

Reading: Ruth 2: 10 – 20

10 At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, 'Why have I found such favour 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 favour in your eyes, my lord,' she said. 'You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant – though I do not have the standing of one of your servants.'

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, 'Let her gather among the sheaves and don't reprimand her. 16 Even 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 guardian-redeemers.'

Preaching notes:

Boaz was a godly man, he knew the law and he tried to keep to it, therefore our story from Ruth really starts here:

Leviticus 19 v 9 - 10 "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God."

So, Boaz made sure that the widows, etc. were able to glean the small amount left by the side of the field. But, it seems, Ruth was different. There was something about her which caught his eye. Now we could be cynical and say that maybe she was more attractive than the others, younger, more personality, but I think it was something else.

Ruth was different because of the way she behaved, her humility was evident, she did not try to take more than she should, she probably helped the other women and she was respectful towards others. Boaz had heard how she had been prepared to leave her own country and family in order to support and help Naomi, her Mother-in-Law. She had put Naomi's needs before her own.

In fact, Ruth had been a true servant of God, her behaviour reflected love, compassion and selflessness.

I think that when we serve God, behave in the way He wants us to behave, the way he created us to behave, then people will notice. When we are followers of Jesus then people should notice, hopefully for the positive aspects of our behaviour, not negative ones.

So, what is that behaviour?

Look at Romans 12 v 9 – 18:

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practise hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Very challenging words as they encourage us to rethink how we behave, how we think, how we relate to other people. Look again at the words. Genuine love is one which gives and gives, which puts the needs of the other before our self, encourages harmony, is forgiving and not revengeful, offers blessings - even to those who hurt us, and tries to live in peace with others (with the caveat that we only have responsibility for our actions and attitudes).

If we can manage to behave like that, serving in humility, showing respect to others, being patient with each other, trying to avoid conflict and arguments, avoiding revengeful thoughts and actions, then people will notice and will begin to ask what guides us, what motivates us.

Our answer, I hope, is that we are followers of Christ and we look to his example and that we can only come anywhere near to that through the guidance and prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Let us not be a church, individual Christians, who are more noticed by how badly we behave, but by how well.

Amen

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