

Ruth

Chapter 2

Ruth Meets Boaz

Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, from the clan of Elimelech, a man of standing, whose name was Boaz. ² And Ruth the Moabitess 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." ³ So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech. ⁴ Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The LORD be with you!" "The LORD bless you!" they called back. ⁵ Boaz asked the foreman of his harvesters, "Whose young woman is that?" ⁶ The foreman replied, "She is the Moabitess who came back from Moab with Naomi." ⁷ She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter." ⁸ So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. ⁹ Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled." ¹⁰ At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?" ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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." ¹³ "May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls." ¹⁴ At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar." When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. ¹⁵ As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, "Even if she gathers among the sheaves, don't embarrass her. ¹⁶ Rather, pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her." ¹⁷ So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah. ¹⁸ She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough. ¹⁹ Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!" Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz," she said. ²⁰ "The LORD bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "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 kinsman-redeemers.”²¹ Then Ruth the Moabitess said, “He even said to me, ‘Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.’”²² Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else’s field you might be harmed.”²³ So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

2:1 *relative.* A sign of hope (see note on v. 20). (CSB)

worthy. Lit, “a mighty man of valor.” Boaz’s social, legal, and economic status in the town was well respected. This expression commonly describes a seasoned warrior. Boaz was a “worthy man” before the Lord, as his forthcoming behavior makes apparent. These words imply that Naomi knew Boaz before departing for Moab. (TLSB)

Boaz. Probably means “In him is strength.” Boaz is included in both genealogies of Jesus (Mt 1:5; Lk 3:32). (CSB)

2:2 *Moabite.* Ruth was careful to seek the most favorable opportunity for gleaning (Lv 19:9; 23:22). But even this was a challenge because she was a Moabite. (TLSB)

Let me go. Although Ruth is an alien and, as a young woman alone, obviously quite vulnerable in the harvest fields, she undertakes to provide for her mother-in-law. In 3:1 Naomi undertakes to provide for Ruth. (CSB)

pick up the leftover grain. The law of Moses instructed landowners to leave what the harvesters missed so that the poor, the alien, the widow and the fatherless could glean for their needs (Lev 19:9; 23:22; Dt 24:19). (CSB)

2:3 *As it turned out.* Divine providence is at work (vv. 19–20). (CSB)

“The heart of a man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps” (Pr 16:9). (TLSB)

field belonging to Boaz. Beginning with fields owned by others, Ruth comes to Boaz’s field. (TLSB)

2:4 *The LORD be with you!... The LORD bless you.* Typical expressions of greeting and blessing still used today. They underscore the reality of the Lord’s commitment to Israel when He says, “I am with you.” This speaks of the Lord’s fidelity toward those who fear Him (Ps 130:3–4). The angel Gabriel used the same words to proclaim the Lord’s fidelity to the Virgin Mary (Lk 1:28). (TLSB)

The exchange of greetings between Boaz and his laborers characterizes Boaz as a godly man with a kind spirit. (CSB)

2:5 *Whose young woman is this?* As a good businessman, Boaz inspected his fields. Boaz did not ask “who” Ruth was. Boaz asked under “whose” authority or family this woman found her identity. (TLSB)

2:6 *Moabite woman.* Six times Ruth is called a Moabite (1:4; 2:2, 6, 21; 4:5, 10). This underscores that she is a foreigner who, hearing God’s Word through Naomi and her family, willingly came in faith to the land of the God of Israel. (TLSB)

with Naomi. Ruth is under the authority of Naomi, within the family of Elimelech, a kinsman of Boaz. (TLSB)

2:7 Ruth worked hard at her task to the glory of God (cf 1Co 10:31). (TLSB)

Ruth had requested permission to glean leftover ears of grain from the ground and gather them for herself into sheaves or bundles. In the harvesting process, a male worker, after he had cut off with a sickle (Jer 50:16) as much as he could hold in his left hand, laid the ears on the ground in piles (see Ruth 2:16) without binding them into a bundle. Later, the men could gather the ears into sheaves (Gen 37:7) and bring them in from the field (cf. Ps 126:6). But usually the men were followed by female workers who gathered the ears into bundles or sheaves, perhaps binding them, and who carried them (cf. Job 24:10; Ps 129:7) to the threshing floor, where the stalks and husks would be separated from the heads. The poor were allowed to pick up ears that the women missed when gathering them into bundles or that they had dropped on their way to the threshing floor. But the poor were allowed to do this only after the sheaves were removed (see Ruth 2:15–16; Is 17:5) so that they would not be tempted to pull out some ears from the sheaves (see Deut 24:19). (CC)

2:8–9 As a young, attractive single woman, or as a foreigner whose presence might bring residual ethnic prejudice from the Israelites, Ruth was protected by Boaz’s word. Boaz would keep a protective eye on Ruth. (TLSB)

