



“GOD’S COVENANT FAITHFULNESS”

WEEK TWO – HARVEST TIME

The last verse of chapter one tells us that Naomi and Ruth came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. This is another important facet in the story of Ruth: her mother-in-law. How often in our lives do we look back and realise that God has a wonderful sense of timing. We often have things clearly worked out in our mind as to when and how we want things to happen, only to find that God has a completely different timetable.

- How do you respond when this happens in your life?
- Do we find God’s ways are always the best?

I think it’s significant that they arrived at this time. Naomi and her husband had gone out in a time of famine, but God brought her and Ruth back at harvest time.

Read Chapter 2

The late husband of Naomi, Elimelech, had family still living in the area, in particular a man called Boaz who was very wealthy landowner. Ruth asked permission of Naomi to go and glean in his fields.

Nowadays, we think of gleaning more in the way of getting information from books or from the internet. It doesn’t mean we take on board all the things we read, but that we pick out what is essential for the task in hand. Gleaning, a term which goes back to the bible, was a right of the poor, in this country, up to the late 18th century, under common law. It is the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers' fields after they have been commercially harvested or on fields where it is not economically profitable to harvest. We sometime see on our TV screens images of people, particularly in poor countries, gleaning (or often now we would say scavenging), on rubbish dumps, so desperate are they to find things to sell for food.

- What does this willingness of Ruth tell us about her character?
- Notice, also, she runs it past Naomi before doing it.
- Can we learn from this?

Read verse 5 This clearly shows that Boaz was a man who watched over what was happening in his fields.

- It puts us in mind of God and how he watches over us. *Read Matthew 10:29* “Not even a sparrow, worth only half a penny, can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it.”
- It is good to remind ourselves of God’s loving care, especially when we are going through challenging times.

Notice how when Boaz enquired of his servants as to whom Naomi was, despite her being a Moabite, he knew the family connection and immediately told her to glean only in his fields and to stay close by his young women.

Read verses 8-13

- What do these verses demonstrate about the attitude of Boaz to a foreigner?
- Do we show care and compassion to those from other countries?
- Are there examples in the Minster of this?
- Is it easier to care for those from some nations than others?
- At present it is a huge topic within our country, but it can be a difficult area of debate. How do we respond to this?
- Ruth had clearly impressed Boaz but what were the things he particularly mentioned?
- Do we take refuge under God’s wings? What do we understand by this?

Read verses 14-23

When I read these verses, it again puts me in mind of God’s provision for us. One of the names of God in the Old Testament is **Jehovah Jireh** the meaning of which is **God will provide**. There is no set way in which God provides, but he understands our situation and knows our needs. However, it is also good to remember that he uses people to meet our needs.

Genesis 22:14 *“Abraham called the name of that place **The LORD Will Provide**, as it is said to this day, “In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.”*

You may recall that this was the occasion when God told Abraham to take his son Isaac and then sacrifice him on the altar, but at the last moment God provided a sacrifice in the lamb that was caught in a bush.

- Are we open to helping others when God prompts us?
- Boaz demonstrated this concept in his treatment of Ruth.
- Also note that Boaz had heard how Naomi had returned with her mother-in-law. She had a good testimony!
- Do we try to have a good testimony?
- Do we trust God to meet our needs?

We see the generosity of Ruth again, when she returns home from gleaning. She had already beat out the grain and brought that with the food left over from lunch. It should be the characteristic of all Christians, to be generous to others and give.

I wonder how much Naomi realised that God was at work in this situation. Not only were they being fed but also, she could be confident that Ruth was able to work in safety.

In the last verse we read that Ruth worked alongside the women in Boaz's fields whilst she lived with her mother-in-law. There is a tendency in our society to treat mothers-in-law as a butt of jokes – think back to some of the comedians! Here, however, Ruth clearly has a great love and respect for her mother-in-law which is good to see.

Let us constantly remind ourselves in the coming week of God's faithfulness and generosity to us.

[Hebrews 10:23](#)

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.



Prayer:

Our Faithful God, thank you for all that you are and may we in turn be faithful to you in all that we say and do.