

Ruth Series #2 - "Stay In This Field" - Ruth 2:8-9

INTRODUCTION

While Ruth a moving love story, also a great picture of the relationship between Jesus and the church. Naomi is a picture of Israel, who, even though she wandered from the Lord, God used her to lead Ruth to the knowledge of Him. Ruth is a picture of the church - a Gentile who came to faith in the true God.

We also meet a man named Boaz, who comes from Bethlehem. Boaz is a picture of Jesus, for Boaz marries Ruth and makes her a part of the people of God.

Once we see the parallels between the book of Ruth and the Christian life, we are able to glean great new insights into our walk with the Lord. One marvelous one is found in chapter 2.

TEXT

Vs. 1-7 = Setting The Scene

{1} There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz.

{2} So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

Naomi & Ruth have returned to Bethlehem. Since they have no one to support them, they have to fend for themselves. Naomi is no longer young enough to work at the hard labor of harvesting the fields so the duty falls to young Ruth.

As a poor widow, she would be allowed to go in to the fields after the harvesters had made their first trip through and glean anything that was left. In Israel, welfare was "workfare." The poor, who did not possess land and crops of their own, were allowed to glean the leftovers of the harvest. In fact, God had told the people that they were not to harvest the corners of their fields but to leave them for the poor. Ruth & Naomi qualified as poor so they were allowed to follow behind the harvesters and take what was left.

{3} Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

{4} Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you!" And they answered him, "The LORD bless you!"

Boaz was a wealthy landowner in Bethlehem. He had a large harvest and so had hired workers who were toiling in the field. As a good boss, he came out to supervise and work alongside them.

{5} Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?"

{6} So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, "It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

{7} "And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house."

As Boaz looks out over his field, he sees the gleaners following behind the reapers. In their midst is a one who looks out of place. She's a young gal, and she's very pretty. He's surprised by this because normally such a young maid would be married or still living in the house of her father and not classed with the poor. She seems out of place, so Boaz asks the foreman what's up. He tells Boaz that it's Ruth, Naomi's daughter in law.

Boaz knew Naomi because Naomi had been married to Boaz's uncle, Elimelech. He had heard the story of how Elimelech took his wife and two boys to Moab for 10 years. Elimelech and both sons had died in Moab and Naomi had returned to Bethlehem with her daughter in law, Ruth. Until this moment, he had had no idea how beautiful Ruth was. The foreman remarks on what a diligent worker she has been as well. She has been working hard since early morning, and she had only take one short break. Boaz likes all he sees and hears, so he approaches her.

Vs. 8-16

{8} Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women.

{9} "Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."

Boaz moves Ruth from the place of gleaner to the place of reaper. Rather than merely getting the leftovers, she gets to partake of the actual harvest.

Reapers would often leave undeveloped heads of grain on the stalk. The ripest and best grain they would harvest and keep. The gleaners would then come along and get what was left, the undeveloped grain, the blighted grain, the overlooked and unwanted harvest. By moving Ruth into the same line with the reapers, he is telling her she can take her choice of the best. Then, when it was time for a break, Boaz tells Ruth to stay and enjoy the cool refreshment the young men brought up from the well.

Ruth is overwhelmed by this show of generosity.

{10} So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

{11} And Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before.

{12} "The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

{13} Then she said, "Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

{14} Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, "Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back. [thinking of her mother in law, Naomi]

{15} And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her."

{16} "Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."

Not only did Boaz give Ruth permission to harvest the best grain, he told the reapers to let some of their already picked grain fall out of their sacks so all she had to do was reach over and pick it up! Boaz is clearly smitten with Ruth and is trying to woo her with His favor and gifts.

This is a beautiful passage. But there is one short passage I want to concentrate on in the time we have left today. It's verses 8-9.

{8} Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women."

{9} "Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."

As I mentioned at the outset, Ruth is a picture of the church, while Boaz is a type of Jesus Christ. Here, Boaz tells Ruth to abide in His field and not wander to glean in another. It is in His field that favor lies, it is in His field that safety rests.

Ruth began by gleaning among the poor but Boaz moved her to partake among his own servants. Even so, before we came to Christ, the best we could do was to shuffle along in spiritual poverty, gleaning the leftover and blighted husks of this world's pleasures. Life was hard and filled with back-breaking labor that yielded little. We were forever hungry, never quite satisfied with what the world offered. But our Greater than Boaz, Jesus Christ, came from Bethlehem and took pity on us. He spoke kindly to us and moved us out of poverty into the riches of His harvest. He set his protection over us and called us to sit with Him and enjoy the satisfying refreshment of the water and bread of life. It is in His field that favor and safety lies. And like Boaz, Jesus calls us to stay in His field.

