

# "THE POWER OF WORDS"

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Series: Resilience in Ruth Title: The Power of Words

Readings: Rut2:4-7; Rut2:12; Cited: Rut1:8; Rut2:19-20; Rut3:10; Rut4:11; Rut4:14

## 1. INTRO TO READINGS

Pronouncements of Blessing in Ruth:

1. 1:8 Naomi pronouncing blessing on Ruth and Orpa
2. 2:4 Boaz blesses his workers and they him
3. 2:12 Boaz blesses Ruth
4. 2:19+20 Naomi blesses Boaz whose field Ruth worked in
5. 3:10 Boaz blesses Ruth on the threshing floor
6. 4:11 The Elders at the gate bless Boaz and Ruth
7. 4:14 The women of Bethlehem bless Naomi, Ruth and the child

## READINGS

Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The LORD be with you!" "The LORD bless you!" they called back.

Boaz asked the foreman of his harvesters, "Whose young woman is that?"

The foreman replied, "She is the Moabitess who came back from Moab with Naomi. She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter."

Ruth 2:11-12 Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband--how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. **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."

## 2. SERMON

### 2.1. Intro

We all know that words are powerful.

We learn "Sticks and stones..." when we're kids, but in reality

"Adjectives and Adverbs can undermine and destroy our hope, confidence and self-worth"

Today we're looking at words in the story of Ruth.

### 2.2. Adversity and Conversations

Bear in mind Ruth is about adversity.

The words are powerfully positive.

Even the "Mara" speech is about Naomi's life and not her character.

In particular, words of blessing.

### 2.3. Two Problems

Immediately there's two problems to deal with.

***Firstly: a theological problem we have to deal with.***

How can I as a human being have the temerity to think that God must bless whoever I want to pronounce a blessing over.

I'll suggest the answers to this puzzle in the three points I'll make a bit later, but, in a nutshell, are answers lie in:

- the generosity and grace of God,
- the fact that He includes us in His work
- and that He urges us to use words well.

## ***But let's deal with the second problem:***

"When we look at Boaz, how do we know that he isn't just one of those people who's learned the lingo

and that all this God-talk is just talk...?"

How do we know that Boaz and his workers aren't just going through the motions.

Kind of like "Hello, how are you....?"

- Boaz is a good man - a Godly man. He acts with integrity towards Ruth, he deals honestly at the city gates, he is highly regarded by Naomi and the towns-people and he is great-grandfather to the King David.
- But even more importantly, he is a Godly boss. He's portrayed as a man who is loved and admired by his staff.  
And he isn't just going through the motions - he enjoys a good "chatting relationship" with his workers. (See v5-7 below)  
When he asks his foreman about the new "young woman" on the field, the foreman gives him more information than what is necessary. One might even argue that the foreman is match-making, bragging about how hard Ruth has worked all morning.
- When Boaz promises Ruth that he will sort out the situation - Naomi says "That man will not rest until he has accomplished..."

## **Now back to the first problem..**

How can we tell God who to bless. Or assume He will bless those we do?

1. A Belief that God wants to bless  
God is an abundant and generous God.  
He loves to bless.  
James - every good and perfect gift.  
Psalm 23 - Quiet Pastures and Tables before enemies  
An understanding that God likes to be at work in the ins and outs of life...  
(Beautiful picture of work)
2. An understanding that we are God's co-workers  
Next we understand that blessing, like prayer is a mystery.  
Does God answer our prayers or does He inspire them?  
Ultimately the authority lies with Him and He works things out according to His purpose.  
But we participate and we get to play our part.  
Sadly we most often participate through our inaction (prayer and blessing)
3. The power of words  
Throughout Scripture we are warned of the power of the tongue.  
Proverbs is full of it.  
James - the tongue is a fire, a bridle and a rudder.  
Words matter.  
When we bless with integrity, I believe we shape a better world.

I for one, would love to live in a world

where we bless more than we curse.

where we wish well more than we gossip.

where we express hope in a good future more than cynically criticize.

## **2.4. Conclusion**

The speeches in Ruth offer a picture

- of God's generosity understood

- being aware of being God's co-workers in the world

- of words used well