

Ruth 2016 3A

- Our study of of Ruth and Naomi and Boaz marches onward
 - Now that Ruth has received promises from Boaz, she 's enjoying a new spirit of optimism in the land
 - She has a grant of privilege and protection and privilege
 - She has reason for optimism
 - And she just enjoyed a full meal probably for the first time in a while
 - But as we noted last week, these two individuals are moving forward without Naomi, or so it would seem
 - While Ruth has benefited from Boaz's kindness, Naomi was not a part of the covenant with Boaz
 - Still, Ruth has attached herself to Naomi
 - So Naomi's opportunity for rest is closely connected to Ruth's situation
 - And speaking of Ruth and Boaz, there's is an interesting relationship to say the least
 - He's committed himself to Ruth but what are his intentions?
 - Single men don't establish this kind of covenant with single women casually
 - Clearly, Boaz has his eye on Ruth
 - Yet he has given no indication he intends to move forward
 - So we're searching to understand why Boaz hasn't taken another step
- In chapter 2 v.14 we learned that Boaz had concluded their meeting with a covenant meal
 - Let's return to that point

[Ruth 2:14](#) 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.

[Ruth 2:15](#) When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her.

[Ruth 2:16](#) “Also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.”

[Ruth 2:17](#) So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

[Ruth 2:18](#) 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.

- After the covenant ritual, Boaz invited Ruth to eat roasted grain
 - The first thing you should notice is that Boaz served Ruth
 - Yet Boaz just made Ruth a servant in his home
 - It was surprising to say the least that the master of the house would be serving one of his servants
 - I’m sure Ruth was shocked, though I wonder if others in the house would have been surprised
 - I wonder if Boaz’s character was well known among his servants
 - I doubt this was the first time Boaz reversed roles in this way
 - So I suspect Boaz was frequently a man of kindness and consideration of others
 - Nevertheless, Boaz is a remarkable and unusual master to say the least
 - Next we see that he also honors her as well with a huge portion of grain, so much that Ruth couldn’t eat it all and had some left over
 - You may remember the story in Genesis where Joseph invites his brothers to eat at his table in Egypt
 - Joseph purposely reversed the norms of his day by giving the youngest son, Benjamin, far more food than he gave the rest of the sons
 - Joseph did this to test his brothers’ hearts to see if they would be jealous of their younger brother’s good fortune

- Similarly, Boaz gave Ruth this excess portion for a reason
 - It was not an accident or simply a miscalculation nor is it an insignificant detail in the story
 - Boaz is working behind the scenes to bless Naomi as well
 - He expects Ruth to take the excess and share it with her mother in law
- But here again, notice how quietly he does his work
 - He is working through Ruth to bless Naomi
 - He could have told Ruth to bring Naomi
 - But instead, he leaves it to Ruth to transfer the blessing to Naomi
- Immediately, Boaz begins to fulfill his promises to protect Ruth
 - Ruth is given shelter for the night in Boaz's home probably in the maids' quarters
 - It was too late in the day for Ruth to walk back to Naomi
 - She would have been traveling after nightfall which was dangerous for anyone, let alone a single woman
 - And since Boaz has assured Ruth of safety, he can't let her leave
 - Then when Ruth arose the next morning to continue her gleaning work in Boaz's field, Boaz fulfills his promise to provide for her
 - First, Boaz directs his reapers to keep an eye out for this woman as she works
 - In v.15 Boaz tells his servants to allow Ruth freedom to work in the field as she collected the leavings
 - This command ensures that no one inhibits Ruth's work
 - Workers can sometimes compete for the best place in the field as they go about their work
 - Consideration is usually the first casualty
 - Or more often, a worker would simply find the presence of a woman beggar like Ruth to be a nuisance who gets in their way

