

**10.09.22 – Pentecost 18**  
**“Ruth’s Ordinary Work”**

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

**Ruth 2:2-14 (NLT) ~ Pam**

<sup>1</sup> Now there was a wealthy and influential man in Bethlehem named Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi’s husband, Elimelech.

<sup>2</sup> One day Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go out into the harvest fields to pick up the stalks of grain left behind by anyone who is kind enough to let me do it.” Naomi replied, “All right, my daughter, go ahead.” <sup>3</sup> So Ruth went out to gather grain behind the harvesters. And as it happened, she found herself working in a field that belonged to Boaz, the relative of her father-in-law, Elimelech.

<sup>4</sup> While she was there, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters. “The Lord be with you!” he said.

“The Lord bless you!” the harvesters replied.

<sup>5</sup> Then Boaz asked his foreman, “Who is that young woman over there? Who does she belong to?”

<sup>6</sup> And the foreman replied, “She is the young woman from Moab who came back with Naomi. <sup>7</sup> She asked me this morning if she could gather grain behind the harvesters. She has been hard at work ever since, except for a few minutes’ rest in the shelter.”

<sup>8</sup> Boaz went over and said to Ruth, “Listen, my daughter. Stay right here with us when you gather grain; don’t go to any other fields. Stay right behind the young women working in my field. <sup>9</sup> See which part of the field they are harvesting, and then follow them. I have warned the young men not to treat you roughly. And when you are thirsty, help yourself to the water they have drawn from the well.”

<sup>10</sup> Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. “What have I done to deserve such kindness?” she asked. “I am only a foreigner.”

<sup>11</sup> “Yes, I know,” Boaz replied. “But I also know about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers. <sup>12</sup> May the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done.”

<sup>13</sup> “I hope I continue to please you, sir,” she replied. “You have comforted me by speaking so kindly to me, even though I am not one of your workers.”

<sup>14</sup> At mealtime Boaz called to her, “Come over here, and help yourself to some food. You can dip your bread in the sour wine.” So, she sat with his harvesters, and Boaz gave her some roasted grain to eat. She ate all she wanted and still had some left over.

**L: These are the Words of God from the Life of Ruth. All: Thanks be to God!**

**Matthew 1:1-6, 16 (NIV)**

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

<sup>2</sup> Abraham was the father of Isaac,

Isaac the father of Jacob,

Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,  
<sup>3</sup> Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,  
 Perez the father of Hezron,  
 Hezron the father of Ram,  
<sup>4</sup> Ram the father of Amminadab,  
 Amminadab the father of Nahshon,  
 Nahshon the father of Salmon,  
<sup>5</sup> Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,  
 Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,  
 Obed the father of Jesse,  
<sup>6</sup> and Jesse the father of King David.  
 David was the father of Solomon . . .

<sup>16</sup> and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

**Leader: This is a partial Genealogy of Jesus. All:** Thanks be to God!

**Please pray with me:**

Generous God, we thank you for our rich Bible history and its men and women of faith. We thank you for a new way to look at the ordinary things of life, both the challenging and the glorious, so that we may see and sense you in a more extraordinary way. We are grateful to be together in worship; so, please be with those who could not be here today. Open our minds and hearts now as we seek the extraordinary in the ordinary. Let me be your messenger. Amen.

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We continue to pray for all those in Florida and other places in our world who began the recovery and re-building process, yet still don't have a house or church building for worship this morning. Although it is chilly here, we are grateful for this space. Our contractor will soon turn off the cold A/C water, but there are repairs to schedule this week before the heat is turned on, so please continue to wear layers, and use the blankets and shawls in the back as needed. On another matter, let me remind you that I will be collecting for the CROP Walk until the end of the month, so plan accordingly, and I moved the basket with blank envelopes closer to the offering tray.

