

## It is Harvest Time

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### Ruth 2

There is no better feeling than going home. Last Sunday we spoke how Naomi and Ruth came home, homecoming. We read about Ruth's **clinging** to God, to Naomi, and to the people of Israel. **She made a covenant with God.**

We find *Hesed*, God's loyal love towards His creation. He sovereign God is in action (behind the scenes). We also see *Hesed*, the loyal love of Ruth towards God, Naomi and her people.

Naomi is bitter. She is in sorrow and pain. The first chapter ends with Naomi and Ruth's arrival in Bethlehem at the time of harvest.

Let's look at Chapter 2.

**Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz.** (Ruth 2:1 NIV11)

This introduction makes an important statement. This is a patriarchal society. We are introduced to a new character, namely **Boaz**.

Naomi and Ruth need kin, a relative of Elimelek's to keep the inheritance and the land. Israel was a kinship and agricultural-based society. A father can pass the inheritance to a son. Naomi was extremely worried about what would happen to her and to her bride (daughter-in-law).

The narrator gives a description of **Boaz**, a relative of Elimelek's, and **man of standing**. Other translations: of great wealth (NKJV); influential man (NLT); worthy man (ESV); noble character (CSB).

"We are talking about someone who has social standing and good reputation. In this context it connotes not only wealth and status but also ability, honor, and capability."<sup>1</sup>

Here I see sovereign God at work. Boaz was a godly man with a good character (we will see this in the coming chapters). This man is in a position to help both Ruth and Naomi. How?

**<sup>2</sup> And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor."**

**Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter."<sup>3</sup> So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was**

**working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.**  
(Ruth 2:1-3 NIV11)

Whenever we see Ruth's name, we see next to it the trademark: she is *odar*, a Moabite. Ruth takes the initiative. Naomi is in pain. She cannot see anything else. Ruth, on the other hand, is on fire. She asks for permission from Naomi to go to the fields and pick up leftover grain. They are poor and hungry. Someone needs to act.

Gleaning was a practice done in Israel.

For widows and poor:

**'When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. <sup>10</sup> Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God.** (Lev. 19:9-10 NIV11)

Well, in their days this is a good practice to help the needy; **yet** the Israelite often failed to observe these instructions. (Deut. 27:19; Isa. 1:17; Mal. 3:5; Mark 12:38-40)

-Ruth goes out and starts to **glean**. This verb, **gleaning** appears **12 times** in this chapter. It shows how desperate Ruth was.

Then the author says, "it turned out" to be the field of Boaz, a relative. Again, I see God is constantly working behind the scenes.

**Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters,  
"The LORD be with you!"**

**"The LORD bless you!" they answered.**

**<sup>5</sup> Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, "Who does that young woman belong to?"**

**<sup>6</sup> The overseer replied, "She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi. <sup>7</sup> She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter." (Ruth 2:4-7 NIV11)**

What do we witness here?

**The Entrance of Boaz.** He greets in giving name of the **Lord, Yahweh**. It looks like he is a kind, godly man who cares of his workers. Their response shows their respect for their boss Boaz. Also, Boaz notices a new face in the field. He notices all his workers and pays attention even to the gleaners? "Who is that young woman?"

- Not every man allows the poor, the widow, the marginalized to come and **glean**.
- This indicates that Boaz is a man of God who keeps God's commandments.
- The response of the overseer, the supervisor of the workers:

He does not say "Ruth," but the nickname, "the *odar*, the Moabite" not in a degrading way, but with praising. I believe Naomi and the Moabite woman (Ruth) were the talk of the town. (positive talk)

The supervisor evaluates Ruth: "She gets an A plus for working hard. She took a short time of rest, but she is working hard." (Good recommendation)

**So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. <sup>9</sup> Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."**

**<sup>10</sup> At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?"**

**<sup>11</sup> Boaz replied, "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. <sup>12</sup> May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."**

**<sup>13</sup> "May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servants."**

**<sup>14</sup> At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar."**

**When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. <sup>15</sup> As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, "Let her gather among the sheaves and don't reprimand her. <sup>16</sup> Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her." (Ruth 2:8-16 NIV11)**

### **What did Boaz do?**

1. Don't go and glean in another field;
2. and don't go away from here;
3. Stay here with [lit., stick close to, *dbq*] my servant girls;

4. Watch the field where the men [and girls] are harvesting;
5. and follow along after the girls;
6. I have told [ordered] the men not to touch you [or hoot at you];
7. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.