Like Boaz, Jesus says to us, "You will listen, will you not?" Whose voice will we listen to? From whom will we take our direction in life? We must listen to the voice of the Spirit as He speaks through the Word of God and the counsel of the family of God.

Like Boaz, Jesus says to us, "Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my servants." Before we

came to Christ, we had tried living off the world's leftovers, but they left us empty and cheated. So we came to feast on the love, peace, and joy of salvation. But something happens in many a believer's life; after a time of walking with the Lord, it might be a few months, often it is a few years, we start to look with longing on the things of the world once again.

This happened to Israel in the Exodus. The Jews were slaves in Egypt, and it was cruel bondage. They were utterly poor and despised. But God delivered them with a mighty hand and they were excited as they began the trek across the desert to the Promised Land. But a short way in to the trip, they began to complain. Life was tough in the wilderness; there was the daily traveling through the wastes of Sinai following the pillar of cloud. Though God provided water and food for them miraculously, they grew tired of the same old thing every day. Think of it, they grew bored of following with God and they grew bored of eating angel's food and drinking the sweetest water every to be tasted by human lips. Of all things, they began to grumble and complain that life was better back in Egypt. At least there, they said, they had such tasty things to eat as leeks and onions!

As we read about Israel's complaining in the wilderness, we shake our heads at their obvious error. But don't we do the very same thing when we begin to cast a longing eye on the shameful things of our past?

The tendency to wander from the Lord is nothing new. A good part of the New Testament deals with this problem. The entire book of Hebrews was written to encourage Jewish Christians to remain faithful to the Lord and not fall back into Judaism. "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Heb 3:12-13

To the Galatians Paul wrote, "Now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?" (Gal 4:9)

And then of backslidders Peter warned, "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning." (2 Pet 2:20)

Everyone of us has either been or will be tempted to turn back to the world. We need to encourage each other to go on and not draw back. We need to stay close by the servants of Jesus.

I've noticed, both in my life and in talking with others, when our heart begins to stray from the Lord, we usually want to bail from being with other Christians. We begin dropping out of fellowship and avoid church. We stop listening to bible teaching on the radio. We start to withdraw, slowly but surely, from being in touch with other believers who have a solid walk with the Lord.

If you see a cooling in your desire for fellowship starting to settle in, be aware. It may very well be the first stages of backslidding.

Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Let your eyes be on the my field." So the Lord says to us, "Keep your eyes from wandering. Stay

focused." It is said that the eye is the doorway to the soul, that what we feast our eyes on feeds the inner man. If we fix our attention on unworthy things, it is only natural that we will end up moving toward them. That is why the Psalmist says, (Psa 119:37) "Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, And revive me in Your way." and (Psa 101:3) "I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me."

Jesus had something remarkable to say to the disciples, "Do not say, there are still four months till the harvest. Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" John 4:35. We need to keep our eyes fixed on the Lord and on His field. It is ripe for harvest, NOW. There is too much to do to allow eyes to start wandering away.

Finally, Boaz said, "When you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn." Jesus calls us to slake our thirst, not from the broken and muddy wells of this world but to come to Him and receive refreshment. He has given the church marvelous gifts in the persons of pastors and teachers who dip their buckets into the well of living water and draw forth cool, refreshing satisfaction for the people of God. Jesus even invites us to come and lower our own buckets in the well of His word and draw forth refreshment for ourselves. The point is, what need we of the world? We have heaven!

CONCLUSION

Friend, stay in the Lord's field. Don't stray. Here lies peace, safety, provision, and satisfaction. There lies turmoil, danger, poison, and want. Sure it looks good, but it's a lie.

When you find the way with Christ hard, when you find the going difficult, that is when you need your brothers and sister the most. Don't pull away, don't lag behind the harvest. Rather, reach out and ask for help. Don't turn back - stay in this field.

You see, this isn't the end of the story of Boaz and Ruth. This was merely their first meeting. But a little later, we see Boaz come back to the field and pick Ruth up in His arms and marry her. Even so, you and I must stay in the Lord's field, busy with His harvest, At any moment our Boaz could come for us, gather us up in His arms and take us home to heaven.

