

The idea of belonging as service is one we see in the hymn ‘Brother, sister, let me serve you (StF611). It reminds us that we belong to one another and share in a journey of pilgrimage as Christian disciples together. Verse 2 says:

‘We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road:
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.’

Brian Wren’s communion hymn, ‘I come with joy, a child of God’ (StF 588) speaks to that sense of belonging both to God and to each other. Wren sees the table where we come to receive Holy Communion as a place that unites us with our fellow Christians around the world and with Christ

Closing Prayer

Loving God, we give thanks that you are a God of generosity. Help us to be givers and receivers of generosity as people who belong to you. We pray especially at this time for all those who are struggling to put food on the table. Open our eyes to the things we can do to share your harvest at this time of uncertainty. We offer these prayers in and through the name of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

CCL Licence numbers: 536401, 570883, 121327 & 1049959

Bible Month Bible Study – Ruth 2

To start our thinking

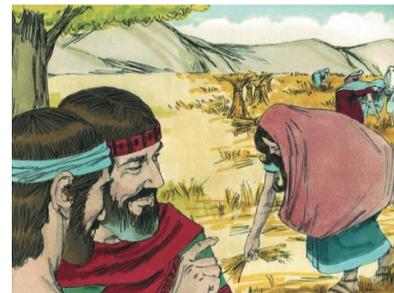
How did you find the first Chapter of Ruth? If you had some knowledge of the story before, was it as you remembered? What has stayed with you from what you read as the week has gone on? You may like to jot down your thoughts as we prepare to look at the next Chapter.

A prayer

Loving God, once again, as I come to think more about the book of Ruth on my own and yet also alongside others I pray, open my heart to your word and your word to my heart. Amen.

Introducing Week 2 – the story of Orpah

*Written by the circuit planning group, based on the Bible month booklet
Picture from the Bible Month booklet*



Naomi had a relative, Boaz, who owned some land. Ruth went to the fields to pick up left-over grain for food. Boaz took care of her, told his men to protect her and made sure that she gathered plenty of grain. Naomi encouraged Ruth to keep going to Boaz’s fields.

Today’s Reading – Ruth Chapter 2

As with the previous week, you might find it helpful to read this in a couple of different versions of the Bible if you have access to them. Contact Lorna if you have no Bible and she will get a copy of the readings to you.



Opening Questions from Lorna

Our opening questions will be the same each time and are there to help us see what we noticed about the text we read.

- What words or phrases stood out to you most from the passage you have just read?
- Was there anything new or surprising?
- Anything you found difficult?
- Are there any themes emerging?

You may like to read the passage again at this point and see if there is anything else you want to note.

A brief reflection from Lorna on the passage

I used this part of the story of Ruth in my harvest reflections last year. One of the reasons is that Chapter 2 in particular highlights some of the challenges of harvest and how it is a different experience for different people. There are those for whom it is rich, those who rely on it for their work and those who are barely scratching a living.

As such, Ruth 2 serves of an important reminder that harvest and justice are closely related. How we respond to the most vulnerable in our society matters just as much in a today's world as it did then. We may not see people gleaning in the same way as might have happened in previous generations, but the rise in foodbank usage and need alerts us to the ongoing issue of food poverty.

The generosity of Boaz in the passage is striking to me because he doesn't just do the basic minimum for Ruth, leave her be including letting her fend for herself if anything happens. Instead he offers security, shelter, food and drink to sustain her work and more than just the scraps.

It reminds me of the way in which I experience God. There are so many times I have been overwhelmed by God's generosity to me, particularly at difficult times. During the lockdown I've had many moments of insecurity and uncertainty, but I've also had many moments of hope and

encouragement. One day when I was particularly struggling the doorbell rang and there on the step was a plant and a card with just the words of encouragement I needed to hear.

For me, those moments of blessing remind me not only that I belong to a generous God, but that I belong to the people of God. A people who are called to care for the vulnerable, just as Boaz does.

Further Questions based on this passage

- What did you notice about the character of Boaz in this story?
- In the notes for Bible month, Rachel Starr encourages us to reflect on the question 'How do we welcome strangers, especially those who are vulnerable such as seasonal workers or undocumented migrants?' What are your thoughts and experiences?
- The theme of generosity emerges in this chapter. What have been your experiences of generosity? In what ways have you received it? In what ways have you offered it? What about times it has been absent?
- Ruth is surprised at the welcome she receives from Boaz because, coming from another land, she feels she doesn't belong. What does it mean to you to belong and what do you feel you belong to? What about times when you felt you didn't belong? In what ways is belonging important?

Hymns and Songs that help us reflect

From the Circuit music for Ruth resource, collated by Peter Clarkson

The theme of generosity to the stranger being part of our call to Godly living is picked up by John Bell who writes:

'The love of God comes close
where stands an open door
to let the stranger in,
to mingle rich and poor' (StF 676)