

Ruth and Boaz



Colour me!



Ruth 2:1-12

One day, Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me see if I can find someone who will let me pick up the grain left in the fields by the harvest workers." Naomi answered, "Go ahead, my daughter." So straight away, Ruth went out to pick up grain in a field owned by Boaz. He was a relative of Naomi's husband Elimelech, as well as a rich and important man.

When Boaz left Bethlehem and went out to his field, he said to the harvest workers, "The Lord bless you!" They replied, "And may the Lord bless you!" Then Boaz asked the man in charge of the harvest workers, "Who is that young woman?" The man answered, "She is the one who came back from Moab with Naomi. She asked if she could pick up grain left by the harvest workers, and she has been working all morning without a moment's rest."

Boaz went over to Ruth and said, "I think it would be best for you not to pick up grain in anyone else's field. Stay here with the women and follow along behind them, as they gather up what the men have cut. I have warned the men not to bother you, and whenever you are thirsty, you can drink from the water jars they have filled." Ruth bowed down to the ground and said, "You know I come from another country. Why are you so good to me?" Boaz answered, "I've heard how you've helped your mother-in-law ever since your husband died. You even left your own father and mother to come and live in a foreign land among people you don't know. I pray that the Lord God of Israel will reward you for what you have done. And now that you have come to him for protection, I pray that he will bless you."

Commentary

Although Naomi and Ruth had returned to Bethlehem, their troubles were not yet over. They were desperately poor and had to depend on the charity of others. It was the custom to leave some grain in the fields at harvest time for poor people to pick up. Ruth offers to gather some grain so that she and her mother-in-law won't starve.

God is clearly guiding events that day because the field where she works turns out to belong to one of Naomi's relatives by marriage. Boaz is a kind man who has heard of Ruth's kindness to Naomi. He arranges for Ruth to pick up as much as she needs and also orders his workers to keep an eye out for her safety. It is the beginning of a love story that leads to a new husband for Ruth, a sure future for Naomi and, in time, children and grandchildren. It is into Ruth's family line that King David is born and from David's family that Jesus comes, far in the future. Ruth's beautiful act of loyalty is rewarded and Boaz's prayer that God will bless her is richly answered.

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Questions

- ▶ Have you ever experienced what it is like to go without food for a while? If not, can you imagine it?
- ▶ What risks do you think Ruth was taking in offering to go out and pick up the leftover grain in the fields?
- ▶ What makes you think that Boaz was a kind man?
- ▶ Why do you think Ruth was surprised to be treated so kindly?
- ▶ Can you imagine what Ruth said to her mother-in-law when she returned that evening and described the events of the day?



Visual aid

Take a loaf of bread out of its packaging and place it in the centre of a large plate. Now empty the crumbs from the packaging all around the loaf. These are like the leftovers that Ruth was allowed to take. How much can you pick up?



Activity idea

By leaving some grain in the corner of the field for the poor to pick up, Boaz was obeying one of the harvest laws in the Old Testament. Our loose change is a bit like the leftovers in Boaz's field. As a family, set out to find and collect as many low-value coins as you can find lying around the house. Look down behind the sofa! Add the money together and turn it into a gift to a charity that cares for those who don't have enough to eat, either in your own country or another.



Prayer idea

Boaz's greeting to his workers was "The Lord bless you". He also prayed a blessing on Ruth. To bless someone is to want the best for them. Write the words "May God bless..." in the middle of a sheet of paper and, as a family, add the names of people, places and special situations that come to your minds. Read them out loud together as a prayer.

Key verse

Now that you have come to [God] for protection, I pray that he will bless you (Ruth 2:12).

New Testament story link

Luke 6:27-38: Jesus tells us of the many ways in which we can bless others, just as Boaz blessed Ruth.



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