

Welcome to our worship together sheets. Today we are continuing and concluding our mini series on Ruth and Harvest. We'll be looking at what happens next in the story and will be thinking a bit about Tearfund who we're supporting this year. The Tear fund envelopes can be placed in the basket on the way out or for those at home please let us know and we'll arrange for someone to pick it up from you. Let's start with a prayer.

Loving God, creator of all. We thank you that we can worship you and praise you in this way. We thank you for your goodness and generosity. Help us to know your presence now. Through your Spirit, guide us, challenge us, and inspire us, so that we can live for you and join you in building your kingdom in this place. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Call to worship: Psalm 92:1-4

It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;

to declare your steadfast love in the morning and your faithfulness by night,
³ to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre.

⁴ **For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I sing for joy.**

Let us praise and worship the Lord with this harvest classic as we sing/read/listen to "Come, you thankful people, come". [Click here to find the song on YouTube.](#)

Thanksgiving:



Tearfund harvest video

[Click here to watch the video online](#)

Reading: Ruth 3

Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. ² Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. ³ Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do." ⁵ She said to her, "All that you tell me I will do."

⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her. ⁷ When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and he was in a contented mood, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came stealthily and uncovered his feet, and lay down. ⁸ At midnight the man was startled, and turned over, and there, lying at his feet, was a woman! ⁹ He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you are next-of-kin." ¹⁰ He said, "May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter; this last instance of your loyalty is better than the first; you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, do not be afraid, I will do for you all that you ask, for all the assembly of my people know that you are a worthy woman. ¹² But now, though it is true that I am a near kinsman, there is another kinsman more closely related than I. ¹³ Remain this night, and in the morning, if he will act as next-of-kin for you, good; let him do it. If he is not willing to act as next-of-kin for you, then, as the Lord lives, I will act as next-of-kin for you. Lie down until the morning."

¹⁴ So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before one person could recognize another; for he said, "It must not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." ¹⁵ Then he said, "Bring the cloak you are wearing and hold it out." So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley, and put it on her back; then he went into the city. ¹⁶ She came to her mother-in-law, who said, "How did things go with you, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her, ¹⁷ saying, "He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said, 'Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'" ¹⁸ She replied, "Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today."ⁱ

Reflection:

In a society that dominated by Patriarchy, where men were in charge, it is not surprising that Naomi wanted to find security for her foreign, widowed, daughter in law Ruth by finding a man for her. Without a husband to provide for her, a husband to protect her, and care for her, Ruth would be destined to be on the margins of society.

Ruth had come from Moab with Naomi, where she had married Naomi's son who had died. And when Naomi returned to Israel Ruth was encouraged by Naomi to return to her family and people, but Ruth wanted to stay with Naomi and return with her to Israel. Ruth had said something very lovely and affectionate to Naomi, she said "where you go, I will go, where you live I will live, your people shall be my people and your God my God." (Ruth 1:16) Somehow Ruth had learned about the people and God of Naomi and had seen something that she wanted to be part of. Somehow some of the goodness and hospitality of God had been shared with Ruth and she felt she would be better off with that than without. And in our reading today we see some of that trust and faith again. Ruth is determined to do what Naomi tells her to do, and she lies down at Boaz' feet to win him over. At college we were told that the uncovering of his feet might have meant something more intimate. But, whatever it was she was willing to do it, and whatever it was, it must have worked. Because Boaz, who was related to Naomi's husband, took an interest in Ruth, and was going to help her. And Boaz did the right thing, he talked to the other closer relative to see if he was interested in helping Ruth. When this other relative wasn't interested, Boaz married Ruth and she gave her a son, and with that a grandson for Naomi. Naomi was overjoyed with this baby. And this baby Obed became the father of Jesse, and Jesse was the father of small shepherd boy David, who later became king David himself.