Since no one knows that moment, we simply don't have time to be distracted

OUTLINE FOR ABOVE MESSAGE

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Book of Ruth A Picture

1. While Ruth a moving love story
2. Also a great picture of the relationship between Jesus and the church
3. Naomi a picture of Israel, who, even though she wandered from the Lord, God used her to lead Ruth to the knowledge of Him
4. Ruth is a picture of the church - a Gentile who came to faith in

the true God

5. We also meet a man named Boaz, who comes from Bethlehem
 - a. Boaz is a picture of Jesus
 - b. for Boaz marries Ruth and makes her a part of the people of God

B. Seen From That Light

1. Once we see the parallels between the book of Ruth and the Christian life, we are able to glean great new insights into our walk with the Lord
2. One marvelous one is found in chapter 2 . . .

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 1-7 = Setting The Scene

1. Naomi & Ruth have returned to Bethlehem
2. Since they have no one to support them, they have to fend for themselves
3. Naomi is no longer young enough to work at the hard labor of harvesting the fields
4. So the duty falls to young Ruth
5. As a poor widow, she would be allowed to go in to the fields after the harvesters had made their first trip through and glean anything that was left
6. In Israel, welfare was "workfare"
 - a. the poor, who did not possess land and crops of their own were allowed to glean the leftovers
 - b. in fact, God had told the people that they were not to harvest the corners of their fields but to leave them for the poor
7. Ruth & Naomi qualified as poor so they were allowed to follow behind the harvesters and take what was left.
8. Boaz was a wealthy landowner in Bethlehem
 - a. he had a large harvest and so had hired workers who were toiling in the field
 - b. as a good boss, he came out to supervise and work alongside them
9. As Boaz looks out over his field, he sees the gleaners following behind the reapers
10. In their midst is a one who looks out of place
 - a. she's a young gal
 - b. and she's very pretty
 - c. He's surprised by this because normally such a young maid would be married and not classed with the poor
 - d. she seems out of place
11. So Boaz asks the foreman what's up
12. He tells Boaz that it's Ruth, Naomi's daughter in law
 - a. Boaz knew Naomi because Naomi had been married to Boaz's uncle, Elimelech
 - b. he had heard the story of how Elimelech took his wife and two boys to Moab for 10 years.
 - c. Elimelech and both sons had died in Moab and Naomi had returned to Bethlehem with her daughter in law
 - d. but until this moment, he had had no idea how beautiful Ruth was
13. The foreman remarks on what a diligent worker she is
 - a. she has been working hard since early morning
 - b. and she had only take one short break

14. Boaz likes all he sees and hears, so he approaches Ruth

B. Vs. 8-16

1. Boaz moves Ruth from the place of gleaner to the place of reaper
2. Rather than merely getting the leftovers, she gets to partake of the actual harvest
3. Reapers would often leave undeveloped heads of grain on the stalk
 - a. the ripest and best grain they would harvest and keep
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 - the undeveloped grain
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4. By moving Ruth into the same line with the reapers, he is telling her she can take her choice of the best
5. Then, when it was time for a break, Boaz tells Ruth to stay and enjoy the cool refreshment the young men brought up from the well.
6. Ruth is overwhelmed by this show of generosity . . .
7. Not only did Boaz give Ruth permission to harvest the best grain,
8. He told the reapers to let some of their already picked grain fall out of their sacks so all she had to do was reach over and pick it up!
9. Boaz is clearly smitten with Ruth and is trying to woo her with His favor and gifts