Now, let's get a little background on Ruth and Naomi. This book was included in the Canon for its artistic story, testimony of love, as a

favorite teaching tool of Rabbis about sacrifice and loyalty, and as a connection to Jesus' lineage. It has no agreed-upon author or date. There are three main characters, Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. The book of Ruth begins with Naomi and her husband, Elimelech, and her two sons, Mahlon and Chilion all going to Moab, considered a foreign country, because of a famine in Bethlehem (ironic because Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, comes from the Hebrew words "House of Bread.") They lived there ten years, where her sons married Moabite girls, Ruth and Orpah. All three men died of unknown cause, so Naomi decided to go back home to Bethlehem in Judah, where the Lord had abundantly blessed their crops. Naomi was an Israelite, but her daughters-in-law were Moabite enemies who worshipped pagan gods.

The ordinariness of our story was the work and duty of Ruth to care for her mother-in-law, Naomi, who insisted Orpah stay in Moab and return to her mother's home to re-marry. Ruth, however, decided to accompany Naomi on the journey. The extraordinary part of our story is twofold: Ruth's loyalty, love, and willingness to convert to the God (Yahweh), Naomi and her family had trusted and worshipped; and the connection to Jesus' lineage. Naomi set a good life example of God's care, despite her mourning. These relational strengths and bonds in this book of Ruth was cherished by rabbis and Jews who utilized it as clear illustration of God's grace and divine intervention.

Now let's see what happened when they went to Judah. Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest and festival. It was customary and the law for Israelite farmers to leave the edges of their fields (about ¼ of their crop) unharvested so the poor or

those not able to work could come to glean what was left over. The word “gleaning” means to gather food or collect things left by others:

<sup>19</sup> When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. <sup>20</sup> When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. <sup>21</sup> When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. <sup>22</sup> Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this. (Deuteronomy 24:19-22)

There was a generous and wealthy farmer named Boaz, to whose field Ruth went. She worked hard there to gather grain for them to eat. When he arrived to inspect his fields, Boaz tells the workers “The Lord be with you!” and the harvesters replied: “The Lord bless you!” He noticed a young woman he spoke kindly to and gave instructions to protect her from the workers he did not know. In the last verse, he also encouraged her to join him at the noonday meal and eat as much as she could. He knew she had not rested since early morning, so he both admired her hard work, and knew she needed protection. Ruth went there seeking the Lord’s favor, and God did intervene with this generous older man. It turned out later when she told Naomi how her day had gone, Naomi revealed Boaz was a relative and could redeem Ruth’s widowhood for their future.

That is where the next chapters go on to talk about her “kinsman-redeemer;” they marry and have a son named Obed, who is listed in Matthew’s lineage to Christ. Obed becomes the father of Jesse and grandfather of David, who becomes third king of the United Kingdom of

Israel, from whom Jesus descended. Ruth discovered more than faith with this man of valor, but a place in Scripture for all time. Read the rest of Ruth in faith, but also as you would read a novel to learn more of this extraordinary love as their relationship blossoms.

In the Matthew genealogy of Jesus, it is interesting to note that there are four women (Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Tamar), yet women were not included in these lists usually, even though according to traditional Jewish law, a person's Jewish status is passed down through the **mother**. Three of them were associated with scandal: prostitution, adultery, and rape; Ruth was an outsider, a convert. Scholars teach that only God's grace could explain their importance leading to Christ. For me that is extraordinary! There are some differences in Luke's birth story of Christ, but remember, Matthew was a Jewish accountant before he met Christ, so his level of detail is thorough but possibly skewed toward Abraham and David.

Another connection besides genetics is the term "kinsman-redeemer." Boaz was Ruth's kinsman-redeemer as Jesus Christ is sometimes called that: our *redeemer*, and since God created us as his children, and Christ is one with the Father (his Son), Jesus, through his humiliation at the cross and glorification at Resurrection could be called our kinsman-redeemer. Although we should not focus solely on this interpretation, it is noteworthy and complex. In any case, this story reveals a lineage of grace and sacrificial love. An example of finding the extraordinary in the ordinary. Amen. ||

**Will you pray with me?** Father God, thank you for this story of relationships, sacrifice, and love. Ruth found the extraordinary in the

ordinary work of survival. May others who are struggling to survive find your extraordinary grace and love for themselves. May they learn of the Christ's sacrifice for our sin and salvation. Let us, too, recognize your grace, in the every day. We humbly ask these things, in Jesus' name, **Amen.**