When we celebrate harvest we also celebrate the goodness and hospitality of our God. In our church buildings we make displays to show this and in some parts of the world we even parade it through the streets. In Tiel in the Netherlands, the city near to where I grew up, there is, or at least used to be, an annual parade of wagons and statues decorated with fruit and vegetables to celebrate harvest. But in the western world, with fruits and vegetables brought in from the rest of the world all year round, it can be hard for us to imagine the joy and relief that harvest brings to people who live closer to nature than we do. I wonder whether as we moved away from our reliance on nature, people in the developed world have also been moving away from faith in God? And yet our need for God's love in our lives is even more evident than it was in simpler societies so many people these days suffer with anxiety, stress and mental distress. And it is not just the high flyers and overworked executives who find it difficult to cope. In every

classroom there are likely to be several children with mental health problems. The ancient story of Ruth is one that speaks to many of the anxieties and issues of our day. Ruth had financial problems like the people who use our foodbanks. She was an immigrant and could easily have been subject to discrimination. Ruth had suffered bereavement and loss. She was constrained by a patriarchal culture. And yet even though in human term she was an outsider with not a lot to offer, God makes her a part of his great plan of Salvation. Ruth is one of only 4 mothers who are mentioned in 42 generations of fathers mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in the book of Matthew. Her place in the story of the people of God will never be forgotten.

We are also, like Ruth, invited into God's story of redemption for the world. Through what Jesus has done for us we too are included and are sons and daughters of the God of the universe. And perhaps our part of the story, perhaps our role to play, is that we could be the people who turn climate change around so that this beautiful earth can continue to provide for everyone who lives on it. We can't do it on our own, we desperately need each other, and we desperately need God. Each other to encourage and spur us on, and God to inspire us and guide us and provide us with every good gift he has to offer. God loves the world and he wants to feed and care for everyone on this planet, and we are invited to play a vital part of that mission.

Questions:

1. How did Naomi know that Boaz would do the right thing for Ruth?
2. God often seems to choose the least likely people for his work. Why do you think he works this way?
3. How do we know if God is calling us to do something?

We're going to sing a song that says thank you to God for what he has done. It is also a song that reminds us of what Jesus was willing to go through for us, because he loves us. We're going to sing/ read/listen to "Thank you Jesus". [Click here to find the song on YouTube.](#)

Prayers for others:

God of justice,

We lift up people around the world who are suffering the effects of the climate crisis. We think of those in Bangladesh, the Philippines, Mozambique and Central America who have recently faced deadly cyclones and floods. We think of those in Burkina Faso, Brazil, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe who are facing prolonged droughts.

Lord, it is not fair that those who have done the least to cause this crisis are suffering. Lord, please provide for them, protect them and give them hope for the future. Lord, we ask that you bless churches and charities who are

responding to this crisis; equip them and give them wisdom.

Lord, you ask us to work with you to protect our neighbours; please shake us out of ourselves, so that as the church we can stand up for those in need, raise awareness and call for change.

And Lord, when the issue feels too big or overwhelming, keep our eyes fixed on you who can do more than we can ask or imagine.

God, ruler of all. We lift our government to you, we thank you for their leadership – especially in these challenging times. As they look ahead and make plans to build back better from the coronavirus pandemic, reveal to them the devastation that the climate crisis is causing for our global neighbours.

Lord, place justice and mercy on their hearts and minds.

Give them wisdom and boldness to inspire them to prioritise the needs of people living in poverty – to not revert back to the status quo.

Lord, use their gifts and talents so they can make a difference and enact laws that create a fairer world.ⁱⁱ

Healing and caring God, we bring to you those who are suffering.

We particularly pray for those we know who are struggling at this time.

In the silence let us bring those we are aware of before God.

May all those we've remembered now, those we love and care about and who need your healing and care at this time, may they know your goodness and love and restoration. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen

Let us pray the kingdom prayer together to respond:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

We're going to finish with a song that reminds us that Jesus is Lord, we can see this in the beautiful world God has made for us. We are going to sing/read/listen to "Jesus is Lord". [Click here to find the song on YouTube.](#)

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore, Amen

ⁱ Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ⁱⁱ Prayers are taken from Tearfund Harvest appeal 2021