

“Ruth: A Woman of Excellence”
Ruth 2
(Preached at Trinity, February 21, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 1** served to set the stage for the remainder of the Book of Ruth. We're told of a Hebrew man by the name of Elimelech, which means "God the King." The context of the story is during the time of Judges where we read:
Ruth 1:1 NAU - "Now it came about in the days when the judges governed"
Judges 21:25 NAU - "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."
2. It would seem that Elimelech's life was more consistent with the rest of Israel than with a man whose King was God. There was a famine in the land (most likely God's judgment upon Israel's sin) and so Elimelech made the choice of compromise. He chose to leave the presence of God's people and the place of God's worship and move his family to live in the pagan land of Moab.
3. The consequence of this decision resulted in his two sons marrying Moabite women. By the time we reach **Verse 5** we find that Elimelech has died and his two sons have died leaving behind three grieving widows.
4. Orpah returns to dwell with her kinsmen and worship the Moabite gods. Ruth, on the other hand, demonstrated wonderful loyalty to Naomi and determines to unite with Naomi's people and follow her God—testimony of God's grace upon her.
5. Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem to reunite with the God's people, only Naomi has fallen into a slew of despond—grief and bitterness has swallowed her.
Ruth 1:20-21 NAU - "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹ "I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"
6. As we enter **Chapter 2** our eyes are immediately turned to Ruth. We already know her to be a woman of faith and loyalty, a woman of high character. In this chapter her character continues to be displayed before us.
7. Tonight I want to gaze upon Ruth's high character. I title this evening's sermon, "Ruth: A Woman of Excellence."
What are some of the characteristics of a woman of excellence?

I. A woman of loyalty –

Ruth 1:22 NAU - "So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess"

Verse 23 - "And she lived with her mother-in-law."

A. We have already seen her great loyalty to her mother-in-law

1. Orpah left and returned to her people and her gods
Ruth, on the other hand could not be dissuaded from following after Naomi

Ruth 1:16-17 NAU - "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. ¹⁷ "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me."

2. Now we find that she remained true to her pledge – **Verse 23**

Ruth 2:23-3:1 NAU - "And she lived with her mother-in-law. "

This means day by day throughout the barley harvest Ruth went to glean and day by day she brought home the grain in order to take care of Naomi.

B. We seldom see such loyalty today

1. Husbands and wives are unfaithful to each other
2. Many members of the modern church have little loyalty to their church – They leave at the slightest provocation always looking for something new
3. Pastors will leave their churches for no better reason than a better offer. On the flip-side pastors find themselves out of a job often because of pettiness with the members of the church or simply a desire for change
4. A loyal friend is a true treasure and hard to find

Proverbs 20:6 NAU - "Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, But who can find a trustworthy man?"

Proverbs 18:24 NAU - "But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

5. Worst of all, few professing Christians show unwavering loyalty to Christ.
6. Our greatest model for loyalty and faithfulness is Christ who was faithful to the Father and to us, His Bride.

C. A true woman of excellence is a woman of loyalty

1. The importance of loyalty should be taught at an early age – loyalty to family, loyalty to friendships. Loyalty to the church should be demonstrated.
2. Older women should demonstrate loyalty as well as teach it to the younger women – to be faithful to their husbands and children, and homes
Titus 2:4-5 NAU - "that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored."
3. The man who finds an excellent wife has found a true treasure. He trusts her loyalty

Proverbs 31:1 NAS - "The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. ¹² She does him good and not evil All the days of her life."

II. A woman of initiative and hard work –

Verse 2 - "Please let me go to the field and glean"

See also **Verse 11**

A. Notice, she doesn't wait for Naomi to suggest it

1. We aren't told why Naomi doesn't go with her. She is past child-bearing years but not feeble. We aren't told of any physical limitations. She had no problem making the trip from Moab. Most likely her bitterness has left her incapacitated. Or perhaps she's just too proud to beg. Remember, Naomi is probably from the aristocratic society. She simply tells Ruth, "Go"
2. Nor are we told why the ladies of the town are not gracious to help these destitute widows get on their feet.
3. But our attention is kept on Ruth. It was Ruth who took the initiative. She saw the need and she put her heart to the task. She was determined to care for her mother-in-law. In **Verse 14** we find Ruth being blessed in being given a meal. She ate to her full.

Ruth 2:14 NAU - "At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left."

But notice what she did with the remaining food.

