

“Why Have I Found Favor?”

Ruth said to Boaz – “Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?”

Dearly beloved, Ruth is an example for us – written into the Scriptures in order that we may learn to share her faith. And what does faith do? Faith enables us to look totally outside of ourselves for everything, and look inwardly for nothing – not even for good works.

In her emptiness, claiming no credit of her own, refusing to self-validate any of her own actions – Ruth does the good works that are produced by faith. She illustrates the purest and most faultless form of religion – which is this – “to look after orphans and widows in their distress” (as St. James writes in his epistle).

Naomi was the widow in distress. Humanly speaking, Ruth had little to gain from the woman who had lost everyone in her life. Ruth gives what Naomi has lost – pledging Naomi her own life: “Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.” (Ruth 1:16-17)

O, that God’s children were so committed to one another in these days! O, that we dared such devotion to say to one another – “May the Lord deal severely with me if I should even come close to failing you!”

Living in a world where there are many better things to do – Ruth has nothing better to do than good works created by faith and carried out for the sake of the neighbor.

Like all Christian women – Ruth is a living image of the holy Christian Church and all the believers who make up this communion of saints. Boaz is a living picture of the Coming Christ.

Boaz notices Ruth’s works, even while Ruth remains blind to them. It is not that she is unaware of her care and commitment to Naomi – but Ruth doesn’t use her love as a tool for her own gain.

Ruth held the Christian faith pure and undefiled, in this – she committed herself to good works while ignoring her good works. “Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?”

It is Boaz, therefore, who says about Ruth what she refuses to say of herself. Boaz answered her, saying: “All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!”

Put Boaz’s words a bit differently and it sounds a lot like what Jesus says about those who live by faith in His mercy, and trust in His grace. “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter your master’s rest” (Matthew 25:21). And, “As you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).

“Why have I found favor in your eyes,” asked Ruth, “that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?” We could learn from Ruth to speak this way to our Lord.

With the words, “I am a foreigner” – Ruth teaches us to claim nothing, to demand or insist upon nothing – to offer nothing as proof of our worthiness.

With the words, “Why have I found favor?” – Ruth teaches us to trust our Redeemer for all that we need in this life and the next. Ruth’s kinsman-redeemer (Boaz) had already been kind and generous to Ruth – but the best part of his redemption was yet to come.

Consoling words of comfort were spoken to Ruth – in order to make her daily hardships more bearable. Some barley and wheat were added, with a promise attached – “You shall not be harmed.”

With one word from Boaz – the future suddenly brightened, as Naomi was quick to observe – “This man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers!”

The best parts of Ruth and Naomi’s redemption still await the end of the book – where Boaz at last takes these women into his home to be part of his family forever.

Ruth's marriage to Boaz caused the women of Bethlehem to rejoice – "Blessed be the Lord," they sang, "He has not left you this day without a redeemer!" (Ruth 4:14)

We Christians have the same reason for great hope and much rejoicing. Christ, our Boaz, has already entered His field – He has already greeted His workers – He has already spoken His consolations to us – He has joined His promises to the food He provides for our nourishment. All that remains is for us to enter "the marriage supper of the Lamb" in His kingdom, which has no end. (Revelation 19:9).

With the Word of Jesus, our future is bright and secure. That does not mean we need to be bored while we wait for our redemption – for there are Naomis everywhere. Amen.

The grace of our Lord + Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.