

Dear Friends,

RUTH 2: 20b-23

Ruth has been gleaning in the field of Boaz. She has returned home to Naomi. Naomi has been in a low mood. This mood has lifted considerably at the sight of all the food that her daughter-in-law has gathered. She has become positively excited at the news that the land owner in whose eyes Ruth has found favour has been Boaz.

Ruth has been stunned into silence. Why has the name Boaz affected Naomi so strongly?

Naomi speaks again. She says, "Boaz is family. He's one of our closest relatives, of our redeeming kin." That is, he may have some responsibility for them. Although there may be an even closer relative with even more responsibility.

To which, if I were Ruth, I would be saying, "Family. We have family. People with responsibility for us. And you didn't think to mention this until now." There are times when you can be so disappointed and crushed that you forget what you actually do have. Naomi seems to have been through that. Now she is re-emerging. She realises that she is not all alone in the world, that God has not abandoned her, but that God's continues to show kindness to her.

Ruth says that Boaz told her to cling to his young men until the end of the harvest. Actually, he didn't say that. He told her to cling to his young women. Naomi seems to be aware that there's a big difference. She tells Ruth that it is good for her to go not with Boaz's young men but with his young women. And this she does. She clings to the young women and gleans until the harvest is over.

The mood at the end of the second act is very different from that at the end of the first. Act One ended with Naomi in a depressed state. She was convinced that God was against her, that she had nothing going for her. In contrast the story teller pointed out that Naomi had arrived at the harvest time and that far from having nothing she had Ruth with her.

Act Two ends with hope. Ruth has done a good day's harvesting and has been promised by Boaz that she may continue to find food in his field. In the light of this, Naomi has come back to life again. The story teller however on this occasion strikes a note of caution. We are told that Ruth continues gleaning until the end of the harvest. The question is, what will happen when the harvest is over and there is no more food to collect. They have known famine before. Maybe famine could return again. Act Two ends with Ruth and Naomi facing uncertainty and insecurity again.

Did Naomi look out for signs of the development of a relationship between Ruth and Boaz? If she did, she waited in vain. Ruth continued to glean in his field, but that was all. If this story is going to be a marriage story, someone is going to have to do something. They are going to have to take some drastic action.

God bless you,

Tony