

Sunday 18 January 2009
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Making Connections Ruth 2 – Harvests



May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge. Ruth 2.12

Ruth a love story.

The story so far, it takes us from suffering to discovering a gleam of hope. Here in Ruth 2, the story unfolds and hope is able to grow.

Ruth is also a true story and reveals how connections can be made.

- **Making Connections with God's Word**

Making connections with the poor and the alien

Naomi and Ruth and Ruth have left Moab because of famine. Ruth 2 describes the harvest season when there were 2 harvests, the first being the barley and the second being the wheat. According to scripture the poor and the alien were to be cared for by the community.

There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the **poor** and needy in your land. Deut 15.11

'When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the **poor** and the **alien**. I am the LORD your God.' Leviticus 23:22

God clearly cares for the poor and is concerned for their needs. Within the UK we are privileged to have a welfare state. It is significant that the scriptures speak of the care of the poor and the alien – those who are not nationals, and that has implications for our attitudes to asylum seekers.

Making connections with family

Naomi also had relations who lived in Bethlehem – one being Boaz who was a wealthy man. Again the Bible spoke how a widow was to be cared for.

If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his **widow** must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. Deuteronomy 25:5.

Within Ruth 2 we are introduced to Naomi's relation Boaz.

The LORD bless him! Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead. She added, That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers. Ruth 2.20.

From God's perspective there was to be to be help for the widow and family had responsibility in this. Paul also picks up on this in his letter to timothy and how faith is to be expressed by caring for our families.

But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. 1 Tim 5.4

- **Making Connections with God**

In the story of Ruth we see God working out his good purpose in a dark time within Israel's history.

Ruth had already pledged to Naomi that Naomi's God would be her God. Ruth was true to her word and as she discovered what the God of Israel (Yahweh) was like then she discovered he could be trusted. Through his word and through his people, Boaz clearly is a godly man Ruth and Naomi are cared for. In what was a very daring thing for Ruth to do – God had blessed her. Boaz himself had said ...

May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge. Ruth 2.12

This same God is the one who yearns for every human being to be a recipient of his love and grow in their love for Him.

For Small Groups

Read the whole story of Ruth. Share those things that have struck you as you heard the story.

Reflect upon what Ruth 1 & 2 and how it speaks to us about

- Suffering
- Love
- Faith and faithfulness
- Hope
- Reaching out
- The relevance of God's word
- His attitude to the poor and the alien (see notes above)
- Family privileges and responsibilities

Turn your reflections into prayers and possibly action points. Don't feel you have to work through the whole list but if there are key things that register with your group then focus upon those.