

Worship Material
Giving beyond obligation
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 10th November

Begin with an opening prayer

Lord Jesus, you came for us, giving everything.
Open our eyes afresh to see you;
open our hearts to give;
open our souls to worship;
open our minds to be wise.
Take us and use us for your glory.
Amen.

Read Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17

Bible Notes

This is a significant story in many ways, not least for its importance in the genealogies of David and Jesus. It is also a complex one, especially in the interaction between Ruth and Boaz. Commentators from different theological perspectives offer varied interpretations of their relationship. Boaz is presented as the kinsman of Naomi and Ruth. The word kinsman literally means 'acquaintance'. As such, Boaz was not obligated to help (as Ruth had not been obligated to help Naomi). Verse four has a degree of ambiguity: the word we have translated as 'feet' is literally 'the place of legs' and can be a euphemism for sexual parts. What exactly happened has many theories, from Ruth enacting a ritual used by sacred prostitutes, to consensual sex, to an entirely innocent lying at Boaz's feet (or legs). The phrase 'when they came together' (4:13) might suggest that the more innocent interpretation of their first encounter could be right. At the time, when a widow (Ruth in this instance) had a child with a subsequent husband (Boaz) the baby would be reckoned to be that of the deceased first husband. And they say relationships are complicated today! It does explain why the baby is said to be Naomi's next-of-kin. And again, it's interesting to note that not every relationship in the family tree of Jesus was straightforward. In the midst of all the twists and turns of the story, Ruth is presented as a model of obedience but also as one with the strength of mind to choose what she believed was the right way.

Prayer

Uplifting God,
we give you thanks for the joy of giving and receiving;
for those special people in our lives
who makes us feel rich and cherished;
for those who show us day by day the value of little things.
Most of all, we praise you for your overwhelming and wonderful gifts
of life and love and hope,
reflected in your Son Jesus Christ,
in whose name we pray.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

What can I give Him
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would give a lamb
If I were a wise man, I would do my part
Yet what I can, I give Him
Give my heart