- So Boaz ensures that the servants know that Ruth has equal right to be in the field
- Furthermore, Boaz goes a step further by giving Ruth an advantage in her work
 - First, remember the law allowed widows to glean where the reaping had already happened and in the standing grain in the corners of the field
 - Essentially, widows could obtain the leftovers
 - That would give a woman enough to eat daily, but it wasn't easy work or particularly fulfilling
 - A woman would have to bend over all day picking through old stalks on the ground to find a good one here or there
 - And she competed with other widows
 - Think of it like an Xtreme Easter egg hunt, where the loser has a risk of dying of starvation
 - But for Ruth Boaz tells his servants she is welcome to glean in the standing grain even before it's been cut down by the reapers
 - Obviously, it's going to be a lot easier for Ruth to gather grain under those circumstances
 - Now's she's guaranteed to find success and plenty of it everyday
 - In fact, I imagine the servants would have had to encourage Ruth to venture into the standing grain to gather it since it was against the rules normally
 - I doubt Ruth would have dared to do it on her own
 - And that's the point
 - Boaz is fulfilling his promise to provide for her and secure her rest
 - In sense he's doing the work for her, or at least he's made her work far easier
 - From Ruth's perspective, she's put in the time and effort and she's seeing a reward

- But in reality, she's being carried along by Boaz's kindness, experiencing a degree of success far beyond her abilities
- Boaz has taken away her worry, uncertainty and fear...but not her need to serve in the work
- Ruth will still work, but she's going to find her work easier and the rewards of that work to be even greater without fear of failure
 - Boaz is blessing Ruth behind the scenes, making these accommodations without taking away Ruth's dignity in the work
 - But what a joy this work will be for Ruth!
- But Boaz goes even a step further
 - He instructs his servants to purposely pull out some of the grain previously collected and bound by the gleaners and leave it for her
 - They were to surreptitiously scatter this grain on the ground where it would be easily found by Ruth
 - Once again Boaz is going well beyond anything required to assist Ruth in the gleaning
 - Yet he's doing it without leading her to feel uncomfortable because of his charity
 - So each day for about six weeks, Ruth goes out into the fields and enjoys a bountiful harvest
 - It would be like a fisherman going out day after day and no matter where he dropped his hook, he caught something every time
 - She must have looked forward to each day of work
 - It could be hard at times, certainly, but it was rewarding all the same
 - And each day brought it's own reward
- We remember last week how Boaz pictured the Lord's call for us to serve Him
 - And here see again how Boaz pictures what it's like to work for our Master

- Ruth's work in the field is a picture of the Church working to serve the Lord Who brought us into a relationship through His covenant
- He called us all to serve Him, and He told us that the work will be easy and joyful
- Ruth saw her work achieve unexpected bounty, so it will be in serving the Lord
 - You and I have been called to make Christ's priorities our priorities
 - To work in His field, not in the world's field, so to speak
 - And He says if we devote ourselves to that pursuit, it will be such easy work
- What kind of work are we talking about? Literally, anything and everything
 - It's not just those of us in full-time ministry or missionaries or even church volunteers
 - We're also talking about mothers who serve Christ in the home
 - Fathers who serve Christ leading their families
 - Godly children representing Christ in their schools
- Godly men and women representing Christ in all levels of society
 - Funding ministries with their personal resources
 - Praying for the needs of others
 - Giving time and attention to those who are lonely or hurting
 - Serving in the work the Lord assigns to each of us...
- As we do this work, the Lord is preparing the field to ensure we are going to reap some kind of harvest
 - And He literally instructs His servants to help us
 - Just as Boaz's servants followed Ruth around and made her work easier, so do the Lord's servants
 - What servants are we talking about?

