



"All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

**27-Apr-12**

## **Christ as Provider**

Last week, we considered the period of the [count to Pentecost](#) as representing the years of our conversion as Christians, and we focused on the work that was required of the Israelites to grow and harvest the grain used in the offering of the [wave loaves](#). This work—and it can be called nothing less—typifies the work [God](#) requires of us in preparation for eternal life in His Kingdom. Just as the Israelite had to work to present an acceptable offering to God, so the Christian is required to "work out [his] own salvation with fear and trembling" ([Philippians 2:12](#)).

Ruth, the subject of the [Old Testament](#) book of the same name, is a wonderful example of a productive worker. She goes out into the fields at harvest time and industriously gleans on the heels of the reapers so that she and her mother-in-law, Naomi, would have enough to eat throughout the summer months. As Boaz' servant tells his master when he inquired about her, "She came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house" ([Ruth 2:7](#)). Her gleaning ties this story firmly to the instructions regarding Pentecost, as [Leviticus 23:22](#) contains God's instruction to allow the poor and the stranger to gather the remnants of the crop after the reapers had gone through the fields.

While engaged in this, Ruth is introduced to Boaz, the owner of the field that she had "just happened" to choose (see [Ruth 2:3](#)). The Hebrew indicates with a wink that her choice of Boaz' part of the field was not serendipity; she was supernaturally led to it. This wealthy man, Boaz, we learn, came from Bethlehem ([Ruth 2:4](#)), which means "House of Bread," so God is suggesting that the man hails from a place of plenty—and of course, in the background lurks the biblical metaphor of bread as a symbol of God's Word. It is also good to know that Boaz means "in him is strength," a hint that he is a man of strong character, one whom Ruth can trust.

Boaz is immediately interested in her. Perhaps she was pretty and thus attracted his attention. More likely, though, it was the fact that she was a stranger, a Moabitess, and he probably admired her diligent work. His servant informs him that she is from Moab and is Naomi's daughter-in-law, and she herself humbly requests permission to glean, which he graciously gives ([Ruth 2:8-9](#)). Remembering that Boaz is clearly a type of Christ and that Ruth symbolizes the Christian who is being redeemed, Boaz' subsequent instructions take on a heightened meaning:

Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."

His immediate concern is for Ruth's safety and health. Notice, too, that when he speaks to her, he makes no mention of her foreignness but calls her "my daughter." He was most likely older than she was, but what is striking is that his first words to her are familial, as if he had already accepted her. She was not a stranger and a foreigner to him but part of the community and maybe even as part of his extended family.

His speech is essentially five consecutive commands. As a type of Christ, Boaz is lord and master of his domain, in complete control of the situation. He knows what she should do and gives her clear instructions about it. Though he has already determined to provide for her—which he does

lavishly throughout the rest of the book—he gives her some ground rules to guide her gleaning.

First, he tells her to listen, to pay attention, to heed his instruction. If she wished to place herself under his care, she would need to abide by his rules. He did not say this because he was a tyrant, but because it was for her good to do as he said. As the master of the harvest, he knew the situation and how she could be most successful. As Jesus would say, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" ([Matthew 11:15](#)).

Second, he forbids her to glean anywhere else, "but stay close by my young women." This is the equivalent of Christ telling us, "Do not gather spiritual food from any other source." His field is sufficient to supply her all she needs to be filled, and the implication is that gleaning in other fields would not be safe. In fellowship with his other servants, she would be safe and satisfied with food.

Third, he tells her to keep her eyes on his field and his servants. A person's eyes show where he is focused, and Boaz did not want her to stray off his land. He did not want her to think that the gleaning was better elsewhere because, frankly, he knew it was not. He also desired that she follow the example of his servants, as they could give her help in doing her work.

Fourth, he assures her that his young men will not touch her. Boaz' servants are under strict orders to be kind and proper toward those under his care. They are not to take advantage of her in any way or to treat her harshly. The "young men" are equivalent to the ministry of God's church, who are commanded to "tend His sheep" in [love](#) ([John 21:15-17](#)).

Finally, he instructs Ruth to drink only what the young men have drawn from the well. Boaz knew that his water was clean and safe and that going to draw water at another well could put her in a dangerous situation. Water, as we know, is a type of God's Spirit, and here it represents teaching inspired by God's Spirit—what is offered through His true servants. Clearly, God is very concerned about what we consume spiritually, and so Jesus tells us in [John 4:14](#), "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him with never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

In Boaz' instructions to Ruth, we see the concern of our Redeemer, [Jesus Christ](#), for His people. He wants us to follow these instructions because they will keep us from harm, they will keep us nourished and satisfied, and they will keep us in the right environment so that we will grow and have a successful harvest. God gives us only good and wise advice, so if he tells us to stay in His church, listen to His ministers, and fellowship among His servants so that we will endure through the harvest, we would do well to heed Him.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[Producing Fruit](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

As shown in the parable of an unclean spirit leaving a man, yet returning with seven more spirits, being cleaned (or purged of leaven) is only the beginning of the growth process. To be made clean only prepares us for producing fruit. God's concern is for us to mature spiritually. If we stand still (resting on the laurels of our justification), the dark forces are going to pull us backwards. Uselessness invites disaster. We have to get away from the negative fixation of not doing and begin concentrating on doing. The consequences of not bearing fruit are graphically described in John 15:6. God's purpose, once we are cleaned, is to produce growth in us.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[The Shepherd's Voice](#)**

by Mike Ford

God's people are often compared to sheep. Lately, however, some have begun to question whether they need a human shepherd. How does one know whether a minister is a true shepherd of God?

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