

Reaping

Ruth 2:1-7

Introduction:

1. After arriving in Bethlehem, Ruth soon began reaping in the barley fields
2. She became a gleaner in order to obtain food for herself and Naomi
3. This gleaner appeared significant but it was really an important incident in the life of Ruth
 - a. In gleaning, Ruth gained her husband and later a son
 - b. As an indirect result of gleaning, Ruth became ancestress of Christ
4. Sometimes those events in our lives which we consider unimportant turn out to be very significant.
 - a. Never discount the importance of an event in your line of duty
 - b. Be faithful to your duty, though humble and inconspicuous

I. The Plan for Reaping – vs 2

- Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem “empty” and they would need food
- Since it was harvest season, they could glean in the fields

A. Her Willingness – vs 2a

2a And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace.

1. It is interesting that Ruth, not Naomi, initiated this plan to glean
2. Ruth saw the need and suggested gleaning
3. Ruth volunteered - she did not have to be begged or threatened
4. Thank God for those in church who see areas and they jump in / do the work

B. Her Respectfulness – vs 2b

2b ... Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn...

1. “Ears” here refers to stalks of grain / “Corn” = any kind of grain
2. Ruth requested permission from Naomi to go and glean
3. Requesting permission showed Ruth’s great respect for Naomi
4. Ruth could have gone out on her own, but she didn’t

C. Her Quickness – vs 2b

2b ... Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn...

1. This promptness was needed because the harvest would eventually be over
2. There was no time to waste if food was to be obtained
3. Opportunity often gives us a small amount of time for profit
4. Procrastinators often complain that they don’t as many opportunities as others, but in reality they have the same opportunities, but they didn’t act

D. Her Industriousness

2b ... Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn...

1. This plan of Ruth’s involved considerable work on her part
2. It involved the tiring, back-breaking task of following the reapers and picking up stalks of grain which had fallen to the ground
3. Ruth did not expect a handout – she was prepared to work
4. The virtuous woman in Prov 31 was industrious

Pr 31:27 She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

5. She did not ask Naomi if she could take a stroll through Bethlehem and see the sights
6. Achievers in life are not loafers or lazy

E. Her Humbleness

2b ... Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn...

1. Gleaning in the fields was very humble work
2. Gleaning was admitting that one was poor and in need - desperate
3. Pr 15:33b... before honour is humility.
 - a) *Humility led to great honor for Ruth*
 - b) *Had she not been humble enough to glean, she might have found a husband and later had a son etc.*

F. Her Lawfulness – Lev 23:22; Deut 24:19

22 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God.

19 When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.

1. The proposal to glean was lawful for the law of Moses made provision for it
2. Four groups could glean in the fields
 - a) *Poor*
 - b) *Stranger*
 - c) *Fatherless*
 - d) *Widow*
3. Ruth qualified on three of these four groups – she was poor, stranger, widow
4. Our govt needs to practice something like this
 - a) *Instead of passing out money to the poor and needy, why not require them to work for it.*
 - b) *Work is healthy – it promotes character*
 - c) *God does not run a welfare program that encourages people to be lazy*
5. If you want God's blessings, then you will have to work
6. Only salvation comes without works

G. Her Graciousness

2b ...Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace.

1. Though Ruth had a right to glean in the fields, she would not demand that she be allowed to glean
 - a) *She would ask permission to glean in the fields*
 - b) *Gifts do not exempt us from graciousness*
 - c) *Entitlement does not excuse lack of courtesy*
 - d) *Some have acted like strikers when they did not receive what they thought they should receive. Some welfare recipients in Detroit staged a sit-in and some chained themselves to the building to demand more money for school clothes for their children.*
2. Asking to glean was necessary because some farmers disobeyed this law about gleaning and refused gleaners

H. Her Acceptableness

2c ... And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.

1. Naomi accepted and approved of Ruth's plan for gleaning
2. Naomi had known better days and to succumb to gleaning must have been quite humiliating
3. I wonder if Naomi had tears in her eyes when Ruth left to glean – “Has it really come to this?”
4. Little did Ruth and Naomi realize that this gleaning was the beginning of something great
5. Don't moan about your troubles, instead do your duty and you begin helping your situation

II. The Place of the Reaping – vs 1, 3

A. Pursing a Place to Glean

3a And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers...

