



Ruth 2:1-13
“For Those Who Honor Me I Will Honor”

Ruth 2:1 There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz.

2 So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

3 Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

4 Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you!" And they answered him, "The LORD bless you!"

5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?"

6 So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, "It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

7 "And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house."

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women.

9 "Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."

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

11 And Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before.

12 "The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

13 Then she said, "Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

Most of you are probably familiar with the story of the Scottish Missionary Eric Liddle which is told in the movie Chariots of Fire. Liddle had been selected to represent Britain as a runner at the 1924 Paris Olympics. Liddle's best event was the 100 Meters, and everyone expected him to win it. But he discovered to his dismay that the event was scheduled to be run on Sunday, the Sabbath. Liddle withdrew from the race, and nothing could persuade him to go against God's commandment. Instead of his best event Liddle signed up to run in a race 4 times as long, the 400 meters, and just before that race started he was handed a slip of paper containing the words of the Lord from *1 Samuel 2:30*, "***Those who honor Me I will honor.***" Liddle not only won the race but broke the existing world record.

That has been my universal experience as well – the Lord honors those who honor him. And I have found what the rest of that verse says to be true as well, for the rest of 1 Samuel 2:30 says “***and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed***”

Now in the book of Ruth, we see both sides of that promise in the lives of the characters. Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, made a conscious decision to despise the commands of the Lord thinking that good would come of it. He broke the Lord’s commandment not to leave the Promised Land, because in a time of famine brought on by Israel’s sin, he moved his family to Moab where he heard there was food. Instead of the plenty he hoped for, he reaped a harvest of destruction. He died, his sons died, and all of the family’s material wealth was lost.

Now we are being introduced to a new character, a pious relative of Elimelech’s named Boaz. Boaz comes from a wonderful family, he is the grandson of Nahshon, who was the leader of the tribe of Judah while the children of Israel were in desert, and he is the son of Salmon and Rahab. Rahab as you will remember was the harlot from Jericho who hid the spies, and who herself converted and became a member of the people of Israel. If you are looking for the Genealogy of Boaz, just look to the Genealogy of Christ in Matthew or Luke, because he is one of his ancestors.

Boaz had stayed in Bethlehem during the famine, and we find the Lord prospered him. Boaz is introduced to us in verse 1 as a man of great wealth using a Hebrew phrase that can also mean a “***mighty man of valor***” – and he was probably both. In times of danger Boaz would probably have been a warrior because of course at this point, Israel doesn’t have a standing army. Leon Morris helpfully suggests we should be thinking in terms of a knight or perhaps what the Scots would have called a *Laird* in feudal times. That’s a fitting analogy because Boaz will in one sense be the white knight who rescues the damsels in distress. He is able to do this because he is a relative of Elimelech and therefore is qualified to be the *Go’el or Kinsman Redeemer* someone who is able to enter into a Levirate marriage with the wife of a deceased relative and raise up a son who can be the heir of the deceased man.

But all of that is still in the future, Naomi and Ruth have returned to Bethlehem, but while they have the family home, they are penniless widows, they have no husbands, no sons, no land and no food. Now in these days of course there was no welfare system, but the Lord had made provision for the poor, and that was by gleaning:

Lev. 19:9 ' When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest.

10 'And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God.

Deut 24:19 " When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

...22 "And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing.

So during the harvest, the landowners would harvest the crops that grew on their land, and the poor would follow behind the harvesters and those who bundled the cut crops together in sheaves, and pick up the stalks of grain they missed. Ruth asks her mother for permission to do this so that they might have something to eat. She asks to go to “the field”, not fields because at this point the village’s crops

were grown on common land that wasn't enclosed by fences or walls. They would make little heaps of stones ("landmarks") that would show who owned that part of the field. Naomi gives her permission and Ruth goes out. We don't know why Naomi does not go out, as at this point she was probably only in her 50s, its possible she was exhausted after the trip but its more possible that at this point she has sunk down into a deep, dark, depression. God has blessed her in that Ruth is not going to let her mother-in-law starve. She doesn't sit around complaining, she asks permission to work and she goes out hoping and probably praying that she will find a field where she won't be mistreated by the harvesters. Because we have to remember, that just because God's law said the landowner should allow the poor to glean doesn't mean that they all did it. Some no doubt made sure their harvesters picked the field absolutely clean and did all they could to make sure gleaners had a miserable time. This wasn't a high point in Israel's history for obeying God's law.

