

A Sermon preached by Martin Tanner in St Mary's, Market Drayton on Thursday 6th October 2016 at 10.00am

SS3 RUTH:

In Ruth Chapter1 Naomi returns to Bethlehem empty. Now in Ruth Chapter2 we see how **God rebuilds lives.**

St Paul tells us in the book of Romans *'In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.'*

He is at work in this story, bringing all things together for good. It is:-

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| The RIGHT TIME: | -Start of the barley harvest |
| The RIGHT PLACE: | -Ruth has just happened to end up in Boaz's Field |
| The RIGHT ACTIONS: | -Ruth is gleaning |
| The RIGHT MAN: | -Because now we have the entrance of Boaz |

But poor Naomi doesn't see it this way, yet.

In verse 2 she says to Ruth "go and glean" but these must have been hard words to utter. Once she and her husband had their own fields and crops. Now the best she can hope for is what can be gleaned. Now gleaning was unproductive work. Yes, farmers had to leave what fell for widows and foreigners to pick up. But the crops were their livelihood and they were good at minimising waste. Gleaning may be likened to what we sometimes see on TV where poor children are scavenging on rubbish dumps. Hot, hard and with little reward.

Anyway, Ruth goes off to glean and then Boaz, the owner of the field and relative of Naomi, appears in the field.

He would probably have started by asking for a report on the harvest from his men. *How the work is going? What was the yield like?.....* but then he notices Ruth and asks **'Who is that woman?'** They tell him that she is the Moabite who came back with Naomi and that she asked to glean.

Now, at that point Boaz could just have said 'OK' and got back to the report on the harvest. He still would have been a worthy man. The Law only required him to allow the widow, the fatherless and the foreigner to glean after his harvest. That was as far as the letter of the Law went.

But this is where his kindness bursts through.

(2)

Boaz goes far beyond the requirements of the law:

First, he approaches Ruth and offers her **his protection**. He tells her to stay close to his women, tells her that he has instructed his men not to touch her.

Later when Ruth tells Naomi about this, Naomi says it is good to stay with his women because in someone else's field she may be harmed. We have to recognize that Ruth was in danger. She was a foreigner, a widow, unprotected, at risk of being harmed, but Boaz protects her.

He also tells her **to drink the water** that his men have bought. And Ruth is overcome.

But it doesn't end there. Ruth probably did not have any lunch with her, she was probably sitting off to one side on her own. She was probably dressed differently to the other women, she certainly would have sounded different.....she was an outsider. **But Boaz calls her in and invites her to share lunch**. She ate until she was full and still has some left over. Boaz's kindness still continues to overflow.

He then goes even further and tells his men to let her glean right up among the sheaves, and **even to pull stalks out of the sheaves** they have already gathered and drop them for her.

Can you imagine the reaction of his workers? They have been working hard all morning and gathering up the sheaves, this is strenuous hard work. They would have said, *'Are you seriously saying that you want us now to pull stalks out of the already collected sheaves and drop them?'* to which Boaz would have responded *'Yes! That's right!'*

Boaz's kindness is incredible.

So Ruth gleans until evening and then threshes out the barley she has gathered and it amounted to an Ephah. So what is an Ephah? It is ten times the amount of mana each person was to collect in the Wilderness during the Exodus.

The NIV says it is "about 13 kilograms"

(3)

It is a staggering amount.

She had gone out that morning with the hope of just gathering just enough to feed her and Naomi that night. She is scavenging for food, expecting just a bare minimum at best, but it is as if she arrived home with 'the weekly shop' from Morrisons!

Naomi was in utter shock and asked, v19, ***Who did this, who showed the amazing kindness and generosity to you?*** and Ruth would have responded

"Well, his name wasummmmm.....Boaz was it?"

Ruth would not have known who he was.

But for Naomi it was different, very different, because she KNEW who he was.

And you can imagine that moment for Naomi, when HOPE **suddenly sprung into her life** and EVERYTHING is changed and different. Verse 20

"He is a close relative, he is one of our kinsmen redeemers"

This man who has shown such an abundance of kindness, has given them such undeserved favour, has gone so far beyond the requirements of the Law, **He has the potential to redeem them.**

God has provided.

He has brought them together such that they have a redeemer, who can do for them what they cannot do for themselves:

Give them a new life
Give them a new hope
Give them a new future

In just ONE DAY God has been at work to re-build their lives and change them for ever.