

Introduction

- Have you ever been given a gift for no reason?
 - or given something for a birthday or a Christmas far in excess of what you might have got from that person?
 - or from someone who didn't normally give you gifts?
- Its a peculiar feeling, being given something we don't **deserve!**

Asylum Seeker

- Ruth is an asylum seeker, with all the disadvantages that entails!!
 - we have debates about benefit entitlement
 - *she had no entitlements!*
- On many of the times Ruth's name is used in this book, it is qualified:
 - sometimes its as **Naomi's daughter-in-law** - for example, (2:22), "**Ruth her daughter-in-law**"
 - but on most of the occasions it is thus qualified, it is her nationality that is picked out: **Ruth 1:22; Ruth 2:2; Ruth 2:21; Ruth 4:5; Ruth 4:10**
 - she was known as, thought of, treated as the foreigner, the asylum seeker!
- Remember, widow too, along with Naomi - doubly disadvantaged!

Recipient of Boaz's Generosity

- And yet this asylum seeker, this foreigner, this sponger off the richness of Bethlehem's harvest, receives from Boaz undeserved generosity!
- In at least four distinct ways Boaz gives to her generously, beyond what she deserved, without reason
 - and there's no hint here that he's buttering her up as a potential romantic conquest!!
 - there's no "**I fancy her; I'll send her flowers!**"

Boaz gives Ruth Food

- Boaz gives Ruth food, the basic necessity for life!
 - he makes sure she is able to glean in his field (**v.8/9**);
 - bread at mealtime, meaning she wouldn't have to dip into what she had gathered (**v.14**);
 - got his men to pull out stuff for her to glean! (**v.16**)
- So much so that when she got home, Naomi saw the amount and knew someone had been generous without being told!! (**v.19**)

Boaz gives Ruth Safety

- Young widow, foreigner, no protector, and in a day when "**everyone did as he saw fit**"
 - quite likely, perhaps, that someone might "see fit" to take advantage of a young woman in a such a circumstance
 - exposed to danger of rape, and that in a society where she wouldn't know who was safe/dangerous, would be considered the outsider in bringing any accusations....
 - and that on top of the danger of starvation which drove her to take risks, to be in exposed situations because of her need to get food
- Into this context, consider the generosity that Boaz demonstrates:
 - bringing her into the context of the world he controlled, the sphere of his workers, his field (**v.8**)
 - instructing his men to not touch her, giving her a cordon of security (**v.9**)
 - even making sure his men didn't give her lip, rebuke her, tell her not to be cheeky (**v.16**)
 - security extends into the future - not just for today - stay until the harvest is done (**v.21**)

Boaz gives Ruth Comfort

- In midst of her grief and isolation, someone is paying attention, taking care of her:
 - more than just the physical care, but the comfort of being spoken to kindly
- (v.13) *"You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant - though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls"*
- How would that have felt to one who has lost husband, home, future, security?

Boaz gives Ruth Honour & Respect

- Boaz also gives Ruth honour and respect:
 - no mere condescending gifts to a pet, a pet project!
 - gives her honour and respect, a place by his side, a place among Boaz's labourers;
 - she is no longer the outsider, the one lacking a place in society; she becomes as Boaz watches over her an insider, one who has a valued place in the order of things
 - (v.9) *"whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled"*
 - (v.14) *"At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar." When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over."*

Conclusion

- This is the way that Jesus treats us - **undeserved grace**
- And there are analogies between what Boaz gives to Ruth and what Jesus gives to us:
 - food, the source of life itself - *"I am the bread of life"* (John 6:35)
 - safety - *"How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings."* (Psalm 36:7)
 - comfort - *"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God."* (Isaiah 40:1)
 - honour and respect - *"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"* (Matthew 25:23)
- Even before she was redeemed, bought back from the precarious existence of the widow, Ruth is cared for by the generous, undeserved giving of Boaz
 - this is exactly how Jesus loves us, Romans 5:8 says: *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*
- Thank God for his love for us in Christ, undeserved, upbuilding, generous love!