

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Lesson Guide
July 5, 2015
“Ruth 2: The Source of Redemption”

Memory Verse:

“May the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done.” Ruth 2:12

Review:

Last week we read and studied about the lives and faith of Ruth and Naomi. After tragically losing her husband and sons in Moab, Naomi begins to return to Bethlehem and Ruth swears her loyalty to remain with Naomi until death. Ruth’s love and devotion is also expressed by her oath to forsake her pagan people and false gods to live with Naomi’s people and to follow Naomi’s true God. Now, this week, we will begin to see Naomi’s sacrifice rewarded and the beginning of Naomi’s redemption by a loving God.

Ruth’s Admirable Traits

Chapter 2 shows us a few new things about Ruth. First, she is true to her intentions of taking care of Naomi. In verse 2, Ruth asks Naomi if she (Ruth) can go out and gather some grain for them. Ruth isn’t willing to sit idly by and live on the charity of others without doing some work herself. Naomi doesn’t tell her to do it, but Ruth volunteers because she takes her devotion to Naomi seriously.

Second, we find out that Ruth is humble. When Boaz asks his servants about Ruth, they report that she had asked to be able to glean or pick up grain behind the harvesters. We see that Ruth doesn’t feel entitled. She doesn’t demand a handout and she’s certainly not presumptuous. She asks permission, politely, to only gather up the leftovers from someone else’s bounty.

Finally we see that Ruth is a hard worker. Once again the servants report to Boaz that she got there and asked to start that morning, and that she hasn’t rested except for just a couple minutes in the shade. Then when the work day was over, she beat out what she had gleaned and measured it and took it home to Naomi, along with the leftovers from her lunch.

As we said in our study on the genre of Historical Narrative, the author almost always has an intention in writing and at least one character or group that they support. It is obvious that the writer of Ruth wants us to understand the level of her virtue and how rare it is compared to other women of the time, the comparison comes through in the report of the foreman. Ruth takes initiative to provide for Naomi, she is humble and she is very industrious, and the writer brings out how admirable those qualities are for a purpose.

- 1. How does Ruth take initiative to care and provide for Naomi and herself?*
- 2. In what ways is Ruth humble?*
- 3. How does the scripture show that Ruth is a hard worker?*

Boaz's provision

Now it is important to see that Ruth's strong work ethic is not the only reason she is prospering, lest we think that she can just pull herself up by her own bootstraps. That's not generally how stories in the Bible, or in Life in general, work. The introduction of Boaz, the kinsman of Elimelech (Ruth's deceased father-in-law), who owns the fields Ruth has been working in, shows us God's divine provision. Verse 3 reads, "And as it happened, she found herself working in a field that belonged to Boaz..." "As it happened" may seem like an unassuming phrase, something like "coincidentally" or "randomly" or another phrase that makes it seem that something just occurred without having been planned. It's important to remember, however, that the Biblical author's use means that it happened without RUTH's plan. Obviously, the author knows that God knew exactly whose field Ruth would be reporting to that morning and that He planned it perfectly that way, and we'll see that expressed explicitly later by none other than Naomi, Miss Mara "the bitter," herself.

Boaz provides the food for Ruth, telling her to stay close behind his maiden workers. Staying close means that she can get the best the leftovers they harvest. Also, Boaz provides protection because he lets the men know not to bother her, or treat her roughly. We can leave the specifics to the imagination, but Boaz makes it known that anybody who messes with Ruth is messing with him. Not only that, but he tells Ruth to drink freely from the water that his men draw. Boaz is a wealthy, godly man and while those under him may have meaner or rougher tendencies, they know enough not to cross the boss man.

Ruth comes to ask Boaz, "What have I done to deserve such kindness? I am only a foreigner." And really, if we didn't see it coming, isn't this what we would ask? What's the punchline? The upshot? What's your motive Boaz? You can't get something for nothing. Where's all this kindness coming from and where is it leading to?

Boaz is quick to clear things up for Ruth. He knows she's a foreigner, but he also knows "everything you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live her among complete strangers." Aha! Word gets around, then. Boaz has heard about the good she has done for Naomi and he wants to repay Ruth and aid her... but that's not all.

Verse 12 reads, "May the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done." Bingo. There it is. The full answer. Boaz thinks Ruth should be rewarded, but he knows that he can't "fully" reward her. See, Boaz understood that all his wealth, power and influence was just a gift from God, so he put God's gifts to work for God's people, whom Ruth is now fully a part of, even though she may still be a foreigner by birth.

- 1. What 3 main things does Boaz provide for Ruth?*
- 2. What does Boaz know about Ruth?*
- 3. Why does Boaz choose to help Ruth?*

Conclusion

When Ruth finally comes home with a huge haul of grain, Naomi knows Ruth couldn't have done it alone. "May the Lord bless the one who helped you!" she says. Ruth explains that it was Boaz who helped her. Naomi responds "May the Lord bless him!... That man is one of our closest relatives, one of our family redeemers." In this, Naomi recognizes God's provision through Boaz. She remembers the concept of the family or "kinsman redeemer". That term will be defined better, later on, but suffice it to say that it is the

position ordained by God and recorded in the Torah (the Law) of one family member to rescue, ransom or avenge another family member. The main point is that Naomi understands that Boaz is appointed by God and so she begins to see that the Lord's hand is not turned against her, as she previously thought because of the hardship of her life!

The author of Ruth, Boaz, Ruth and Naomi all understand, as we should understand now, that our initiative, our humility, our industry and labor... none of those things is what causes us to prosper. We are rewarded and prospered because we seek refuge under the wings of God almighty, and we seek to do his will in loving and caring for others. If this sounds anything like "Love God" and "Love your neighbor" the two greatest commandments according to Jesus Christ, we shouldn't be surprised. Jesus WAS the God of Ruth, the God of Boaz and the God of Naomi and neither He nor the things He values, ever changes.

Final Question:

Someone is providing for Ruth and Naomi. If we asked the characters, who do you think they would say is providing for them by the end of chapter 2? Why?

Ruth:

Boaz:

Naomi: