

# Ruth Meets Boaz

Ruth gleans in the fields to provide for Naomi, and 'happens' to work in the field of Boaz, a wealthy relative who shows her extraordinary kindness.

Ruth 2:1-23

CHARACTERS: Ruth, Boaz, Naomi, The harvesters

THEMES: Providence, Hard work, Kindness, Redemption, God's care for the poor

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NOW NAOMI HAD a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. His name meant 'in him is strength,' and he was a man of noble character, a man of wealth and position.

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.' This was the provision of the Mosaic law—the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the foreigner could glean the edges of fields and gather what the harvesters left behind. It was backbreaking work, and it identified Ruth as destitute.

So Ruth 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 Elimelech.

'As it turned out'—Scripture uses this casual phrase to describe what was actually divine providence. Ruth didn't know whose field it was. She couldn't have planned this. But the sovereign God was orchestrating events.

Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, 'The Lord be with you!' 'The Lord bless you!' they answered. Here was a godly man who spoke blessings over his workers.

Boaz noticed Ruth and asked the overseer, 'Who does that young woman belong to?' The overseer replied, 'She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi. 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.'

Boaz had already heard about Ruth. He went to her and said, '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. 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.'

At this, Ruth bowed down with her face to the ground. 'Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?'

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. 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.'

Beautiful imagery—Ruth, the foreigner, had come under the wings of the God of Israel. Like a baby bird finding shelter, she had sought refuge in the one true God. And Boaz was asking the Lord to reward her faithfulness.

'May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord,' Ruth 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.'

At mealtime Boaz invited her, 'Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.' When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over.

As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, 'Let her gather among the sheaves and don't reprimand her. Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her.'

So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. When she beat out what she had gathered, she had about an ephah of barley—over half a bushel, far more than a gleaner could normally collect. She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered.

Naomi asked her, 'Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!'

Ruth told her about Boaz. Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, 'The Lord bless him! 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.'

A kinsman-redeemer—a go'el in Hebrew. This was a relative who could buy back family land that had been sold due to poverty, who could redeem a relative sold into slavery, who could marry a widow to preserve the family line and inheritance. The kinsman-redeemer was both able and willing to pay the price of redemption.

Ruth stayed close to the women of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law. For about three months, she worked faithfully, and Boaz watched and showed her favor. The stage was set for redemption.