

Ruth 2:4-9

We continue on with the account of God's providence in the life of Ruth – and Boaz. In verse three, Ruth happened upon a field belonging to Boaz. Now, in verse four, we read that Boaz appears in the field to encourage his workers.

Ruth 2:4 Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the LORD be with you." And they said to him, "May the LORD bless you."

Certainly it is noteworthy that Boaz would be in the same field at the same time as Ruth. Remember, Boaz was a man of wealth and it is possible that he owned many fields for harvesting grain. Before we get to the introduction of Boaz to Ruth, we are given a bit more information about Boaz.

First, the fact that Boaz was among his servants and payed particular attention to them shows he was a kind master to those working for him. His salutation of them shows his love of God. Adam Clarke's Commentary suggests the words 'May the Lord bless you', might be paraphrased, "May God be with you, to preserve you from accidents, and strengthen you to accomplish your work!" This expression is more than just an acknowledgment of 'Hi, how are you' while passing through. It is a sincere and genuine blessing to those who are working for him.

What can we learn from the words and action of Boaz? There is value in a kind greeting given with sincere motivation to encourage another. Taking the time to stop and acknowledge the hard work of others is an example of genuine care. **Do we seek to show true kindness to all those we are associated with? Are we too busy or self-centered or important in our own eyes to acknowledge others?**

The reply to Boaz from his workers is just as significant. There was an exchange of blessing. Instead of recording for us the words of disgruntled servants, the response we have comes from thankful workers. Perhaps the work we have been given or need to perform is not necessarily what we might choose, or is physically harder than we would like. Maybe we see our job as boring and without meaning. Regardless of how we feel, we should recognize that work is a blessing from God. This turns our heart towards thankfulness for the work He provides no matter what it is.

You may be thinking that the exchange of greetings between Boaz and his workers is simply the cultural thing to do, yet as we read on to the actions of this master, it is easy to see that his expressions are not just formal politeness but genuine care. And, this care is reciprocated.

The second thing we learn about Boaz in this exchange of words is the reminder that although he is well-known and holds a place of distinction in

the city, he does not regard himself above others in his actions. True children of God recognize they are all in need of God's care and intervention. There is no definition between wealth, poverty or position. No matter our calling we are reminded to be kind in our overseeing of others and to be faithful in our work.

It does seem that there must have been a remnant culture at this time in Palestine that was receptive to God. There was no hesitation to mention His hands of blessing both in Boaz's words and those of his servants. We might read this and think our salutations of one another are quite different today. There doesn't seem to be the same openness or recognition of God. In fact the mention of God's name may not be received as favorable. **Yet, does that mean we cannot or should not extend God's blessing towards others?** Perhaps their response would not be positive but often, at least in my personal observation, the response of God's blessing on another is welcomed. The challenge or question is, 'Do we show our love for God by speaking of Him freely, in all circumstances. **Do I show my genuine care for others by sharing what is most important?**

Some time ago, I was convicted of the necessity in my own life to become bolder about God's priority in my own life. As I have purposed to mention His name in almost every situation – grocery store, walking, restaurant, etc. – not once have I been met with hostility. Sure, sometimes silence can be deafening or conversations end abruptly but every now and then, my greeting is returned with a similar blessing, and smile and conversations have resulted in encouragement. John Wesley's Notes says this, "They expressed their piety, even in their civil conversation, and worldly transactions; which now so many are ashamed of.

2Thessalonians 3:16 says, "Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!" Consider what might happen if you were to give a similar greeting to those around you.

We have been given an example of the encouragement of a genuine, sincere expression of God's blessing upon those we are in contact with. This is more than courtesy, it is kindness allotted to one another and acknowledgement that all blessings come from God. **What is your behavior towards others as a master or leader, or the one in charge? What is your behavior towards others as a worker, or the one taking direction? Is mutual good-will shared in your relationships? Would others know, by your words and actions, it is God you serve?**

Joshua 24:15 "And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites

in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Moving forward, Boaz enquires about Ruth,

Ruth 2:5-6 "Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" And the servant in charge of the reapers answered and said, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab.

There were servants appointed to look after a group of workers to see that the work was done well. Apparently, there were persons gleaning in the field at the same time, one of them, Ruth. Perhaps in a smaller town, you would begin to recognize faces and get to know who was among the poor gleaning the fields during the harvest. Boaz did not recognize this young woman he saw and inquired his servant about her.

