

Ruth 2:17-19

Review Ruth Chapter 1 through 2:16.

Ruth 2:17 So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

Ruth did not just 'ride easy' on the care given to her. Instead we see her working hard until evening to gather grain for herself and Naomi. To glean <laqat> literally means to pick something up or to gather. Imagine yourself out in a field which is being harvested. There is perhaps dust flying everywhere, the sun is beating down and you have just done what feels like your 300th squat and bent over more times than you can count. This goes on all day. After collecting the stalks of grain, Ruth then had to separate the grain from the stalk by beating it with a stick. After all was said and done, she collected about 2/3 of a bushel or 23 liters, according to the *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible Notes by Keener and Walton*. Some commentaries note she had gathered about a bushel. This amount was enough for five day's food for the two women.

Ruth began a day's work and finished a day's work. She began early in the morning and finished at dusk. She did not stop because she was tired, although she must have been. She made good use of her time gleaning until evening. She did not abuse the kindness Boaz directed towards her, rather she showed her gratefulness by working hard. She made the most of what she had gathered by beating out the grain herself and collecting it.

Proverbs 12:27 says, "A slothful man does not roast his prey, but the precious possession of a man [is] diligence". Notice the comparison in this verse between slothfulness [idleness] and diligence [perseverance].

Proverbs 31:27 addresses idleness, "She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness".

- ♥ Are you willing to work hard at whatever tasks God places before you? (Do you often find yourself saying 'I can't' or 'It's too difficult'?)
- ♥ Do you give up easily because something is uncomfortable or unenjoyable?
- ♥ Do you choose to do what you would *rather* do above what you *should* do?
- ♥ Do you make the most of the advantages you are given?

Ruth 2:18 And she took [it] up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took [it] out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied.

When Ruth had finished gathering and threshing her grain, she carried it back to town. A bushel is about eight gallons. The *Standard Weight per Bushel for Agricultural Commodities*, says that a bushel of barley weighs 48 pounds (Section 600, Table B). Imagine working from sunrise to sunset then walking home with a parcel weighing almost fifty pounds!

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible says, "She took it up herself, and carried it into the city, though, had she asked them, it is likely some of Boaz's servants would have done that for her. We should study to be as little as possible troublesome to those that are kind to us. She did not think it either too hard or too mean a service to carry her corn herself into the city, but was rather pleased with what she had gotten by her own industry, and careful to secure it".

You can almost feel Ruth's excitement about her days work! She had left early in the morning hoping to secure a place in a field where she would be able to gather grain for herself and Naomi. The process of gleaning a field had been new to her and she was aware she was an 'outsider'. Yet, in faith, she went ahead with the instruction of her mother-in-law and walked towards the fields that were being harvested. She not only was welcomed by the owner but shown considerable favor and kindness. Now, at the end of the day you can imagine Ruth is physically exhausted but also exhilarated by the outcome of her work.

Look back at Ruth 2:14, "And at mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied **and had some left**".

We have a description of 'ancient day' doggie bags☺! Much like we would do after having a meal out, Ruth packaged up what she was unable to finish so she could bring it home for an additional meal. However, she did not bring it home for herself but instead shared with Naomi. Ruth is continuing to care for her mother-in-law and shares the blessing that had been extended to her from Boaz. This is a great example of the responsibility we have to provide for those in need and to honor our parents. Read 1 Timothy 5:3-4, "Honor widows who are widows indeed; but if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family, and to make some return to their parents; for this is

acceptable in the sight of God". We see the outward action of honoring parents by sharing our blessing with them, which Ruth demonstrated so well.

Patrick/Lowth/Whitby/Lowman Commentary says that the phrase 'Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned' means Naomi wondered at the quantity. This suggests the amount of grain Ruth brought home was unusual. Ruth had been shown uncommon kindness in Boaz's fields.

God always provides for his children – often in quantities that exceed our actual need. Recall the well-known account written for us in [John 6:12-13](#) when Jesus multiplied three loaves and two fish to feed five thousand people, "And when they were filled, He *said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost." And so they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, which were left over by those who had eaten". This is an incredible demonstration of God's power and faithfulness in providing more than enough for those who seek Him.

In Ruth 2:18, along with the continued reminder of Boaz's generosity, we see that

- ♥ Ruth worked hard to **complete** the day's work, and
- ♥ She **shared** the blessings that had been extended to her, therefore honoring her mother-in-law.

Naomi is curious about the quantity of grain and the leftover meal Ruth has returned home with. Consider a small child opening their hand and showing you a ten-dollar bill! You would probably ask questions as to how they came about this gift and who was involved. Naomi's questioning seems to confirm the thought that the amount of grain Ruth collected was unusual. Her questions of 'where did you glean and where did you work' ask for specific information like **what place, how and when** did you come upon this incredible fate. You can almost hear the conversation between these two women as Naomi asks Ruth to recount exactly what happened that day!

Ruth 2:19 Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."

I love Naomi's first reaction, 'May he who took notice of you be blessed'. Her words extol the desire for great blessing to be upon the one who showed such kindness and interest in Ruth. We truly have no idea how our acts of kindness may ripple down to others. In helping Ruth, Boaz has blessed Naomi. Not just in physical provision of food but certainly in the hope

that all will be well. Imagine how encouraging it must have been to see Ruth with almost fifty pounds of grain for their food.

Ruth reported to Naomi that the fields she had worked belonged to a man named Boaz. Picture the surprised look at hearing this name! Although Ruth did not yet know who Boaz was, Naomi was certainly aware of her late husband's relatives. Happenstance or God's providence? The first is coincidence the second is "the guardianship and control exercised by a deity" (*WordWeb*). It is incredible to see God's hand in all circumstances. He has a plan for each of His children – a plan that will bless them and honor His name. Back up to [Ruth 2:10](#) and remember Ruth's reaction to Boaz's kindness, "Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

- ♥ Think upon the specific ways you have seen God's hand of blessing in your life.
- ♥ How has He used others to bless and encourage you?
- ♥ Do you pray for opportunities to bless others?

The following comments are from *John Wesley's Notes on the Old and New Testaments* regarding Ruth 2:19. "Where hast thou gleaned today? It is a good question to ask ourselves in the evening. "Where have I gleaned today?" What improvements have I made in grace or knowledge? What have I learned or done, which will turn to account?"

The questions above are worthy of thought. Gleaning means harvest or gathering. [Are we involved in seeking truth, in sharing truth, and in building treasures in heaven?](#) Instead of answering a quick 'yes', consider a more complete answer by adding detail:

- ♥ What am I doing to grow in my knowledge and understanding of God?
- ♥ Am I eager to share truth with others? Am I bold to mention Jesus' name and what He has done for mankind?
- ♥ Is my time, energy and resources poured into earthly pleasure or heavenly treasure?