

DEPENDING ON COMUNITY Sunday School- August 21, 2011

Unifying Topic: EMPOWERING THE NEEDY

Lesson Text

I. Ruth Meets Boaz (Ruth 2:8-13)

III. Boaz's Kindness And God's Favor (Ruth 2:14-16)

III. From Impoverished To Empowered (Ruth 2:17-18)

The Main Thought: The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.. (Ruth2:12, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Many people believe in the concept of sharing, but they often run into obstacles in carrying out their best intentions for helping others. Why is it so hard to be generous with those in need? The Bible illustrates the principle of sharing with the poor through the practice of gleaning.

Lesson Aim: To examine Ruth's encounter with Boaz and his kindness toward her in her impoverished state.

Life aim: To promote the idea that the poor are not powerless but can be empowered through the kindness of others.

- 2:8 Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens:
- 2:9 Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn.
- 2:10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?
- 2:11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.
- 2:12 The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.
- 2:13 Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.
- 2:14 And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.
- 2:15 And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not:
- 2:16 And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.
- 2:17 So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.
- 2:18 And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.

HISTORY:

Ruth 1 Verse 22, at last, Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem, in the beginning of barley harvest, which was the first of their Harvests and after that the wheat follows. When Naomi heard of the truth in the country of Moab—that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread, her eyes of understanding had truly convinced her that God had forsaken her (v21). She still wanted to be called "*Mara*." While Ruth with her eyes of understanding might have seen this good land in its best state and now they both have opportunity to provide for winter. Our times are in God's hand, both the events and the time of them. Barley crop was a revelation of God's faithfulness. If only Naomi could see the joy in that.

Ruth 2:1-3 Ruth Is Not Afraid To Work:

¹Ruth knows no one there (*Bethlehem*). In fact, she is probably looked upon with some suspicion by the townspeople because she is an outsider; yes, she is an outcast being a Moabite. She realized that she had a responsibility to provide for the needs of her mother-in-law. It should be obvious that Ruth and Naomi are in great poverty. Naomi still owns the land which was originally her husband's by inheritance. However, she does not have enough money to even work the land. How could they even eat? They are so poor that the only way that Ruth can provide for them is to go out to someone else's field and pick up the grain which the reapers drop onto the ground. God, in His infinite love and wisdom, had made provision for the poor in His law. In Leviticus 19, the Lord commanded, *Lev. 19:9-10 "Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, neither shall you gather*

¹ <http://rondaniel.com/library/08-Ruth/Ruth0201.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

the gleanings of your harvest. Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the Lord your God." There was only one thing for her to do. She must go out and work in the fields to secure whatever she could find to satisfy the physical hungers which she and Naomi had.

"Gleaning" was God's plan: farmers weren't allowed to pick their fields bare during the harvest. They had to leave the corners of the property, and couldn't harvest with more than one pass through the field. This would leave enough "leftovers" for any poor people that needed food. You know everyone did not adhere to God's plan. Some farmers would throw obstacles in the way of the poor and others would even forbid them from gleaning in their fields. That's why Ruth said, *"...in whose sight I shall find grace (2:2)."* She had no idea of where to go to glean. She had no friends to protect her from the rowdiness which always seemed to be present in the fields. She was new in the community. Who would give her a helping hand? Ruth's situation takes you back to her statement in verse 17 of Chapter one, where she expresses her confidence and her trust in the Lord God. As she headed out to the fields that day, she prayed to God asking that He might guide her footsteps to the right fields where she might glean grain to provide for her and Naomi's needs.

Now there is an interesting statement in **verse 3**. The KJV expresses it this way, *"and her "hap" (chanced upon, happened or fortune) was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz."* There was a lot riding on Ruth's choice of gleaning location. If she hadn't chosen Boaz's field, they never would have met; King David and King Solomon never would have been born; Jesus wouldn't have been born in Bethlehem! All of this, riding on which field Ruth decided to glean in! We might say that this was quite a coincidence. But you will have to believe in God's leading. God directed her to the field of a man who would not only have compassion on her need for food, but also compassion on her need for a redeemer. Isn't that just like God! As He is providing for our immediate need, He is often orchestrating to meet our greater need.

Greetings:

You will note in **verse 4** as Boaz greets the servants that he is very *"hands on"* in his prosperity and with his servants. Notice the relationship that the landowner Boaz has with the reapers: He speaks blessing to them, saying, *"May the Lord be with you."* And see what their response is: *"May the Lord bless you."* Boaz and those who worked for him understood that the source of their prosperity was God. Although they planted and then harvested the field, the watering and the yield came from God. Boaz is wealthy and notice where he is—he is out in the field with his foreman and his concern is to his workmen and the harvest. This also reveals a little about the character of Boaz as a man who followed the Law and cared for the poor. If you want to know a man's relation with God, you need to find out how far God has saturated to the details of his everyday life.

