

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON FIFTY-SIX: RUTH 3:17

"And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law."

Ruth recounted all that had transpired that night on Boaz's threshing floor. She concluded by showing Naomi the six measures of barley that Boaz had given her. She also repeated the words Boaz had said to her, "Go not empty to thy mother-in-law." He was sending a message back to Naomi that he would take care of her needs as well as Ruth's.

When Naomi had come home to Bethlehem, she had complained that the Lord had brought her back "empty" (see 1:21). She had lost everything she had taken with her: her husband and two sons. She had returned to nothing, having lost her land through ten years of neglect. The unfairness of it all is implied in the Hebrew word translated "empty."

That same word appears here in verse 17. Ruth was not returning to Naomi "empty." Her cloak ("vail") was filled with grain. Naomi's "empty" days were over.

In her sorrow over all that she had lost, Naomi had neglected to appreciate what she had found: a new daughter. And through that daughter Naomi's last days would be full.

Naomi had left Bethlehem with her family. And, she had returned with her family. It's just that in the intervening ten years her family had changed. And, it was through her new family that God provided the means to restore her family's land and heritage.

As Elimelech's widow, Naomi could have claimed a Kinsman-Redeemer from among Elimelech's brothers or closest relation. But, she was too old to conceive an heir to carry on the family name. But Ruth, as Mahlon's widow, could do all that. Through Ruth, the land she lost would be returned and the family name, which had died out with Mahlon and Chilion, would be restored.

Boaz's gift of six measures of barley assured Naomi that he was willing and able to be the Kinsman-Redeemer she needed for Ruth. He knew that Ruth had worked in his fields to provide for her mother-in-law. By his gift and his words, Boaz was letting Ruth and Naomi know that he understood their relationship and he intended to provide for Naomi as well as Ruth. Jesus, like Boaz, understands the needs of His Bride, the Church. And, He is willing and able to meet those needs over and above what we could ask or think (Eph. 3:20).

Like Naomi, sometimes we don't notice the good things that God has given us because we are so focused on our loss. God has a plan for each one of us. And He is constantly working on that plan, bringing the elements together at just the right time. Ruth was the key to the restoration of the land and heritage of Naomi's husband and son. Boaz was a crucial element in that restoration. The two met when Ruth "accidentally" ended up in Boaz's field. All the time, God was working in the background.

He's working for you, too. Are you like Naomi, so focused on what you lost you are in danger of missing a blessing? Jesus does not leave His people "empty." He gives us abundant life (John 10:10). Open your eyes and see what He is doing for you.

*"O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy."
Psalm 107:1, 2*