



It was nice to welcome a relatively new member of St Paul's to celebrate Harvest Sunday with the third of our Sermons on our Church Vision: here at St Paul's we aim to become a "Growing Community of Grace". This requires us not only to CONNECT and to SERVE but also to GIVE. Read Ruth 2: 1 – 13.

Grace and Giving in the book of Ruth

- We are familiar with thinking of God's grace to us as a free gift, but that means that these two words are intertwined for us too: unless we are generous givers, we will struggle with trying to be gracious.
- 'Ruth' is set in the time of the Judges. A famine in Bethlehem drives Naomi's family to Moab to find food, they settle and the young men marry local girls. Then Naomi's husband and sons die in quick succession and Naomi has to return home. Ruth insists on travelling back with Naomi and goes to find food by gleaning in a field that 'happens' to belong to Boaz, Naomi's kinsman-redeemer who eventually marries Ruth. (**Deut. 24:19-22 and 25:5-6.**) Their great grandson was King David.
- It's a story about migration, generosity, God's Providence & Redemption. It's a sign-post to the Cross.

Giving will be costly: Ruth's Example.

- **Ruth 1: 16-18:** Ruth could have gone back to her relatives and probably re-marry but instead she chooses a life of poverty and struggle in an alien land: she sacrifices her comfort to stay with Naomi.
- **Ruth 2: 1-2:** Ruth heads out into the fields to glean. This was an extremely dangerous move for an unmarried foreigner- **Ruth 2:9, 22.** She is boldly risking her safety to provide for her mother-in-law.

Giving should be glad: Boaz's Example.

- In Boaz we see the heart-attitude God requires when we are giving: he doesn't do the minimum:
- **Ruth 2: 8-9, 14-18.** He orders his harvesters to drop whole stalks of barley for her, he guarantees her protection, he gives her water and invites her to eat with them at the end of the day..... In chapter 3 he pours grain into her shawl to take home ... By Ch. 4 he disregards her lowliness and marries her. Boaz has an instinct to give; he has a heart overflowing with generosity.

Growing as Givers Ruth 2: 4-7

- Look up to God, recognising how much he gives us, how little we deserve it and how much He longs to give us more. **Ephesians 1: 3-4; Romans 5: 7-8; Revelation 21: 6.** Generosity will come to us naturally when we are overwhelmed by God's generosity. We see how Boaz understood this in the way he greets his workers and noticed the stranger in their midst.
- Look out to see the needs around us:
 - **Financial Giving:** thank you to those who have contributed to a rise in giving over the last 18 months. But we'd like everyone to give a bit more so we can continue to support and further the work of St Paul's for its parishioners and beyond.
 - **Welcoming Newcomers:** can we all make a special effort to welcome newcomers. **Ruth 2: 13** Start by occasionally welcoming someone you don't recognise, if you already do, make it a weekly habit, if you regularly invite new people for a meal and/or to homegroup – Well done!
 - **Supporting the Needy:** Our harvest gifts are going to the Calais Jungle, where there are thousands of people like Ruth. We can provide sustenance like Boaz did and there are other ways of getting involved: prayer, advocacy, hospitality and practical support.

Questions for discussion

1. *How does Ruth's declaration of faith (Ruth1:16-17a) inform her decision to stay with Naomi?*
2. *What sort of person would you be prepared to follow into a life of poverty and hardship? What would you risk?*
3. *What signs are there in these verses that Boaz is a Good Master? What can we discover about Ruth's character?*
5. *How can we develop the deep joy of knowing how much God has given us, and wants to continue to give us?*
6. *Can we reflect on the awesome generosity of God and think of one way in which we can increase our generosity?*
7. *Let's be encouraged by the way we see the hand of God guiding the faithful in the details of everyday life at the same time as guiding events preparing the way for the birth of the Son of David. See Jesus' genealogy: Matt. 1: 5-6*