- When Ruth left the house she was not certain where she was going to reap
1. “She went” shows the good effort of Ruth to seek a place to glean
 2. This might have been a laborious and discouraging task
 3. Being a foreigner, her task was probably harder
 4. “came” tells us that Ruth was successful in finding a place to glean
 5. Notice that the “went” preceded the “came”

B. Providence in the Place to Glean – vs 3

3b ...and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

1. “hap” occurs 10x in the OT and is translated, hap, chance, befallen, event
2. The world calls it “luck” or “chance” but really it is the providence of God
3. There are no chance happenings with God's people
4. God providentially led Ruth to the field of Boaz
 - a) *He was a relative of Elimelech*
 - b) *He was wealthy enough to marry Ruth*
5. Obedience is needed to see God's provisions

III. The Provider in the Reaping – vs 4-7

A. The Interacting – vs 4

4 And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.

- We see some noble interacting between Boaz and his servants
 - Here is an employer / employee relationship that we seldom see today
1. The Godliness of Boaz – “the Lord be with you”
 - a) *We get the idea here that Boaz is a godly man and his godliness is reflected in his dealings with people.*
 - b) *Boaz was not afraid to mix religion with business*
 - c) *Neither employer nor employee were afraid to acknowledge God in their work and lives*
 - d) *He was not some crude foul-mouthed businessman*
 - e) *Everything we see of him in the book of Ruth reflects a life that would honor Jehovah*
 - f) *Some wear religion on Sunday but it is absent the rest of the week*
 - g) *Boaz was the same in the field as he was in the house of worship*

2. The Influence of Boaz – “the Lord bless thee”
 - a) *Not only was the speech of Boaz very noble and God-honoring*
 - b) *But the reply of his workers was also noble*
 - c) *Boaz lived a life before his servants that inspired them to give honor to Jehovah*
 - d) *Our lives ought to inspire and encourage others to live holy lives and to honor God*
3. The Contrast of Boaz
 - a) *The interaction between Boaz and his workers stands in stark contrast to the times of the Judges*
 - (1) The times of the Judges were dark times for Israel
 - (2) Much evil abounded in the days of the Judges
 - b) *In spite of the general degradation of the day, Boaz honored God*
 - c) *He was a great and holy contrast to the ungodly ways of most of the people of that time*
 - d) *We need to let our lights shine more brightly than ever in this day of wickedness and evil*
 - (1) Just because others are evil and wicked, doesn't mean that we are to be that way too
 - (2) It is not easy to live for the Lord in evil days, but it is possible

B. The Inquiring

1. Romance in the Inquiry – “Whose damsel is this?”

5 Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?

 - a) *"damsel" is the feminine form of the word "servant"*
 - (1) Boaz thought Ruth was a servant woman belonging to a master
 - (2) In the next verse the servant will explain to Boaz who Ruth was
 - b) *That Boaz would recognize a gleaner is unusual - no one paid much attention to them*
 - (1) This was more than just a passing interest
 - (2) The gleaners were poor and not influential
 - (3) No one paid much attention to them
 - (4) They weren't respected and they were often in the way
 - c) *This reminds us that the Lord notices His servants - we were once like Ruth*
 - (1) We were once strangers to God
 - (2) We are often unnoticed by the multitudes
 - (3) The Redeemer notices every hurt, sorrow, tear
 - d) *What a blessing that God would notice us*

2. The Response to the Inquiry

6 And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: 7 And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.

- The servant answers the question that Boaz asked in vs 5

a) *The Purity of Ruth*

- (1) She “came back” with Naomi “out” of Moab
- (2) She left Moab to dwell in Israel
- (3) This separation said something about the character of Ruth

b) *The Loyalty of Ruth*

- (1) She returned with Naomi
- (2) She didn’t turn her back on her mother-in-law
- (3) She would glean for herself and Naomi

c) *The Propriety of Ruth*

- (1) “I pray you, let me glean and gather”
- (2) Though there were laws about gleaning, she did not demand her rights
- (3) She humbly asked if she could glean

d) *The Activity of Ruth*

- (1) She "came" and she "continued"
- (2) Ruth was consistent and steadfast in her work
- (3) Ruth did not ask for a handout, she was willing to work

e) *The Example of Ruth*

- (1) Ruth is a shining example of our work for the Lord
- (2) If we are expecting to hear the Lord's "well done" then we must do what Ruth did
- (3) The servant reported that Ruth "had tarried a little in the house"
 - (a) *This was not the house where Ruth lived with Naomi - that house was back in Bethlehem*
 - (b) *This house was a shelter of some kind in the field where workers could go for shade, rest, refreshment*
 - (c) *If we would continue in the Lord's fields, then we must spend time in God's house*
- (4) If we are going to "continue" in our Christian lives, then we must spend time in the "house"
 - (a) *Heb 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*
 - (b) *Ps 92:13 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.*