

Wednesday, July 15, 2026

Ruth 2:17 and 18

So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah. She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough.

If you have time, read Ruth 2.

Ruth is not just determined to stick with Naomi. She is determined to provide for her. As two widows, Ruth and Naomi have limited options for sustaining themselves. Ruth is forced to glean in fields. Basically, she is forced to depend on the leftovers of others. She could see this as humiliating. She could see this as beneath her. She could be bitter about having to do this hard manual labor. Instead, Ruth takes joy in what many would turn their noses at.

Joy is not a choice. It cannot be manufactured just because we want it to exist. But God does give us his joy, even in difficult circumstances. This means that while we cannot choose joy, we can choose a perspective that allows us to see God's everpresent joy. This may sound like splitting hairs, but it's an important distinction. We can't just decide to be joyful. We can decide to participate in the joy that God has placed before us.

Ruth goes into the fields and works hard. She does not focus on the fact that this work would not be her first choice for her life. She does not focus on the fact that she is not the owner of the field. She focuses on doing the work and providing for Naomi and herself in the way that God has given. She takes joy in something that many would not. She sees the blessings in what is before her, and her joy begins to grow. She even begins to see evidence of God's favor (remember that Naomi returned to Bethlehem saying God was against her) as Boaz makes sure she is protected while gleaning in the fields.

As Ruth chooses to participate in the joy that God has provided, that joy grows. In fact, just like the food in verse 18, she has leftovers to share with Naomi.

We will go through good and bad times as followers of Christ. Part of following him is consistently seeking ways in which we can participate in his joy, even when that joy is not easy to see.