2:5-7 A Hard Worker:

Ruth was just a woman in the fields of Boaz, then Boaz turns his concern to this woman he sees in his field and asked about her. It was apparently unusual for an attractive woman to be gleaning the fields after the reapers; and it is obvious that Ruth was particularly attractive, catching the eye of Boaz. The servant in charge of the reapers told him *"It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab."* He also told how she worked: *"...she came and hath continued even from the morning until now (2:6)."* We are called to good works and to have good work ethics - that alone is a tremendous witness.

- *First*, we see Ruth's initiative to care for her mother-in-law.
- *Second*, we see Ruth's humility. She knows how to take initiative without being presumptuous. She asked for permission.
- *Third*, she went behind the reapers.
- *Fourth*, we see her hard work. She is an amazing worker.

She does not demand a handout. She does not presume the right even to glean. She had said, *"Pray, let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers (2:7)."* She is like another foreign woman who came to Jesus and said, *"Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs"* to which Jesus responded by extolling her faith. The servant over the reapers continue to tell Boaz that she had worked hard and spent only a limited amount of time for rest and refreshment.

LESSON:

Ruth 2:8-13 Ruth Meets Boaz

2:8-9 Provisions Secured:

It just so happened, that Ruth had come to a part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. God is gracious and sovereign even when He is silent. As *Prov. 16:9* says, *"A man's mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps."* Boaz approaches Ruth and shows her great kindness, even though she is a foreigner. He provides

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food by telling her to work in his field and **stay close behind his maidens**. He provides protection by **telling the young men not to molest her (2:9)**. And he provides for her thirst by telling her to **drink from what the men have drawn**. So all of Boaz's wealth and godliness begin to turn for Ruth's favor, securing every provision she would ever need. He only asks her to stay in this field, **Go not to glean in another field (2:8)**. ²The Lord also has promised that He will provide our needs with the same condition of looking to Him. Naomi had to learn this lesson earlier the hard way down in Moab, when she had doubted the provision of God in Bethlehem, and wandered off (Moab being the world's way). But Ruth was single-minded and was dedicated to live by faith – firstly to Naomi and to Naomi's God—whom she had made her God; and soon to come, showing that same dedication to Boaz.

2:10-13 Boaz Blesses Ruth:

You can't help but **fall on your face** in humility **to the ground** with all these blessing. Proud people don't say thanks. Humble people are made even more humble by being treated graciously. Ruth is shaking her head - "*I don't get it. I just do not get it! Why are you so kind to me? I'm a Moabite!*" **Why have I found grace in thine eyes?** She was amazed.

Moab was the son of an incestuous relationship between Lot (who was drunk) and his oldest daughter and as a nation the Moabites were Israel's enemy, having opposed Israel when she came out of Egypt.

So why was Boaz so kind? Well, in the natural it was probably because he was pretty keen on Ruth; But what about the spiritual? Have you come to the point in your Christian life where you just have to stop and shake your head in disbelief at the grace of God? (*You've seen what you are like in your own nature, yet you still find yourself blessed by God*). That is why grace is so amazing. Boaz had given her free access to his field, protection from the young men, and water from the well. All she wanted to know is why me? Hallelujah!

Boaz answers by saying, **It hath fully been shewed me...(2:11)** What we discover is that Boaz knew all about Ruth and her commitment before she knew anything about him! He knew of her heart and the sacrifice she had made to follow Naomi and the Lord. She left her father and mother and her land to come to people she didn't even know. This again pictures the Lord Jesus who already knows all that we are, even before we have begun to know Him. Ruth was someone who was dedicated and loyal without trying to draw attention to herself, as well as humble and dependent upon grace. Boaz did not dwell on where she came from but where her faith has brought her now. We can also look at Abraham and Sarah, following after God!

Boaz is only an instrument of God. Boaz says in **verse 12** that God is really the One who is rewarding Ruth for her love to Naomi. But now notice the words spoken by Boaz, **The Lord recompense you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to trust** (take refuge) **(2:12)**. This verse gives us a picture of God as a great winged Eagle and Ruth as a threatened little eaglet coming to find safety under the Eagle's wings. The implication of **verse 12** is that God will reward Ruth because she has sought refuge under His wings. She has not earned mercy from God or Boaz. She is not their employee. They are not paying her wages for her work. On the contrary, she has honored them in her response of humility, by simply taking refuge in their generosity. Wherever Ruth went or whatever she did, her character remained the same by her responding in humility (*a humble heart*) because of the grace of God. She has bowed herself before a Holy and Awesome God, who has brought her into a place of blessings.

Back in **verse 10**, she had asked "*why have I found favor?*" She was talking to Boaz. Boaz lets her know why. She is now saying to him after hearing what he said, then continue, **let me find (this) favour (2:13)**. I want this favor! She forgot all about her fears and rested on what he had said. Why? Because first, Boaz had **comforted her** with his words and second Boaz had **spoken friendly**, (*meaning, spoken to the heart*) even though she was **not one of the Hebrew handmaidens** but a foreigner. If someone does speak kindly and shows kindness to you, it would be from the heart, then you would really feel and know that you could trust them; you can rely on them. Boaz met her right where she was—someone who was in need. And that's how God meets us! Favor came by God's unmerited grace. We know that there is a lot we don't deserve but God...!