C. Stay In These Fields

1. A beautiful passage
2. But there is one short passage I want to concentrate on in the time we have left today
3. Vs. 8-9
4. As I mentioned at the outset, Ruth is a picture of the church, while Boaz is a type of Jesus Christ
5. Here, Boaz tells Ruth to abide in His field and not wander to glean in another
6. It is in His field that favor lies, it is in His field that safety rests
7. Ruth began by gleaning among the poor but Boaz moved her to partake among his own servants
8. Even so, before we came to Christ, the best we could do was to shuffle along in spiritual poverty, gleaning the leftover and blighted husks of this world's pleasures
 - a. life was hard, filled with back-breaking labor
 - b. and we were forever hungry
 - c. never quite satisfied with what the world offered
9. But our Boaz, Jesus Christ, came from Bethlehem and took pity on us
 - a. he spoke kindly to us and moved us out of poverty into the riches of His harvest
 - b. he set his protection over us
 - c. he called us to sit with Him and enjoy the satisfying refreshment of the water and bread of life
 - d. it is in His field that favor and safety lies
10. And like Boaz, Jesus calls us to stay in His field
11. Like Boaz, Jesus says to us, "You will listen, will you not?"
 - a. whose voice will we listen to?
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- c. we must listen to the voice of the Spirit as He speaks through the Word of God and the counsel of the family of God
12. Like Boaz, Jesus says to us, "Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my servants."
- a. before we came to Christ, we had tried living off the world's leftovers, but they left us empty and cheated
- b. so we came to feast on the love, peace, and joy of salvation
- c. but something happens in many a believer's life:
- d. after a time of walking with the Lord,
- it might be a few months
 - usually a few years
- e. we start to look with longing on the things of the world once again
- f. this happened to Israel in the Exodus
- the Jews were slaves in Egypt, and it was cruel bondage
 - they were utterly poor and despised
 - God delivered them with a mighty hand
 - and they were excited as they began the trek across the desert to the Promised Land
 - but a short way in to the trip, they began to complain
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 - though God provided water and food for them miraculously, they grew tired of the same old thing every day
 - they grew bored of following with God
 - they grew bored of eating angel's food and drinking the sweetest water every to be tasted by human lips
 - and of all things, they began to grumble and complain that life was better back in Egypt
 - at least there, they said, they had such tasty things to eat as leeks and onions!
- g. we read about Israel's complaining in the wilderness and shake our heads at their obvious error
- h. but don't we do the very same thing when we begin to cast a longing eye on the shameful things of our past?
- i. the tendency to wander from the Lord is nothing new
- j. a good part of the NT deals with this problem
- k. the entire book of Hebrews was written to encourage Jewish Christians to remain faithful to the Lord and not fall back into Judaism

"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." 1

1. to the Galatians Paul wrote, "Now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?" 2

m. and then of backslidders Peter warned, "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning." 3

n. everyone of us has either been or will be tempted to turn back to the world

- o. we need to encourage each other to go on and not draw back
- p. we need to stay close by the servants of Jesus
- q. I've noticed, both in my life and in talking with others
 - when our heart begins to stray from the Lord
 - we usually want to bail from being with other Christians
 - we begin dropping out of fellowship
 - we avoid church
 - we stop listening to bible teaching on the radio
- r. start to withdraw, slowly but surely, from being in touch with other believers who have a solid walk with the Lord
- s. if you see a cooling in your desire for fellowship starting to settle in, be aware
- t. it may very well be the first stages of backslidding
- 13. Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Let your eyes be on the my field."
 - a. so the Lord says to us, "Keep your eyes from wandering. Stay focused."
 - b. it is said that the eye is the doorway to the soul
 - c. that what we feast our eyes on feeds the inner man
 - d. if we fix our attention on unworthy things, it is only natural that we will end up moving toward them
 - e. that is why the Psalmist says . . .
 - (Psa 119:37) Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, And revive me in Your way.
 - (Psa 101:3) I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me.
 - f. Jesus had something remarkable to say to the disciples
 - "Do not say, there are still four months till the harvest. Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" 4
 - g. we need to keep our eyes fixed on the Lord and on His field
 - it is ripe for harvest, NOW
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- 14. Finally, Boaz said, "When you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."
 - a. Jesus calls us to slake our thirst, not from the broken and muddy wells of this world
 - b. but to come to Him and receive refreshment
 - c. He has given the church marvelous gifts in the persons of pastors and teachers who dip their buckets into t he well of living water and draw forth cool, refreshing satisfaction for the people of God
 - d. Jesus even invites us to come and lower our own buckets in the well of His word and draw forth refreshment for ourselves.
 - e. the point is, what need we of the world
 - f. we have heaven!

III. CONCLUSION

A. Stay In This Field

1. Friend, stay in the Lord's field
2. Don't stray
3. Here lies peace, safety, provision, and satisfaction
4. There lies turmoil, danger, poison, and want
5. Sure it looks good, but it's a lie

B. The Temptation

1. When you find the way with Christ hard
2. When you find the going difficult,
3. That is when you need your brothers and sister the most
4. Don't pull away, don't lag behind the harvest
5. Rather, reach out and ask for help
6. Don't turn back - stay in this field

C. *The End of The Story*

1. You see, this isn't the end of the story of Boaz and Ruth
2. This was merely their first meeting
3. But a little later, we see Boaz come back to the field and pick Ruth up in His arms and marry her
4. Even so, you and I stay in the Lord's field, busy with His harvest
5. But at any moment our Boaz could come for us, gather us up in His arms and take us home to heaven
6. Since no one knows that moment, we simply don't have time to be distracted

-----Footnotes

- 1 Heb 3:12-13
- 2 (Gal 4:9)
- 3 (2 Pet 2:20)
- 4 John 4:35