From these statements, it is possible to conclude:

- (from points 1–3) that Ruth was leaving the field as Boaz arrived
- (from points 4–6) that something done to her by the male reapers has made her uncomfortable enough to leave
- (from point 7) that Ruth’s attempt to get a drink of water had provided the occasion for the young male reapers’ action. (no man can touch her, she has protection of Boaz)<sup>2</sup>

In other words, Boaz did much more than was needed. I don’t think Boaz was attracted to her and that was the motivation of all these actions. I don’t know if you can imagine how hot will be the field, and how women used to wear their clothes, covering their head....

I see here a man who **sees a need, and acts on it.** That is God’s Spirit working through this man. **He is a generous man.** Later we will see more about it.

But more importantly, we see hand of God again, brothers and sisters. We see the *hesed* of God, the loyal love of God.

“Boaz’s action is once again an evidence of God’s providence (Yahweh has answered her wish in v. 2).”<sup>3</sup> **And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor.”**

### **What was Ruth’s reaction?**

She bowed down, as a gesture of humility. But also, she has a personality, she asks a question to Boaz:

“Why? Why me? how come you do all this to me? I am nobody, a foreigner.”

Boaz’s testimony is great.

“You guys are the talk of the town. It is all about love (*hesed*) that you showed to God and Naomi and our people.”

Do you see how the testimony is louder than words?

**-Ruth’s response was gratitude.**

She was elevated to eat with them, drink from their water, and have protection, and stay with them more days.

Don’t you love this story?

Illustration: When I was in Kansas in the 1980s studying music, my first job was cleaning the toilets of a big conference building. I had limited access to what I could do in the US. I was on a student visa, and I could work only on campus. It was a hard job that I was not used to doing. My boss was kind Christian man. I kept my word and did my best. After some time of working for this man, I was elevated to have a better paid job in the building. I became like the manager of the building in his absence. I turned to God and thanked Him for his provision over me, under His wings. I continue thanking Him for everyday that He provides.

**So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah.<sup>18</sup> She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough.**

**<sup>19</sup> Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!"**

**Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz," she said.**

**<sup>20</sup> "The LORD bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers." (Ruth 2:17-20 NIV11)**

**From emptiness to fullness.**

God is at work. Finally, Ruth finds out who Boaz is. **He is our guardian-redeemer.** This is so important for those widows. They need a blood relative who will rescue them, save them, help them, protect them...name it. God is showing his *hesed* to Ruth and Naomi.

**Boaz acts as God's servant to bless Ruth and Naomi.**

**Application:**

**1. Show *hesed* to people**

Boaz did not know who Ruth was. She was no one, a poor lady collecting leftover food. He treated her with respect and elevated her.

-Do we show *hesed* in our workplaces?

-How do you treat people who are serving you? How do you treat waiters?

Workers? People who don't have high positions?

-What is your testimony in the world?

What is your testimony in the market?

## 2. Who is your guardian-redeemer?

I don't have same story that Ruth and Naomi had. But I am sinner and I need guardian-redeemer. Who is my redeemer?

Jesus Christ, my savior, my redeemer.

We all were foreigners.

We all were doomed to sin and death.

We are unable to save ourselves.

You cannot do it by your wealth, your wisdom, your kindness, ...

We need Christ, our guardian-redeemer.

**He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household... (Eph 2:17-19 NIV11)**

Lord Jesus,

you are my righteousness,

I'm your sin.

You took on you what was mine;

you set on me what was yours.

You became what you were not,

that I might become what I was not. *(Martin Luther)*

1. K. Lawson Younger Jr, *NIV Application Commentary (Judges/Ruth)*. P 440

2. *ibid* P 443

3. *ibid* p 445