

Old Testament Characters: Boaz – A Righteous Man

Goldstone Church – 21-Aug-16 10:30am

Ruth 2:1-6, 14-15, 4:1-13

Introduction

This is the last in our series looking at various characters in the Old Testament.

It's easy to think of the book of Ruth as a sentimental love story; giving some perspective on the lives of "normal people" living in the Promised Land.

Some Bible commentaries go close to suggesting that the book of Ruth is a *woman's* book, i.e. in Jewish culture, marriage, child-bearing and making sure that the family line kept going was the job of women.

However, let's focus instead on Boaz:

1. [Boaz's] **PRINCELY PAST** (Ruth 2:1)

"Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz". (Ruth 2:1)

Unfortunately, this introduction is significantly short on details. We have to look around to get the full picture.

a) **The Whispers.**

A Bible commentator describes Boaz as a "Prince of Judah" - a valid title. Boaz was from the tribe of Judah, from a significant family tree and heritage (see Ruth 4:18-22). Salmon (Boaz's father) was possibly the first landowner at Bethlehem. But who did Salmon marry? i.e. who was Boaz's mother?

Matthew 1 gives a long list of names that provide Jesus' family tree; v.5a, *"Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,..."* i.e. Rahab the prostitute of Jericho. Imagine the whispers while Boaz was growing up! A *Gentile!*

b) **The Worries.**

"In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land" (Ruth 1:1). Naomi and her family went to Moab to avoid the famine, but Boaz probably stayed in Bethlehem. As a landowner, a famine would have signalled some bad times – it might have even contributed to his parents' death.

Boaz would have experienced hardships through his life.

c) **The Worker.**

"Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters..." (Ruth 2:4a).

Boaz was not at home but outside in the fields, in the hot sun, mixing and engaging with the workers. Boaz was a hands-on farmer and land owner.

Although Boaz was a 'Prince of Judah', these snippets show he must have experienced much heart-ache and effort during his life. Yet despite his unroyal parentage and a past full of problems, God had big plans for Boaz.

Boaz's life provides us with an important truth: it doesn't matter what your background is, God knows all about you, values you highly, loves you unconditionally - and will use you for His purposes.

2. [Boaz's] **PURPOSEFUL PRESENT** (Ruth 2:4-16)

We have more information about Boaz's day-to-day activities.

a) **Puts God First** (Ruth 2:1-4).

The first words that Boaz is recorded to say is, "*The Lord*" (v.4). Boaz's workplace vocabulary reflects that God is first in his life. Even if these words are just a cultural greeting or a throw-away line, it shows that Boaz's heart is focused on God.

b) **Kindness to Poor** (Ruth 2:5-10).

Even though Boaz knows that Ruth is a poor, foreign refugee, he still shows a practical kindness. "*Boaz said to Ruth, 'My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field'*" (v.8). This is a sacrificial expression of simple human kindness to someone in great need.

c) **Encouragement to Others** (Ruth 2:11-13).

Boaz applauds Ruth for the way that she has supported Naomi. "*I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband*" (v.11). Note: this is a *man* speaking to a *woman*, a rich land owner speaking to a penniless beggar, a *Jew* speaking to a *Gentile* – these are significant words of encouragement.

d) **Protects and Provides** (Ruth 2:14-16).

Boaz makes sure that Ruth is kept safe – and even provides the unexpected practical gift of a midday meal (v.14).

No wonder that Boaz is given an overall description as "a man of standing" (Ruth 2:1). Boaz is not twiddling his thumbs at home, but shows his love of God in the practicalities of everyday life.

The life-principles that Boaz followed are equally valid for us today:

- (1) *Put God First* in all things,
- (2) *Show Kindness to the Poor*,
- (3) Be an *Encouragement to Others*, whoever they are, and
- (4) *Protect and Provide* for those in need in any practical way.

God calls us to live out our love for Him in the way that we conduct ourselves in our daily life.

3. [Boaz's] **PROMISED FUTURE** (Ruth 4:13)

Boaz refused to be sneaky or underhanded about taking on Naomi's property (Ruth 4:1-12). Instead, Boaz submitted himself to God, by submitting himself to the Elders. Boaz understands that God is in complete control – of every situation.

As a result of Boaz's God-honouring actions, "*Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife... and she gave birth to a son*" (Ruth 4:13).

Ruth's pregnancy is a wonderful gift from God. This was Ruth's *second* marriage, her first marriage lasting about 10 years (Ruth 1:4) – but *without* children. In those days, the culture believed that childrenlessness was a curse from God.

So in v.13 God is reversing a human "curse". This is God bringing: new life, new wholeness, new meaning. This is a promised future.

Today, God is calling us to trust Him afresh, to act honourably in our daily lives, and to be worthy ambassadors for Him. As we do so, our relationship with God will deepen and bring: new life, new wholeness, new meaning.

CONCLUSION

Reviewing the Old Testament characters that we've studied in the past few weeks, several common themes keep appearing.

- a) God knew about each person's **Background**; their heritage, nationality, family, physical ability, fears, age, etc. God knew all about these factors, yet nothing limited God. Nothing prevented God's ability to work through an individual.
- b) Each person encountered **Problems** and hardships. Yet, despite the struggles, they could still say, God is faithful. Following God is a good thing.
- c) Each person was **Changed** from the inside out. As each person stepped out in faith and in loving obedience of what God had asked them to do, God brought new life, new wholeness, new meaning.

Boaz is described as "*a righteous man*" – a man of standing, who, despite his background and personal problems, put God first in all things, and was changed from the inside out. Boaz expressed his personal love-relationship with God, by offering kindness, protection and provision to someone who was in need.

As we come to the end of this series, God is calling us afresh:

- To follow Him and to put Him first in the practicalities of our every-day living;
- To express our personal, love-relationship with God in practical ways;
- To speak out, and to reaching out, to those that we meet;
- To share with them about the richness of the love of God. A love that brings:
 - New life in Jesus,
 - New certainty of forgiveness of sins, and
 - A promised future of eternal life.

May we be people who do the right thing – not because we have to, but because we love God. Because God loves us, we love Him - and we express this love in whatever we say and in whatever we do.

AMEN