Remember Ruth's faithfulness to Naomi in choosing to leave Moab and follow her to Bethlehem. In Ruth 1:16, Ruth had dedicated herself to Naomi's people and to her God. We continue to see God's care of His children as His plan develops. **Did Ruth know what was going to happen or who she was to meet?** There is no indication of this. We are blessed to have the entire narrative to read in God's word so we are able to follow the intent of circumstances that lead to blessing. Ruth stepped forward always trusting, doing what was suggested by Naomi. So now we find Ruth gleaning in a field, belonging to Boaz, and he has questioned who she is. Boaz's servant goes on to explain how Ruth has happened to be in the field. He recounts for Boaz the request Ruth made of him earlier in the morning.

Ruth 2:7 "And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while."

There is so much packed into verse seven. First, although Ruth had knowledge that gleaning was for the poor and widowed, she did not assume she would be given the same consideration as those who were from Bethlehem. When she encountered the servant in charge, she asked permission to glean in the field. NAS translates Ruth's words as saying 'please'; KJV translates the same words as 'I pray'. In each translation, what we see is a modest thought of oneself. Clearly, she is humble, not expecting something is owed her. **Proverbs 15:33 says, "The fear of the Lord is the instruction for wisdom, and before honor [comes] humility"**. Read also, **Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"**. None of us is above another, no matter the circumstances. **Ephesians 5:21 reminds us of the need to have a lowly thought of oneself, "and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ"**. **1 Peter 5:5-6 commands**

us to clothe ourselves with humility saying, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble”.

I wonder how often our expectations become something we feel we deserve. There are so many specific areas we could address, we'll look at the idea of deservedness in general. Any blessing God chooses to bestow upon us is because of His love. We do not even deserve to have breath in our bodies. It is easy for us to look at what others should be doing for us or how we should have this or that or how we should be treated. We can often focus on what we do not have and become bitter over our supposed lack. Do you recognize your blessings? Do you act like a victim – always having something bad happen to you at the hands of another? Is someone else always to blame for your lack? This attitude does not recognize the hand of God in an undeserving soul. Humility of mind causes us to be thankful for all things, realizing we deserve nothing.

An attitude of anger and bitterness and deservedness, comes from a prideful heart; an attitude of joy and thankfulness are born of humility.

Think of how Ruth's attitude could have been different. She may have insisted that she be treated the same as those who were long-time residents of Bethlehem. After all, she gave up her own country to aid her mother-in-law. She could have been disgruntled to find herself among the poor, gathering left-overs in order to provide food for herself and Naomi. Bitterness over the loss of her husband could have filled her heart. Trying to navigate in a completely new culture, with its laws and putting herself in an uncertain position may have caused her to have a sour attitude. Yet this is not what we see. When Boaz required of his servant in charge about Ruth, the servant recounted how she had asked permission to collect the sheaves left on the ground. He then added that she had worked hard all day with only a small break.

This brings us to our second point – Ruth was grateful for the opportunity to work at providing and this showed in her willingness to put forth effort. She did not just expect something to be handed her, regardless of her situation. She was diligent in her labor. Romans 12:11 gives us this command of how to conduct ourselves, “not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord”.

Ruth 2:7 places Ruth sitting in a shelter. The picture painted for us is Ruth perhaps taking cover from the sun in a covered area, after a long days' toil, catching her breath, and Boaz walking around with his overseer, making sure all is well. His eye catches the face of someone unknown to him and he asks his servant about her. Boaz's servant tells him of her asking permission to gather after the reapers and of her perseverance to work all day.

Boaz now directly addresses Ruth. Ruth 2:8-9 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. "Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw."

Here we see Boaz stretching out his hand in kindness to Ruth. He not only allowed her to gather grain as the Jewish law intended, but encouraged her to stay in his field alongside his workers. He also assured her of safety as she worked in the fields and looked out for her comfort in encouraging her to use the same resource of water available to his servants. Earlier, we were introduced to Boaz as being a righteous man seen by his words to those working for him, now in his actions toward Ruth, we see the same character.

Do we do what we can to make others feel comfortable in an unfamiliar situation? So often we can become so focused on what we want or need to do that we neglect reaching out to others. Genuine words and acts of kindness and thoughtfulness are an important avenue for encouraging others. The word genuine is not to be missed here. Words mean nothing without action. Notice how Boaz felt for Ruth's protection and did something about it by speaking with the young men in his employ. This is more than a statement of, 'I hope you stay safe', it is an action of let me do what I can to provide safety for you.

When we desire to encourage another, let's take the extra step and be willing to put our words to action. **What practical examples can you think of that would show kindness?** For instance, instead of saying you will pray for someone, how about praying with them at that time or following up with a text or note that reminds them you are covering them in prayer.

Boaz instructed Ruth to follow the reapers and collect what was left. Since she was a stranger, Boaz had also taken care to protect her from possible uncivil or rude acts from his workers. It is obvious Boaz has a genuine concern for her well-being. In our next study in Ruth, we will see that she noticed his kindness and responds in humility.