Ruth 2:14-16 Boaz's Kindness And God's Favor

2:14 ³Boaz showed great kindness and favor to Ruth at **mealttime**. It would be enough to have just invited her, but he also invited her to share fully in the meal, even the privileged dipping (*common custom in the East*); sitting among the workers; Boaz serves corn to Ruth – **reached her parched corn** means that he reached in and got it for her lest she be too modest to get it for herself. **She had eaten until she was filled and left.**

² <http://www.jesuplusnothing.com/studies/online/ruthchapter2.htm>

³ http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/comm_view.cfm?AuthorID=2&contentID=7551&commInfo=31&topic=Ruth&ar=Rth_2_13
<http://www.pitwm.net//pitwm-sundayschool.html>

2:15-16 Not only had she been impressed with him, but he was now impressed with her! Therefore **Boaz commanded his young men** (servants) to **let her glean even among the sheaves**, meaning that she could now harvest the unpicked crop for herself. The Law gave the gleaners that right. She was **not to be reproached** and she was to have **handfuls left on purpose (2:16)**, meaning they were to literally drop handfuls of grain for her to glean. Thus the kinsman's provision was more than adequate. Ruth had no idea that Boaz had commanded his workers to be so generous to her. She meets the one man who can change her future and her fate. Not only is the encounter of their meeting a pleasant one, but she immediately becomes the object of his special grace. What a beautiful picture of the love of Christ and His provision for His bride!

Ruth 2:17-18 From Impoverished To Empowered

2:17 It was a long day and a primitive method of threshing. The poor still **beat out** the grains of barley or wheat at the close of the day by using sticks or stones. Ruth **beat out** (*threshed*) at the end of the day and had about **an ephah of barley**. An ephah was 1 bushel and 3 pints.

2:18 The average receipt of a gleaner was only enough to support a family for one day and therefore the process had to be repeated constantly. However, Ruth returned home with an ephah of barley which would have been enough to support them for about five days. A bushel of barley was rather heavy for a young woman to carry into the city—about 60 pounds (*Every Commentator had a different amount for an ephah; all we know that it was a lot and it was heavy*).

However, the field was no doubt near Bethlehem: furthermore, she may have had help in carrying it. She was able to take this to Naomi, as well as what remained from her meal. Ruth was not only a diligent worker, but she was also careful not to waste anything God had given her. Naomi (the Jew) is now getting her blessings from Ruth (the Gentile).

You might look at Ruth as the weaker vessel, a poor foreigner, a widow, bankrupt and poor, however, she accepted the King of all kings, the God of Israel, the Master and Ruler who spread favor upon the least likely. Look at what God can do! God sent the right blesser to provide the encouragement Ruth needed. She now knows that where she was, she don't have to stay there. She can now move from being poor, to somebody that has the power to get up; somebody that has confidence and self-esteem backing her up. We can't make it on our own! Ruth had the grace of God through Boaz. We have the grace of God through Jesus Christ!

SUMMARY:

⁴Boaz approaches Ruth and shows her great kindness, even though she is a foreigner. He provides food by allowing her to work in his field and stay close behind his maidens. He provides protection by telling the young men not to molest her. And he provides for her thirst by telling her to drink from what the men have drawn. So, all of Boaz's wealth and godliness begin to turn for Ruth's welfare. Ruth raises a question which turns out to be very profound. It's one that we all need to ask God: **"Why have I found favor in your eyes?"** - Because as a non-Israelite she does not expect any special treatment. Her response to Boaz's kindness is astonishment. Ruth expresses her sense of unworthiness by falling on her face and bowing to the ground. Notice: When Ruth asks why she is being shown grace, Boaz does not answer: Grace has no conditions. He answers her question "Why?" by saying, *"Because you have loved Naomi so much that you were willing to leave father and mother to serve her in a strange land."* But Boaz is really saying that, God is really the one who is rewarding Ruth for her love to Naomi.

Ruth's will to make it was shown in her loyalty and in her work ethics. Others took notice. Her words promised to Naomi were kept and God showed tremendous favor through a man named Boaz. She didn't come to sit, but came to be a part of a community. Through one man's generosity of being a Blessor, brought others on board to share in being a blessing. Everyone was depending upon another in the community as they gleaned which empowered and permitted them to care for their own families. There will be change in each individual through the kindness of others. It means something when one is helped. It empowers them to care for themselves and their families.

APPLICATION:

When you give of yourself to another individual and they are helped, you are teaching them to give of themselves to someone else. God empowers us to do and give what we can. We just have to depend upon Him! God **will** always place someone in our path for us to help!

⁴ <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/ruth-under-the-wings-of-god>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>