Well as it "happened" and of course the narrator wants us to know that it wasn't chance at all but God's providence, she ends up in the only portion of the field owned by someone who can directly help her. Boaz's portion. And again, it just so happens that while she is gleaning, Boaz comes from his home to see how the harvest is going. Now the way he greets his reapers shows that he is a man who loves the Lord first and foremost, *The LORD be with you!* Not "*how is the harvest going?*" and it is no coincidence that a God fearing man is going to be the agent that God uses to rescue and then bless Ruth and Naomi. Incidentally, would that we in our everyday speech mentioned the Lord more, it used to be the case, that people parted by saying "God Be With You" – but unfortunately we eliminated Him by shortening that to "Good Bye."

Well again, providentially amongst all the gleaners, Boaz notices this young woman, and asks his foreman whose servant she is. He tells him she isn't, he tells him she's the young woman from Moab who came back with Naomi that the whole town is talking about. He also gives him a good report on two other points: (1) That she was very modest, and had not gleaned till she had asked permission to do so (2) That she was very industrious, she had been working like a dog in the hot sun all day and had only taken a little rest in the temporary shelter set up for workers.

Boaz is moved by this, and he goes over to her, and addresses her as "my daughter" – because he is considerably older. He grants her some pretty significant privileges that other gleaners don't get, that she be allowed to follow just behind the women who are reaping and so have first pick of the gleanings, that he has instructed his own men not to touch her and please keep in mind that along with no welfare, there was also no police force. Your only protectors were your kinsmen and she is a defenseless widow. Also, he tells her when she gets hot and thirsty she may drink from the water that his men would have toted from the well to the field.

Now Ruth is overcome by this and asks what she had done to deserve this especially since she was a foreigner, and not a local. So Boaz says that he has heard all about her character, how she had helped Naomi his relative even when she didn't have to and doing so didn't make worldly sense, even more importantly Boaz is moved by her faith in Yahweh, how she was willing to abandon her people, her family, her country, everything and flee to the Lord. You cannot help but think of how he must have been thinking of the story of his own mother's conversion and the stories she must have told him at her knee.

Boaz recognizes that Ruth has honored the Lord in her faith and her actions, and so he assures her that her faith has not gone unseen and that the Lord will bless her. Although she may be penniless now, she has gone to the one person who is sovereign over all things, she has fled to the Lord for refuge.

These are the first comforting words Ruth has heard since the death of her husband in Moab, She loves Naomi, but Naomi has been sunk in bitterness over her own misfortune – Boaz on the other hand, is not only a man of great wealth but great faith, and by his deeds and his blessing he gives real help to Ruth and she answers not merely thank you for your help but **“you have comforted me.”** You have given me strength to continue to do what is right and good without despairing. As the Father sent an angel to strengthen our Lord Christ in the garden, that He might complete the awesome task that he was sent for, so Boaz as a messenger of the Lord strengthens Ruth at a critical point, that she too might continue on. And brothers and sisters that is what is meant when the author of Hebrews says that we are to be about the business of **“exhorting one another”**

Some Applications:

First are you, like Ruth, industriously gleaning, both in your work and in the fields of faith? We live in a time where the work ethic couldn't be worse we are so full of discontentment. And where so few are inclined to do the hard work in the fields of the Lord both to grow themselves and...

Second are we, like Boaz helping those poor gleaners, those who are new to the faith?

Finally, in your life have you made a decision to honor the Lord come what may, Like Boaz, Ruth, or Eric Liddle, using all you have in serving him.

or are you daily despising his commandments.

Elvis example, so many talents, and yet he lived his life following the world. Spiritually barren, books he was scribbling in Gnostic nonsense, Would have been better off had he never made it big and gone off to Moab. At the end of his life his funeral was preached by his father's ex-wife's pastor, because neither he nor his father were church-goers.

Ruth sought refuge under the wings of the Lord.

Matt. 16:26 "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Seek your refuge in Jesus Christ under his wings.

Luke 13:34 " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!

“Those who honor Me I will honor and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed”

O Lord our God, under the shadow of Thy wings let us hope; protect us, and carry us. Thou wilt carry us both when little, and even to gray hairs wilt Thou carry us; for our firmness, when it is Thou, then is it firmness; but when our own, it is infirmity. Our good ever lives with Thee; from which when we turn away, we are turned aside. - AUGUSTINE