

“Ruth Goes Gleaning”

October 25, 2015

Ruth 2:1-18

I. Introduction

The Book of Ruth is a rag-to-riches story which shows how God is involved behind the scenes, directing and controlling every situation. Read casually, it’s a love story about a widow from Moab by the name of Ruth who leaves her homeland and follows her mother-in-law back to Bethlehem. “*God happens*”—and Ruth meets a wealthy landowner by the name of Boaz. Boaz falls in love with Ruth and after satisfying some legal requirements for redemption, he marries her—raising her from rags to riches. On a deeper level, the Book of Ruth is a picture, an analogy, of the relationship of God and the sinner. God loved the sinner so much that He sent Jesus to die on the cross to redeem the sinner from the penalty of sin. This raises the sinner from the rags of sin to the riches of being a child of God and the bride of Christ.

God cares for the downtrodden—in [James 1:27](#) we read, “**Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.**” God’s concern for widows and aliens is even seen in the Mosaic Laws, in [Deuteronomy 24:19](#), God said, “**When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.**” Whenever they reaped a harvest, God’s people were to consider the poor and leave gleanings—left-over grain—for them. God gave the harvest and He has every right to tell the people how to use it.

Ruth wasn’t a person who could stay idle for long, so soon after they have settled in, Ruth asked Naomi’s permission to “**go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain.**” Ruth was acting in faith based on God’s commandment in the Law. She was an alien, she was poor, and she was a widow, so Ruth went gleaning.

II. Ruth Goes Gleaning

A. The Hero of the Story Before we are told about Ruth’s success or lack of success in the fields, the author introduces us to the hero of the story—Boaz. Boaz was a relative of Naomi’s husband, Elimelech. This will be an important factor later in the story. Boaz was also a “**man of standing,**” that is, he was a wealthy man. Even his name was significant; *Boaz* means “*in him is strength.*”

B. Ruth went to the fields. Naomi may have been sitting around feeling sorry for herself as she contemplated the loss of her husband, her two sons, and the loss of all her earthly possessions and as

she thought, the bitterness in her heart grew. But Ruth determined to go get grain so that they would have food to eat. So, after getting Naomi's brief permission, "Go ahead," Ruth went out to the fields.

The writer added an important phrase, "As it turned out," i.e. it just happened that she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz. Actually, it was through God's direction that Ruth "*just happened*" to come to this part of the field; it was no accident. From Ruth's viewpoint, it was just by chance, but in reality, her steps were guided by the Lord. As Abraham's servant said in [Genesis 24:27](#), "As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey."

C. Ruth met Boaz When Ruth set out that morning to glean in the fields, she was looking for someone who would allow her to pick over the leftover grain in the field; basically, she was looking for someone who would show her grace. Grace is favor bestowed on someone who doesn't deserve it and can't earn it. As a woman, a poor widow, and an alien, Ruth had no claims on anyone. She was on the lowest rung of the social ladder.

As she was working in the field, who should show up from the city but Boaz, the owner of that particular field—the timing was perfect, because it was God's timing. The Lord had led Ruth to the field of Boaz and then led Boaz to visit his field while Ruth was there. Boaz's fields were open to the poor as God commanded because Boaz was a man of God who sought to obey God's will. This is seen in his greeting to his workers "The LORD be with you!" and their reply, "The LORD bless you!"

No sooner had Boaz greeted his workers than he noticed the presence of a stranger in the field, a lovely stranger at that. Having read the rest of the story, I suspect that when he saw her, it was love at first sight. This little foreign girl by the name of Ruth, willing to accept poverty and ostracism and perpetual widowhood, is out in the field gleaning. By chance—really by God's direction, she has gone into the field of Boaz, one of the most acceptable bachelors in Bethlehem and he falls in love with her. From this point on, his focus is on Ruth and not the harvest.

When asked, the foreman identified Ruth by her national origin and by her connection with Naomi, "She is the Moabitess who came back from Moab with Naomi." He also volunteered other information about her: 1) she asked permission to glean behind the harvesters (not a necessity according to the Law); 2) she "has worked steadily from morning till now;" 3) she had taken only "a short rest in the shelter." [Ruth 2:11](#) indicates that Boaz had already heard about Ruth, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband-- how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before." Now he was about to meet her personally.

1. First, we see Boaz’s response to Ruth. First, **Boaz took the initiative.** After learning who the “stranger” was, Boaz could have gone along on his way, but instead Boaz turned to Ruth with the goal of helping her. Boaz took the initiative.

Boaz then spoke to Ruth. After turning to her, Boaz spoke to her. It was he who first spoke to her, for she would not have dared to speak to a man, especially one who was a stranger and the lord of the field. As an alien and a widow she had no right to speak to a great man like Boaz. BUT he interrupted his conversation with his foreman to speak to a poor stranger gleaning in his field.

As a term of endearment, Boaz called Ruth, **“My Daughter.”** He was saying that he would treat her like part of his family. He instructed his young men to protect her and the young women to work with her. She was to walk with his servant girls who followed right after the reapers—Ruth had first chance at the best of the grain. His workers were to allow her to even glean among the sheaves themselves and he told them to deliberately drop some of the harvest so she could pick it up. If she were hungry or thirsty, she could refresh herself with his workers. In fact, Boaz ate with her and personally handed her food. **Boaz promised to protect Ruth and provide for her needs.**

2. Then we see Ruth’s response. **“She bowed down with her face to the ground”** in humility and gratitude. She was humble and grateful. She recognized her own unworthiness and accepted his grace. She believed his promises and rejoiced in them. There was no need for her to worry, the lord of the field would care for her and Naomi. Ruth fell at the feet of the master and submitted to him. She looked away from her poverty and focused on his riches. She forgot her fears and rested on his promises. **“So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah;”** about a week’s worth for the two women.

III. Conclusion

In Boaz we can see a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and His relationship to His bride, the church. Like Ruth, the lost sinner is outside the family of God, destitute, with no claim on God’s mercy. But God took the initiative and provided a way for us to enter His family through faith in Jesus Christ. When Boaz saw Ruth and loved her, he made the first move—he took the initiative.

In a similar manner, God made the first move to come to our aid; **1 John 4:19** says, **“We love because he first loved us.”** Turn to **Romans 5:6-8.**

Taking the initiative, Boaz spoke to Ruth. In a similar manner, God speaks to us—**Hebrews 1:1-2** says, **“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.”** **Revelation 3:20** says, **“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat**

with him, and he with me.” In spite of all that the world of sinners has done to the Lord, He still speaks to us of His grace and offers salvation to all who believe on His name— [John 1:12](#) says, “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”

Boaz claimed Ruth as part of his family and promised to protect her and provide for her needs—God has said the same thing for those who come to Him. Jesus said in [Matthew 11:28](#), “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Turn to [Matthew 7:7-11](#). God hasn’t left us alone to forage by ourselves, in [Matthew 28:20](#) Jesus said, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” [James 1:5](#) says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.” Paul wrote in [Ephesians 3:20](#) that God “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.” The promises of God go on and on.

Our response to the love and promises of God should be that of Ruth to Boaz. We need to fall down before God in humility and gratitude for all He has done and all He will do for us. We need to look away from our poverty and focus on God’s riches. We need to forget our fears and rest on God’s promises. Paul summed it up in [Romans 8](#), turn to [Romans 8:31-39](#).

