us? It tells us the

death of the Lord brings forth an amazing abundant harvest of life. Just as John 12:24 says, “When a grain of wheat dies, it bears much fruit.” We can see the Holy Spirit has spoken to us subtly behind this Old Testament picture. And the Lord has told us, “If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Myself.” Brothers and sisters, this has been fulfilled. We are among these thousands and thousands of grains. This is such a beautiful picture.

As Boaz was lying there and asleep, Ruth came secretly, uncovered his feet and lied down. We can understand this experience of dying with the Lord is a hidden pursuit of the saints. One who has experienced the cross, his experience is never be a public one. Today, when many Christians say they are picking up the cross and following the Lord, you can easily tell from their faces that they are carrying the cross. They are afraid others may not notice and hope the whole church knows they are carrying the cross and suffering. Brothers and sisters, to experience the death of the Lord is a private experience. This should be a secret between the Lord and us. Every one of us should have a secret. Just as after Samson did something, when everyone asked him about it, he told them it was a secret. Every Christian should have a secret. This is a story of our hidden fellowship with the Lord. Ruth lied there. Simply put, where Boaz lied, Ruth also lied. A simple truth here: Whenever the Lord dies, we ought to die there also. Christians ought to pursue after dying with the Lord. But a reminder for brothers and sisters, you need to die the right death. Sometimes we do not die correctly. For example, if we encounter something unpleasant today, and we tell ourselves that we ought not to lose our standing as Christians, so we try to be patient and bear with it. We bite our teeth and it is so painful. On the surface, we speak with a smile, but within, there is a volcano waiting to explode. Brothers and sisters, this is an incorrect death.

If you have truly died, then you will have rest. The rest stems from within. This is such an important matter. The greatest experience of the cross is death; the greatest effect is resurrection. Only true death brings forth true resurrection. Forgive me in sharing some of my personal experiences. In my days of following the Lord, I do not have too many important experiences. Perhaps some brothers and sisters may have heard these before and I hope you can be patient. I hope that it can be a reminder for you again. When we serve, we often encounter setbacks and difficulties. I remember it was more than 20 years ago, I went with my family to dine in restaurant one day and we bumped into a young couple. I had known them for a long time and I had served them when they were students. We knew each other well. I was in a good mood and we were happy to have bumped into each other in the restaurant. After we greeted each other, the brother came over to me and asked if he could have some fellowship with me. I agreed and we went to sit down at another table. After we sat down he said to me, “Brother Sun, it was my wife who asked me to tell you this.” He continued, “My wife said she has a headache every time she listens to you preach. She said that your preaching has deep revelations but has very little pastoral value.” I had never heard of deep revelations and pastoral value before. He was very blunt and told me these words; these words touched my flesh. Because I am older, I need to be a gentleman. So, I said to him, “Is that so? I am really sorry.” And he left. I had no idea what I ate that day and my good mood completely changed. After I returned home, the more I thought about what he said, the more upset I became. I thought to myself: I had never been satisfied with my own preaching, but still this was not your place as a young person to criticize me. How could you be so rude? The more I thought about it, the angrier I became. I began to feel bad as the flesh came out. I knew about the doctrine of the cross. I realized it was the Lord who let me

encounter this matter. I needed to learn a lesson: I needed to die to myself. So I went to my room to pray. I knelt before the Lord and I felt very bad. Why would I come across this today? I was boiling within. But at the same time, I said to the Lord, "Lord, I need to die to myself. I need to die now." You know there is a gap between doctrine and experience. The more you want to die, the more alive you are. I was feeling very bad. I often say to brothers and sisters, "If you have truly died, you will have rest." It is not right that you are so alive, but being half dead and half alive is even more painful. I was suffering and struggling much at that time. Let us remember, it is the Holy Spirit who guides us into the truth. The words in John 16 are so precious, "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth." As I was struggling, the anointing of the Lord came. In an instant, I entered into the death of Christ. It was so restful within! All the anger, unrest, bitterness and struggle completely disappeared in an instant like a vapor. I was totally submissive before the Lord, and I wept before the Lord and thanked Him for His grace.

Later when I saw my brother and my sister in the meeting, it seemed as if nothing had happened. I shook hands with my brother with sincerity and I was able to continue to love them as I did before. I had no complaint within. Thank the Lord for He does not want us to suffer in vain. A few months later, when I came down from the pulpit and walked to the door of the meeting place, that sister was waiting for me. She said to me with a smile, "Brother Sun, your messages now have very high pastoral value." Thank the Lord for comforting me.

So brothers and sisters, Paul explained this truth. We truly need to bear the death of the Lord, so when death works in us, life will be in others. This is spiritual service. How precious it is. So wherever the Lord dies, we die there also. We must have the right kind of death so we will have the outflow of the resurrected life.

Let me say this again, our Christian living is an art. We must understand this. We need to learn to follow Him in the smallest matter of our lives. When Ruth laid herself down next to Boaz's feet, the Bible says Boaz was startled and woke up. He found a woman lying there. Brothers and sisters, these are such precious words. Throughout church history, many brothers and sisters who love the Lord had this lifelong pursuit, just as the hymn says, "Yes! I would count them all but loss, to gain the notice of Thine eyes." Those who truly love the Lord do not wish for the attention of man, but only to be noticed by the Lord. Lord, if You would just take a look of me, I will be completely satisfied. This is the desire of those who love the Lord. The reason we offer up ourselves and serve is in order to gain notice of His eyes. It is true that the attention of man is nothing, yet too often we live for their attention. We value too much of how others look at us. If you truly love the Lord, if you want your life to be meaningful, you need to have the Lord notice you.