- Who does Jesus have following us, throwing grain in our path so to speak?
- The writer of Hebrews says that the Lord's angels were created for this very purpose
 - Speaking of angels he says:

Heb. 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

- The angelic realm is working behind the scene to make sure our work is productive and easy
- To ensure we gain results far beyond what we could accomplish on our own
- And just as Boaz's servants helped Ruth without her knowing it, angels work outside our notice as well
- We can see them or even how they work, but we can see the result
 - When you step out to serve Christ...when you make a commitment to follow His word or take on some new challenge...
 - Expect Him to show up
 - You won't see the help coming before you take that step
 - And you may hesitate to step out because you can't see it, but that's why we call it faith
- Like Ruth, there could be no gathering unless and until she entered the field
 - Ruth couldn't see the miraculous provision of Boaz's grace by staying in the house
 - She had to begin the work
 - And so do we...test the Lord...see if He won't keep His promise to make the work fruitful
 - It will still be work, but what a joy the work will be
- And we can see the impact of Boaz's grace on Ruth's first day of harvest

- In v. 17 Ruth we're told Ruth collects an ephah of grain
 - An ephah is roughly a bushel of grain or about 35 liters
 - That's 46 pounds (21kg) of barley grain
 - She probably had trouble carrying the grain home
 - In fact, she probably collected just an ephah and not more because that was limit of what she could carry!
- I can't tell you what the average widow would normally collect on an average day scavenging in the field
 - But I assure you it was a lot less than 46 lbs!
 - So of course Naomi was stunned to see what Ruth brought home
 - Naomi had probably been praying just receive a small sack or so of grain
 - Perhaps enough for a meal for the two of them
- Instead, Ruth appears with weeks' worth of food
 - And Ruth also brings the leftover boiled grain from the previous night's dinner
 - So not only does Naomi have a measure of security in the raw grain
 - But she also received the immediate joy of a meal
- So Ruth has fulfilled her pledge to be a blessing to Naomi
 - She accomplished this because Boaz has fulfilled his pledge to be a blessing to Ruth
 - And this is true because Boaz is related to Naomi and in covenant with Ruth
 - So we can say that Boaz was the means to both women receiving a blessing
- So then we see Naomi's reaction

[Ruth 2:19](#) Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."

[Ruth 2:20](#) Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the Lord who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead." Again Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives."

- Naomi asks the obvious questions
 - Where did you get this and who made it possible?
 - Naomi understood immediately that there was no way Ruth could gain so much grain under normal circumstances
 - Something unusual happened
 - Ruth tells Naomi the story and when she reveals the man's name, Naomi's eyes must have opened up
 - She recognized the name of Boaz...he was a member of Naomi's extended family
 - So Naomi responds in praise to the Lord
 - She says may the Lord bless Boaz for what he has done
- And then Naomi praises the Lord exclaiming that the Lord has not withdrawn his kindness from the living and the dead
 - She's speaking of the wombs of these women
 - The living refers to Ruth
 - And the dead refers to Naomi
 - Ruth has a "living" womb in the sense that she is still young enough to produce children
 - And producing children was a woman's lifeline in these days
 - An eligible woman who could produce children was still likely to find a husband
 - Because a man's posterity was tied to his offspring

- In that sense, Ruth is the living, because she can bring life into the world
- And likewise, Naomi is the “dead” because she is past child bearing years
 - And therefore, Naomi knows she has zero prospect of ever being married again
 - Which made her all the more desperate and vulnerable
- But now at this moment, Naomi sees the Lord is working to care for both of them through Boaz’s kindness
 - It’s obvious the Lord is working to care for Ruth
 - But when Naomi sees the left over grain from dinner, she knows that Boaz is thinking of her too
- This is all the more credit to Boaz
 - It’s obvious why Boaz might have an interest in showing kindness to a young, unmarried woman like Ruth
 - But to extend his kindness through Ruth to Naomi is another thing altogether
 - It says he’s truly desiring to do the Lord’s work of showing mercy and kindness to the least of Israel
- Naomi tells Ruth at the end of v.20 that Boaz is one of their closest relatives
 - Which leads Ruth to tell Naomi more of the story...

Ruth 2:21 Then Ruth the Moabitess said, “Furthermore, he said to me, ‘You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.’”

Ruth 2:22 Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that others do not fall upon you in another field.”