Ruth 2:18 NAU - "She took *it* up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took *it* out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied."

4. Ruth was a hard worker

Verse 7 - "she came and has remained from the morning until now"

Verse 17 - "So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned"

B. This character trait is common among women of character. They are industrious and hardworking

1. Notice the excellent wife in Proverbs 31

Proverbs 31:14-16 NAU - "She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar. ¹⁵ She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens. ¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard."

2. She is always looking for ways to care for her home. She is under the leadership of her husband but she takes the initiative in her labors

Proverbs 31:24-27 NAU - "he makes linen garments and sells *them*, And supplies belts to the tradesmen. ²⁵ Strength and dignity are her clothing, And she smiles at the future. ²⁶ She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. ²⁷ She looks well to the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness."

3. Ruth was not one to eat the bread of idleness. She gave herself to diligent work.

III. A woman of humility –

Verse 7 - "Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves"

Verse 10 - "she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

A. Ruth showed humility in all her ways

1. She willfully submitted to her mother-in-law -

Ruth 1:16 NAU - "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge."

2. She came to the foreman of Boaz's field and humbly asks to glean from it
Verse 7 - "Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves"

Gleaning was a right commanded in the Law of God, but Ruth didn't come demanding her rights. This should be an example for today when everyone is demanding their rights.

3. Then we find her demeanor before Boaz as being meek and humble

Verse 10 - "she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

B. This must be the high pursuit of all of us

Psalms 131:1 NAU - "O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty"

1. How hard it is for us to bow before others in submission

Humility brings us to submit to God and man

a. When Mary received the stunning report that she was about to be with child and bear the Christ

Luke 1:38 NAU - "Behold, the bonds slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word."

b. Afterwards in Mary's great song referred to as the Magnificat she said,

Luke 1:46-48 NAU - "My soul exalts the Lord, ⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. ⁴⁸ "For He has had regard for the humble state of His bonds slave"

The word for "bonds slave" is δούλος

2. We are naturally proud. We desire to be heard. We desire to have power and authority. We are given to selfish ambition. We desire to be exalted. Notice Ruth. She has left everything she knows and owns in Moab. She is now a beggar at the mercy of Boaz.

3. What a place for us to see ourselves—beggars before God and man.

This is high character in the eye of God.

1 Peter 5:5-6 NAS - "You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,"

IV. A woman of an excellent reputation –

Ruth 2:11 NAU - "Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me"

A. Ruth's good reputation was preceding her wherever she went

1. Apparently, she had become the talk of the town. Boaz had heard about Ruth's character. This is the kind of character that turns the heads of people.
2. It is easy for us to become the talk of the town, but it isn't easy for our reputation to be excellent. Ruth had a reputation for excellence
Ruth 3:11 - "And 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."
3. Paul wrote that the widows worthy of the care of the church were those with a reputation of good works.
1 Timothy 5:9-10 NAU - "A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man, ¹⁰ having a reputation for good works"
4. It is one of the qualifications for leadership in the church
1 Timothy 3:7 NAU - "And he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church*, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."
1 Timothy 3:10 NAU - "These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach."

First deacons:

Acts 6:3 NAU - "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task."

B. What are the traits you want to be a part of your good reputation?

1. Trustworthy, honest, and faithful – "All that you have done for your mother-in-law"
Children, this is what you want your parents to think of you. Is this your reputation
2. Hard working – Boaz' foreman reported of Ruth - **Ruth 2:7 NAU** - "Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while."
Any employee with this reputation will do well. This is the kind of person employers are looking for.
3. Not afraid to attempt new challenges - **Ruth 2:11 NAU** - "you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know."
 - a. Of course, this is talking about Ruth's faith, but a person should not want a reputation of being a coward, of being fearful of new things.
 - b. Strong leaders are those who have demonstrated courage in the face of adversity.

4. The foreman also reported her humility - **Ruth 2:7 NAU** - "Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves"
 - a. Humility and meekness are not signs of weakness but of great strength.
 - b. We must fear to have a reputation of being proud, boastful, and arrogant.

Conclusion:

1. We marvel at Ruth: her loyalty, her initiative and hard work, her humility and her excellent reputation. The truth is these should be character traits that mark all of us as Christians.
2. May God grant us the grace to live our lives with great virtue and excellent character. **2 Peter 1:4-8 NAU** - "For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. ⁵ Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, ⁶ and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, ⁷ and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."