

## The Embodiment of Loving-Kindness (Ruth 2)

**Summary** (v.1-7): Ruth has left Naomi in Bethlehem (v.18) to glean in the corner of the fields, as prescribed in the Mosaic legislation. She “happened” to come to the part of a field that belonged to Boaz (v.3). Boaz is introduced as an upstanding man of virtue from the same tribe as Naomi’s deceased husband, Elimelech (v.1). He arrives late morning to check in on the harvesting operation (v.4) and is informed by his foreman that a “young Moabite woman” had requested to follow behind the harvesters in an area that was not granted to her through the Mosaic law. What will Boaz do?

### 1. The Reason for Kindness (v.8-9, 11)

- Boaz has been informed by others of the commitment Ruth has displayed to Naomi after the death of Ruth’s husband (Mahlon). We do not know who informed him. Did he know that Ruth came to his field? Is that why he inquired of the young foreman “whose” young woman is this? (2:5).
- Ruth’s favor, in some degree, is tied to her virtue and commitment to her mother-in-law, while not completely the result of it.
- Boaz has commanded (emphatic in the Hebrew) not to go to another field. He may have been pointing at his field: don’t leave “this” field. If all Boaz did was demand that she stay on his field, that would seem harsh. However, Boaz is a worthy man (v.1). How will this be worked out?
- He refers to Ruth as “my daughter” which is reminiscent of Naomi’s title attributed Ruth (1:11, 12; 2:2). This was intended to remove the ethnic and social barriers that existed between them. Boaz may have also been considerably older than her.
- Boaz has shown favor to Ruth because of his own virtue (v.1), God preparing his own heart (v.2) and her own virtue (v.11).
- Ruth leaving “father and mother” and “native land” is an allusion to the covenant of marriage and/or promise for future progeny (Gen. 2:24; 11:31; 12:1-3; 31:13).

### 2. The Reception of Kindness (v.8-9, 14-16)

- The Mosaic law prohibited Moabites from the congregation of Israel for ten generations (Deut. 23:3). Ruth does not expect anything. Boaz lavishes magnanimous favor and lovingkindness towards Ruth:
  - A. He invited Ruth to stay with his female workers (v.8): these female workers would have followed behind the reapers (men) to collect the stalks of grain and gather them into bundles. He refers to them as “my” women: they were hired laborers, and/or part of Boaz’ clan. Boaz’ command Ruth to “stick” to the young women is the same Hebrew word as Ruth “clinging” to Naomi (1:14).
  - B. He commanded his male servants not to “harass” Ruth (v.9, 15): Boaz may have issued this command more than once. This harassment refers to both verbal (v.15) and physical (v.9). The hut/dwelling that she took a rest in previously (v.7) may have been a temporary makeshift shelter designed for workers who rested/hydrated. When Boaz arrived, Ruth may have been taking a temporary break in this hut. Her break may not have been the result of exhaustion, but instead, harassment.
  - C. He publicly authorized her to drink from the same jars as his workers (v.9): in the morning, servants/workers would draw water from a well or cistern (2 Sam. 23:16; 1 Chron. 11:18) and carry it to where they are harvesting.

Typically, foreigners would be the ones who drew for Israelites. Women (or foreigners) would draw for men (Gen. 24:10-20; Deut. 29:11; 1 Sam. 9:11).

- D. He invited her to eat with him, share his bread, and use his sauce (v.14): mealtimes were often celebrations and tokens of hospitality and belonging (Gen. 18:1-8; Ps. 23:5; Matt. 22:1-14; Luke 12:36; 14:8; 15:22-23; John 2:1-11).
- E. He commanded his workers to leave behind grain on the stalks: (v.15): he charged his female workers to intentionally remove stalks of grain from their bundles and leave them behind for her. She is no longer just gleaning “among the sheaves” but following behind the female workers. This is special treatment given only to Ruth and no other foreigner (Deut. 24:19-21).

### 3. The Response of Kindness (v.10, 13)

- Ruth’s concerns are displayed by the narrator (v.13). The “comfort” she has experienced is likened to a “sigh of relief.” Additionally, she did not know how she was going to be treated as she departed early that morning.
- She fell on her face in humility, honor, and respect. This is reminiscent of Abigail’s relation to David (1 Sam. 25): Abigail and Ruth fell before virtuous men and refer to themselves as the same Hebrew word (Ruth 2:10; 1 Sam. 25:23): maidservant/slave (shiphah). David would later marry Abigail. Will Boaz marry Ruth?
- She has been a hard-working sojourner and widow who has taken nothing for granted and has appreciated every act of kindness. She deserves none of this.
- Boaz not only gave a blessing on behalf of the LORD (v.12) but was the agent of it. Both Naomi and Boaz wanted the LORD to give favor to Ruth (1:8-9). Boaz, however, was able to be that blessing. He is not just the spokesman for God’s covenantal mercy, but the agent of it: it was his wings that she is and will continue to take refuge under. He is God’s wings!
- In leaving Moab, Ruth has permanently yoked herself to the LORD’s people and to their God (1:15-16) and has subsequently, in faith, come under the refuge of the LORD’s wings (Ps. 91:4; Matt. 23:37 Luke 9:60; 13:34; 14:26).
- He wants the LORD to “reward” or to “compensate” Ruth for her faith: Scripture attests to God rewarding righteous living (Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; Prov. 24:12; 13:21; 19:17; 25:21-22; Jer. 25:14; Phil. 4:15-19). Ruth’s future reward is similar language to Abraham’s (Gen. 12:1; 15:1-6) and Jacob’s (Gen. 29:15; 31:7, 41).

### 4. The Reward of Kindness (v.17-23)

- She departs from Boaz’ field at the end of the day with 40-60 pounds of barley. Ruth would have “beaten” the stalks against the ground to remove the barley heads. Ancient food ration is approx. 1 liter per person per day. Ruth has collected enough food in this one day to last over a week.
- When Naomi sees Ruth, she is amazed: “where (in the world) did you get all of that grain?!” (v.19). Ruth is unaware of Boaz’ relation to Naomi up to this point. Naomi is concerned primarily with whose field this is. She blessed Boaz for not forsaking both the living (Naomi and Ruth), and the dead (Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion). He has honored the dead. We’re also informed that Boaz is one of the redeemers (v.20).
- For seven weeks, through the barley and wheat harvests, Ruth continued to glean and gather behind the workers. If she gleaned every day, she would have collected over 2500 lbs. of grain. Despite the daily interaction between Boaz and Ruth, she is still living with Naomi (v.23). Why? She is still a Moabite (v.21).