Ruth 2:23 So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

- Ruth says Boaz has instructed her to remain in the field until the end of the harvest
 - To which Naomi gives the most obvious advice that any mother-in-law has ever offered

- Naomi tells Ruth you should definitely stay there
- Not only will it ensure a good provision for then
- But Naomi expresses concern for what would happen to Ruth should she wander into another property
- Remember, this is the time of Judges
 - Remember what happened to the concubine who was abused by the Benjamites?
 - Historically, women have always been victimized by bad men
 - But in this time in Israel, such abuse was especially bad or so it seems
- So Ruth stays close to Boaz throughout the barley harvest and up to the next harvest
 - Barley is harvested in the spring around Passover
 - And wheat is harvested about 6 weeks later
 - So Ruth works in Boaz's field for a season or so
 - Until the the second harvest
 - But all that while, she stayed with her mother-in-law
 - Naomi probably is staying on her ancestral land
 - The land hasn't been farmed since it had been abandoned for 10 years
 - But perhaps some of the homes were still standing
 - So seem to have a roof over their heads yet they depend on Ruth's working in the fields
 - Ruth's work provided enough grain to live on and it also became a source of income for the women
 - For a season Ruth has the joy of working in Boaz's field
 - For a season Ruth is blessed with protection and provision
 - And during that same season, Naomi is blessed as well, though from a distance

- But the harvest doesn't last forever
 - So Naomi foreseeing the harvest time drawing to a close begins to plan for what will happen next
 - She knows Boaz has made commitment to Ruth but not to her
 - So she begins to help Ruth cement the relationship
 - And her plan centers on Boaz connection to Naomi as a kinsman

Ruth 3:1 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?"

Ruth 3:2 "Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight.

Ruth 3:3 "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.

Ruth 3:4 "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."

Ruth 3:5 She said to her, "All that you say I will do."

- Naomi begins by telling Ruth she wants to seek for Naomi to have a more secure future
 - She's not talking strictly about financial security, though that's a small part of it
 - She's talking about obtaining a husband for Ruth
 - This is a two-fold strategy on Naomi's part
 - She wants Ruth to have a security that (in that day and age) only a husband could provide
 - Secondly, she knows that if Ruth obtains the security or a husband, it will ultimately benefit Naomi as well
 - So Naomi says to Ruth Boaz is our kinsman
 - I've been alluding to the significance of the term kinsman on several occasions, and we need to explain
 - It's a legal term coming from the Law of Moses
 - In Deuteronomy 25, the Law provides another mercy for a widow

- Just like the law that required that widows had a way to provide for themselves, this law ensured a posterity for tribes in Israel
- Here's what we read

Deut. 25:5 "When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.

Deut. 25:6 "It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

- If a married man dies before he produced a male heir, the widow of the dead man is given a means to ensure his family name lives on
 - The law required that the unmarried brother of the dead man marry his brother's widow
 - Then the first male son produced from that marriage would technically be considered the offspring of the dead man
 - When that son was an adult, he would inherit the estate of his deceased "father" and continue to family name
 - The purpose of this law was two-fold
 - First, it provided a second chance for the widowed woman to gain the security and rest of a husband and a son
 - Secondly, it ensured that the dead man's family name wasn't cut off from among the tribes of Israel
 - The name given to the man who redeems his brother's widow is kinsman
 - This is Ruth's situation
 - Ruth married a Jewish man who later died without a son
 - As such, she should be redeemed by her deceased husband's brother
 - But in this case, her husband's brother has also died
 - So the law required the nearest, unmarried male relative to assume the duty for Ruth

- Naomi is thinking of this very requirement on one evening at the end of the barley harvest
 - She Naomi gives Ruth womanly advice on how to trigger Boaz to do the right thing by Ruth
 - When we come back to the study next time, we'll look at Naomi's advice and what Naomi expected to see happen
 - And as we explore these events, we'll return to the prophetic significance of what's happening