

Dear Friends,

RUTH 2: 14-20a

Ruth has found favour in the eyes of Boaz a land owner. She has been gleaning in his field.

The moment comes for the harvesters to rest from their work and share a meal. Last time we mentioned how our story includes elements that are often part of betrothal scenes. Here's another one. These scenes often include a meal. Boaz invites Ruth to share the food. He heaps it up for her, making sure that she has plenty to eat. She eats until she is satisfied. But she also saves some. She is hungry and needs to make sure that she has strength for the afternoon's work. But she does not forget Naomi. She puts some aside for her.

When Ruth returns to work. Boaz gives instructions to the harvesters to make allowances for her, so that she is able to gather a generous amount. When evening comes and the time for gathering the harvest is over, Ruth has yet more work to do. She beats out what she has collected to get rid of the chaff.

Ruth goes back to Naomi. She is perhaps not sure what she will find at home. Naomi has been so quiet. She has hardly said a word. All her thoughts have been about the bitterness of her life. Ruth shows Naomi the food she's collected. Then, even better, she shows her what she saved from lunch time. Food that is ready to eat.

Naomi at last comes to life. She is full of questions. "Where did you glean? Where have you worked?" She says "Blessed is the man who took notice of you." Naomi has quickly read the situation. The land owner has clearly taken notice of Ruth, paid special attention to her and shown her favour. Could he be singling her out as a potential partner for himself? Is Naomi's mind racing ahead a little too fast? Or has she correctly guessed the land owner's feelings?

Ruth gives Naomi the information that she has been waiting to hear. "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."

Naomi says, "Blessed be he by God whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead." Naomi has changed her tune. Earlier she had lost her confidence in God. It happens. It happens so easily. She prayed that God would show the sort of kindness that her daughters-in-law had shown. It was as though she felt God needed to be given an example to follow. When she returned to Bethlehem, she could see only that God had made her life bitter, had dealt harshly and brought evil upon her. Now she remembers something else. Her eyes are opened again to God's kindness.

At this point the narrator uses a device to tell us that there's a gap in the story. This gap is where Ruth is meant to say something. We as readers are invited to ask what is happening for Ruth, why isn't she speaking? I think she's shocked. She is

asking herself why Naomi is getting so excited? What is it about this Boaz that has had this effect upon her? Actually the story teller has already revealed who Boaz is. They did this right at the beginning of the chapter. I chose to ignore it then because I feel that piece of the picture is better saved until now. Or, at least until my next letter.

God bless you,

Tony