Boaz was startled and woke up. This tells us how we can capture the Lord's attention: We must experience His death and also live in His death. Our Lord will take notice of this. When we read the story of Stephen in the Book of Acts, we see his expression was the manifestation of our Lord Jesus. He was faithful, courageous, and more importantly, he was fearless toward death. At the end, through his death, he was truly united in the likeness of the Lord's death. When people were stoning Stephen, what did Stephen cry out when he knelt down? "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" This was just like what the Lord said when He was nailed on the cross.

“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” While others were stoning him Stephen, he only had forgiveness in his heart. This action moved even the heart of our Lord. We know that on Mount Olivet, when the disciples witnessed the ascension of the Lord, they could only see the Lord ascend to the clouds, but they were not able to see what was beyond the clouds. But when Stephen was dying, he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” Now our Lord was originally sitting on the throne after He had finished His work on earth, but the death of Stephen moved our Lord’s heart, so even the Lord stood up. Brothers and sisters, this is the greatest glory we can gain in our lives on earth. Whenever there are saints who are willing to experience dying with the Lord, the Lord will take notice. This is how we can startle our Lord.

Brothers and sisters, gifts are given by God. The Lord does not value how much function one can manifest, but only those saints who truly die with the Lord catch the eyes of our Lord. When Boaz found Ruth lying by his side, Ruth had this beautiful plea, “Please spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative.” She was asking for her rights to be covered by Boaz. Today, God has given us who are saved by His grace this right; we can ask for His covering over us. Some tells us this covering can also be translated as shadow of His wings. These wings are protection and we can live under the protection of our Lord. Boaz was joyous in his heart and praised her saying, “You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first.” This tells us if we know how to die with the Lord, we will receive a greater grace. It is a blessing that we can die to all gains outside of the Lord. Forgive me as we do not have time to go through some examples and I hope brothers and sisters can meditate on this before the Lord.

Then Boaz said to her, “I will do for you whatever you ask.” Only when we are united in the experience of the Lord’s death will He fulfill our desires. This is an important secret in our daily living. Ruth lied there until it was almost morning and Boaz told her not to let anyone know she came to the threshing floor. We know the experience of the cross is forever a hidden one. What does it mean by “lie down until morning”? This tells us to go through this experience until the Lord returns. This is a lifelong experience. Ruth arose and left before one could recognize another. Before she left, Boaz measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Yesterday we mentioned Ruth was a strong woman. Six measures of barley were quite heavy and she carried them home. The spiritual meaning of this is that if you are willing to die with the Lord today, an abundant harvest will follow. Earlier I mentioned about my small experience and you can see the result was beautiful. If we live a life of complaints and anger, even though we are not at the point that we fight with our brothers, it will still be unpleasant. When you die, it becomes a blessing to others. We thank the Lord.

When Ruth returned home, she told Naomi what had happened and Naomi spoke these precious words, “Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today.” The description of Boaz is actually our God’s character. Just wait and rest as He will settle the matter. Brothers and sisters, if we truly enter into dying death with the Lord today, we will have rest when we die to our self. Often times, I remind brothers and sisters who serve with me that the work of God is a work of rest. The characteristic of God’s work is rest. If you are not rested when you serve, you are grasping the work in your own hands. If your service is restful, that proves it is God who is doing the work. Brothers and sisters, this is an important lesson. Very easily we become anxious and grasp everything in our own hands.

The tighter we grasp, the more unrested we become. But when we die to the self, God begins to work. Once He works, we can see there is true rest. Therefore, we are responsible to die to the self, and God will take up His responsibility in doing His work. He will accomplish His work in us. Brothers and sisters, when you rest, He will not rest; when you are unrest, He will rest. Today, we want our God not to rest because He is an almighty God. We need not work until we are all anxious and the flesh comes out. Brothers and sisters, God's work can only be completed by Him and He will certainly complete it. Paul explained this teaching in the New Testament. I am sorry, because of time, we cannot go into a detailed explanation on dying with the Lord. I can only mention it briefly.

We know that Romans 6 speaks of the experience of baptism. We may only know that we are baptized and overlook that we are baptized into His death. When we are baptized, we enter into the water briefly, but we need to spend our entire life entering into the experience of baptism into His death. This is the true meaning of baptism. It is like kneading the dough when we make bread. After you mix flour with water, you cannot work on the dough right away. You need to let the dough rest. Maybe after a few hours or overnight you will find the dough has risen, you can then make the bread, as the flour and the water is now completely mixed together. The experience of our entire life is an experience of baptism. The more you allow the death of the Lord enter into your life, the more of the work of the Lord can be accomplished in your life. Galatians 2 tells us, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Simply put, if you die, then He can live in you. If you continue to live, He cannot live in you. When He lives, everything can be accomplished. Brothers and sisters, this is such a precious truth. We thank the Lord. If we want to live a meaningful life before God, a life that is pleasing to God, and walk along in line of His glorious will, please remember the Book of Ruth has pointed out the way for us. Regardless of how chaotic this world is, regardless of how evil this age is, God has already placed this clear way before us. When we return to the Book of Ruth and live according to such truth, our lives will be filled with meaning and will be useful to God.

Let us bow our heads and pray.

Lord, our hearts are full of thanksgiving. You have given us Your words and You have illustrated with these pictures the spiritual meaning in them. But we still need the Spirit of truth to help us. May the Holy Spirit guide us into the truth. While we still have our remaining days on earth, let us live our lives meaningfully. Not only are our spirits filled, and we have clear guidance in our daily living, we can also see You accomplishing Your work in us. Glory be Yours. May You listen to our prayer. In the precious name of Jesus Christ we pray.