

Emptiness and Fullness

Ruth 2

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With very few exceptions, typically things that are empty are bad and things that are full are good. And this is how our story begins. The story of Ruth begins with a wretched emptiness reflected in the famine which has plagued the house of bread.

Bethlehem is empty- Israel is empty - Elimelech is empty

An empty man in an empty town indicative of an empty people.

And just in case we miss the visual, the narrator drives home the dilemma of famine and emptiness when we hear Naomi speak in 1:21. *“I went away **full**, and YHWH has brought me back **empty**.”*

2:1 - There is a new character introduced into the story – Boaz.

2:2 – *“Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor.”* (I am going to the field to glean.)

This is a declaration, rather than a question. Ruth is not looking for permission. There are a couple surprises here in this text.

1. That Ruth even knew of this practice and provision to begin with.
2. Naomi neither suggests nor participates in the gleaning.
3. Ruth wastes no time waiting for others to do what she can do herself.

Right to glean was a humanitarian right guaranteed by the law of God
Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-22

Notice Boaz’s prayer he prays for Ruth and how it stands in contrast to Naomi. *“The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a **full** reward be given you by the LORD... (2:12).*

This is word is not accidental at all, but deeply intentional. In contrast to Naomi’s perceived emptiness, Ruth will experience a fullness which will result in her being **satisfied** (2:14, 18).

Naomi along with her husband decide to take matters into their own hands and “lean on their own understanding” instead of trusting in the promises and the faithfulness of YHWH. In the end, this self-preservation leads only to death and emptiness.

On the other hand, there is an example of a foreign girl who, against all odds, hears of God's goodness and faithfulness and fully trusts in him for her every need even in difficult circumstances and consequently she will be filled with the blessings and rewards that come only to those who know and trust God.

On one level the story of Ruth shows us that there are those who spend their lives filling it with all the things they think are important and in the end they are left empty (Matthew 6:19-21). Then there are others who value the things which God himself values (Matthew 6:33 *Seek first the kingdom of heaven...*) and they come to find that he is the greatest treasure of all and are willing to lose even their own lives to know him (Philippians 3:8-11) and they in the end are the richest of all.

It is God's intention to fill all of creation with his own presence and glory. This is the very mission of God. Israel was merely a small example of what God purposed to do on a much larger scale (Hab 2:14; Numbers 14:21; Isaiah 11:9).

This, God will accomplish through people made in his image (like Ruth and Boaz) who are filled with his presence.

"Be not drunk with wine but be filled with his Spirit" Ephesians 5:18

What are you filled with?

*"In him dwells **all the fullness** of the Godhead in bodily form **AND you have been filled in Him**"*
Colossians 2:9

Ephesians 3:19; 4:13; John 1:16

What you are to the people around you is seen simply in the overflow of what fills you. If you are filled with the presence, power, and glory of Christ and his Word those around you will see Christ in you. You will talk of him, serve others, reflect his nature and goodness in how you live. If instead, you are filled with yourself you'll talk about yourself, your dreams and pursuits. You'll insist that others respect you, honor you and make much of you.

But you can't be full of yourself and full of Jesus.