By addressing Ruth as “my daughter,” Boaz signaled that he was extending a generous welcome to this destitute foreigner. He insisted on Ruth gleaning only in his field, for which he took added precautions to allow for both her comfort and protection (2:8–9). It would have cost her precious time to go back to the town well for a drink (see 2 Sam 23:15–16). And abuse was real enough in a time of compromised morality (see Judg 19:22–25; Ruth 2:22), especially against a single foreign woman who had no special protection under Israel’s laws. Boaz permitted her to glean close to his female workers, and he also made sure that she would not be molested. He thereby instituted the first recorded “anti-sexual-harassment policy in the workplace.” This demonstrates that early pious Israelites already applied the Sixth Commandment fundamentally in the sense of Jesus’ radical interpretation (Mt 5:27–28). Because lustful intent already breaks the Law of God, Christians must be chaste and circumspect in their dress and behavior, especially in respect to the opposite sex. (CC)

2:8 *my daughter.* Naomi addressed Ruth in this language as well (2:2, 22; 3:1, 16), suggesting that she and Boaz were roughly the same age. (TLSB)

my young women. After the menservants cut the grain stalks, the young women gathered it into sheaves (bundles) to be brought to the threshing floor. Ruth was to follow behind the young

women—ahead of the other aliens, widows, and poor—to have first opportunity to collect the best and most abundant gleanings without fear of rough treatment from the hired help. (TLSB)

2:9–10 *drink ... foreigner.* Though a foreigner, Ruth would not have to draw water for Israelites (Dt 29:10–11; Jsh 9:21–27); though a woman, she would not have to draw water for men (Gn 24:11–18; Jn 4:7–9). Now she would drink water drawn by Israelite men. (TLSB)

2:9 *follow along after the girls.* It was customary for the men to cut the grain and for the servant girls to go behind them to bind the grain into sheaves. Then Ruth could glean what they had left behind (see note on 1:22). (CSB)

2:10 *she fell ... to the ground.* Boaz was possibly the first person to show kindness to Ruth since she arrived in Bethlehem. (TLSB)

Why have I found favor in your eyes. Ruth knew she had been found by Boaz, in whose sight she wanted to find favor (v 2). (TLSB)

2:11 Ruth's commitment to care for her desolate mother-in-law remains the center of attention throughout the book. (CSB)

Till now, Boaz knew Ruth only by reputation. With his own eyes, Boaz now sees the righteousness of Ruth's actions. (TLSB)

you left. Ruth was the antitheses of Orpah. Ruth's sacrifice of leaving family and country could have reminded Boaz of Abraham and Sarah's earlier pilgrimage (Gn 12:1–5) to the Promised Land. (TLSB)

2:12 The blessing pronounced by Boaz pointed ahead to the shed blood of Jesus Christ on Mount Calvary for the forgiveness of the sins of the world. This blessing reaches its most poetic expression when Jesus proclaims His redemptive love for Jerusalem (Mt 23:37–39). (TLSB)

The LORD repay you for what you have done. "Faith must be the mother and source of works that are truly good and well pleasing to God, which God will reward in this world and in the world to come. This is why St. Paul calls them true fruit of faith, also fruit of the Spirit [Galatians 5:22–23]" (FC SD IV 9). (TLSB)

under whose wings. A figure of a bird protecting her young under her wings (see Mt 23:37; see also note on 3:9). (CSB)

On the cherubim as God's "wings." (TLSB)

2:13 *I have found favor.* After suffering, Ruth is now the beneficiary of the Lord's mercy through Boaz's kindness. (TLSB)

your servant. A polite reference to herself. (CSB)

Because she is not an Israelite, she has no legal standing in Israel. (TLSB)

If anyone had any doubts as to Ruth's status in Boaz's "household" of harvesters, they were now clearly removed. Boaz continued to respect Ruth as a gleaner, who as such humbly kept her distance. Yet he unmistakably promoted her to the level of his own female workers ("one of your [Boaz's] maidservants," 2:13) by granting her unheard-of privileges for a gleaner. First, he invited her to partake of their noon meal (2:14). Next, he allowed her to glean among the piles of ears even before his young women had bound and gathered them up (2:15). Finally, as the greatest exceptional gesture, he ordered his workers to pull out some of their cut ears and drop them on the ground intentionally for her to take (2:16). (CC)

Boaz here has gone far beyond the requirements of the Law of Moses for an Israelite to be merciful toward a resident alien or Israelite widow. Rather, he has displayed the "favor" and acknowledgement (2:10) that an Israelite would show to a favorite, a member of his own circle of relatives. He exhibited himself not only as a relative of Naomi, but also of Ruth. He accepted her not just as if she were a resident alien in Israel, but even as if she were a full member of his clan. Through Boaz, the LORD was showing his grace to this Moabitess, who had become acceptable through faith (cf. Acts 10:35; Rom 15:16)! (CC)

