

Ruth and Boaz — Ruth 1-2, Ephesians 5:25-27



Nicolas Poussin, Summer (Boaz and Ruth)

Ruth foreshadows Mary as an ancestress of Christ. She is one of four women in Matthew's genealogy of Christ, one of two we are sure were not Jewish, reinforcing that Christ is inclusive, the savior of the whole world.

In Ruth we see a woman humble enough to tolerate being an outsider, to do menial work, and even to make a counter-cultural marriage proposal. In the end we see her reversal of fortune, being raised to great honor as the ancestress of an unbroken line of kings from David to Christ. Similarly, Mary's humility comes through clearly in her song, and she is honored above all other women. A search through scripture reveals gifts God gives the humble that applied to Ruth and Mary and can apply to us: exaltation, honor, grace, earthly property, greatness in the Kingdom, rescue, seeing God at work, being cared for, supported, and victory.

Ruth also serves as an example of loyal love. Her declaration of loyalty to Naomi and her God has entered our marriage services as an ideal of a committed relationship. Here is relational evangelism at its finest, even though Naomi was herself struggling with her own faith. Ruth is an example of a widow who found new people to love, did not stay stuck in her past life, but moved into a new period of fruitful life. She serves as a great example for any of us who have suffered the loss of someone we care about, an example that love fills in our losses.

Boaz' romance with Ruth not only reminds many of their own romances, but reflects Christ's romance with his bride, the church. His kindness as he took an interest in

“that girl over there” and his initiative in welcoming her, affirming her, protecting her, and providing for her are tender signs of love that eventually led to their engagement and marriage. He welcomed this foreigner into the community and she was changed by this love. Ruth and Boaz’ admirable characters give us models to which we can aspire.

As for each character in this story, do I have faith that God’s purposes for me are good and trustworthy?

Redemption — Ruth 3-4, Luke 1:68



John August Swanson, The Story of Ruth

Boaz reflects Christ as redeemer, rescuing from poverty, exclusion, loneliness, and unfruitfulness. He chose to fulfill the laws in Deuteronomy regarding caring for the widows of one's relatives. In the midst of the chaotic period of the Judges, he was an example of an honorable man, obedient to the law.

Seeking marriage, Ruth set aside any clothes from mourning her widowhood, she dressed beautifully, and she approached Boaz privately in the context of a harvest party. She let him know, just as her mother-in-law had instructed, that she was

available for marriage. Taking the fact that Ruth was a Gentile coming to Boaz, a redeeming Christ-figure, her humble approach was a request to be part of the family of faith. She asked to be covered and redeemed, something we also ask.

Naomi offered Ruth wise advice we can apply to many situations in our lives. “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens.” So often we want to rush ahead and do things when we would be wiser to simply see what God will do, often through other people. The scriptural theme of waiting on God tells us that He will act on behalf of those who wait for him.

The legacy of Ruth and Boaz’ life was the coming of Christ, the same legacy we desire to come through us. Boaz redeemed Ruth and married her. The result of their marriage was a child, the ancestor of King David and Christ, a key point of this gentle romance and its importance in scripture. Ruth’s story and the birth of her son took place in Bethlehem where Christ was born. Together Ruth, Boaz and Obed thus become an image of the Holy Family.

Do I seek to make my family an image of the Holy Family?