

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups December 1st 2007

First Fruits - A Harvest of Blessing

Ruth 2:1-15



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

At the Jewish feast of Shavot or Festival of Weeks as it is sometimes known, the book of Ruth is read. Ruth is set in the time of the Judges of Israel in what was generally a dark period of Israelite history and tells the story of the problems and concerns of a family in Bethlehem. It is a story connected to the season of the grain harvest of Israel and a story that is full of blessings.

At the heart of the story of Ruth is the blessing of Naomi – read 2v20-22. From emptiness, despair and destitution Ruth moves to fullness, security and hope – read 2v13-17. Behind the story lies the presence of an invisible helper – God. God didn't intervene in a spectacular miraculous way but rather was at work in the ordinariness of life. None of the characters in Ruth doubted that life proceeded under God's direction and his hand:

- 1:17 it was the Lord by whom Ruth promised when she declared her love to Naomi.
- 2:20 it was the Lord whom Naomi credited for bringing Ruth to Boaz's field.
- it was God's law that brought Boaz and Ruth into marriage
- it was God who gave them a son
- it was God whose plan and purposes stretched beyond Ruth and Naomi's personal lives to being the very family line of his own son Jesus

The story of Ruth is about how God is at work in the ordinariness of life, how through blessings God brings redemption to one family and all families. Blessing is the 'key word' and there are three God given principles of blessing in Ruth that I believe God would have us embrace into the life of our Church family here at St Paul's.

Firstly - God calls us to be a Blessing to others. It doesn't matter who we are, what we earn, what we do, or whatever our circumstances we can all be a blessing to others. Let's compare Ruth and Boaz; one is a young alien destitute widow, the other is a middle aged well to do prosperous Israelite, both are a blessing to others. Ruth through her unswerving selfless love is a blessing to Naomi and Boaz through his generosity is a blessing to Naomi and Ruth.

Secondly - God blesses us when we bless others. When we give cheerfully/generously, sacrificially and out of love for God, not only do we release blessings to others but we too are blessed. Ruth blessed Naomi and was herself blessed by Boaz and a new family – read 3:7-11. Boaz blessed Ruth and was himself blessed with a wife and son – read 4:11.

Thirdly – God's kingdom comes through blessing. When we bless others and God blesses us God's kingdom comes! Ruth and Boaz embodied the self giving love of God and through such selfless love the promised blessings of God's kingdom found fulfillment in Jesus.

Our church is already a blessing to many others through our life of worship – several 1,000 over the Christmas period - and through our life of witness – as we each daily live out our faith. However I do believe that God is calling us to release a new 'wave' of blessings that will impact throughout the generations and spread across the world. This 'wave' of blessing begins in the heart of each of us. May we at St Paul's embody that self giving love of Christ that would release a harvest of blessing.



Witness: questions to discuss

1. Where can you see God at work in the ordinariness of your life?
2. What signs are there that your life is proceeding under God's direction and his hand?
3. How are/can you be a blessing to others?
4. How have you been blessed by others - this past week?
5. In what ways can our church be a blessing to others?
6. Ruth and Boaz embodied the self giving love of God and blessed others. How can we embody this love?