2:14 Boaz invites a destitute foreigner who was doing the menial work of gleaning to eat with him and his reapers. Boaz serves Ruth a meal with his own hands. This is a tremendous rise in status for Ruth. (TLSB)

wine. Or, sour vinegar made from wine. (TLSB)

she had some left over. Boaz's generosity overflows. (TLSB)

2:15 *gave orders to his men.* Boaz goes beyond the requirement of the law in making sure that Ruth's labors are abundantly productive (see 3:15). (CSB)

Let her glean even among the sheaves. Gleaners typically followed the young women who bundled together stalks and ears of cut cereal grass into a sheaf. Now Ruth gleans before the young women bundled the sheaves. (TLSB)

2:16 *bundles for her ... to glean.* Boaz's generosity far exceeds the requirements prescribed in the Law for the poor (Lv 19:9; Dt 24:19). Such acts show that Boaz has a particular interest in Ruth. (TLSB)

2:17 *she gleaned in the field until evening.* Though her work was manifestly easier and more productive, she did not become presumptuous and slack in her labors. (TLSB)

threshed. See note on 1:22. In Ruth's case, as in that of Gideon (Jdg 6:11), the amount was small and could be threshed by hand simply by beating it with a club or stick. (CSB)

ephah. See NIV text note; an unusually large amount for one day's gleanings. (CSB)

C 29 lbs, an astonishing amount gleaned in one day's labor. (TLSB)

2:18 *city*. Typical translation of the Hbr term, though it may describe a walled town of small size, such as Bethlehem. (TLSB)

2:19 *with whom I worked.... Boaz*. Ruth makes it sound as though she was working for Boaz. She recognizes that he treated her as a member of his clan, but she is not affected by this. Throughout, Boaz hints at things that Ruth has yet to comprehend! (TLSB)

2:20 *The LORD... has not stopped showing his kindness*. See 1:8. In 3:10 Boaz credits Ruth with demonstrating this same virtue. (CSB)

kinsman-redeemers. Redemption is a key concept in Ruth (see Introduction: Theme and Theology). The kinsman-redeemer was responsible for protecting the interests of needy members of the extended family—e.g., to provide an heir for a brother who had died (Dt 25:5–10), to redeem land that a poor relative had sold outside the family (Lev 25:25–28), to redeem a relative who had been sold into slavery (Lev 25:47–49) and to avenge the killing of a relative (Nu 35:19–21; “avenger” and “kinsman-redeemer” are translations of the same Hebrew word). Naomi is encouraged when she hears that the Lord has led Ruth to the fields of a relative who might serve as their kinsman-redeemer. This moment of Naomi's awakened hope is the crucial turning point of the story. (CSB)

Hbr *go'el*. A redeemer's responsibilities included the following: “First, buying back the estate of a deceased relative (Lev 25:24–30; Jer 32:6–15); second, buying back an impoverished relative who had to sell himself into slavery (Lev 25:47–53); third, receiving restitution for a crime whose victim was deceased (Num 5:8); and fourth, avenging the willful, non-accidental killing of his relative by executing the murderer, for whom there was no ransom (Num 35:11–12, 16–21, 31–32; Deut 19:11–12), although this fourth practice was probably replaced by due procedures in criminal courts during the monarchy. Fifth, as implied in non-legal literature, the redeemer evidently also had the customary duty to assist the relative in a lawsuit” (CC Ru, p 38). Cf Jb 19:25; Ps 119:154; Pr 23:11; Jer 50:34; Lm 3:58. (TLSB)

2:21 Boaz's men would also now keep a protective eye on Ruth. (TLSB)

2:22 *young women*. Workers for Boaz. (TLSB)

assaulted. As a young, single foreign woman, Ruth would be open to simmering verbal prejudice or worse. (TLSB)

2:23 *until the barley and wheat harvests were finished*. This phrase rounds out the harvest episode and prepares for the next major scene on the threshing floor (see Introduction: Literary Features). (CSB)

she lived with her mother-in-law. Though times were improving, Ruth was still faithful to her mother-in-law in accord to the vow she made in 1:16–17. (TLSB)

Ch 2 The Lord brings Ruth and Boaz together in mutual honor. We see a wonderful reversal in the fortunes of Ruth and Naomi. In times of darkness and suffering today, we may doubt God's Father-heart toward us. Yet God promises that He works all things for our good (Rm 8:28–39). • Dear Jesus, by Your Holy Spirit, open the eyes of our hearts so that we may see You caring for us through those around us. Amen. (TLSB)