

**Proper 27**  
**Cycle B RCL**  
**Revised**

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

Naomi's plan for marrying Ruth off to Boaz is very simple: Make Boaz think he has to make an honest woman of Ruth. The key to understanding the plot is the fact that in Hebrew the word "feet" (*raglayim*) is sometimes, as here, a euphemism for the genitals. Well fed, and especially well lubricated with wine, Boaz collapses in sleep and Ruth gently puts the plan into action. Upon awakening at midnight (3:6), Boaz is surprised to find Ruth lying beside him and to find himself strategically uncovered. Determining immediately and graciously to do the honorable thing, Boaz takes the steps necessary to redeem Ruth from a closer kinsman than he and marries Ruth (3:6-4:13). The blessing of the men at the gate in 4:11-12 anticipates Ruth's role in the building up of the house of David (4:17).

Naomi, the hidden main actor in arranging the marriage of Ruth and Boaz, now receives the fruit of her intrigue. By cuddling the child to her breast, the author does not mean to suggest that Naomi magically became Obed's wet-nurse. The word *omenet*, otherwise found only in 1Samuel 4:4, means "caregiver," not "nurse" (*meyneqet*). Even though Naomi has shown no love for Ruth throughout the story, the women of the town tell Naomi that Ruth's love has been worth more to her than seven sons (4:15). Indeed, their last word is that a son has been born *to Naomi*. Did someone forget Ruth?

**Psalms 127**

There is some agreement among researchers that this psalm consists of two sayings, verses 1-3 and verses 4-5. Some believe that the individual sayings are independent of one another, while others like H.-J. Kraus contend that the second saying derives from the first. H. Schmidt dubbed it a "birth greeting." See Ruth 4:14-15 for a parallel to such a song. The strongest parallel, both in thought and in structure, however, comes from the ancient Mesopotamian Song of Nisaba.

**OR**

**1 Kings 17:8-16**

The so-called Deuteronomistic Historian (often abbreviated Dtr), who is responsible for the great history that extends from Joshua through 2 Kings, often portrays prophets not only as bearers of the divine message but also as wonder-workers. Even within that context, however, this story is remarkable because Elijah accomplishes his life-saving miracle for a non-Israelite woman in the very heart of Baal country outside the Land of Israel. A major question facing the readers of Dtr was whether the God of Israel could operate outside of the land of Israel and whether God could provide for the necessities of everyday life as Baal was supposed to be able to do for those who worshiped Baal. This account answers both questions with a resounding "yes."

**Psalms 146**

Psalms 146-150 are all *hymns* that begin with the expression *hallelu-jah!* ("Praise the LORD!") and may be part of a larger collection of hymns. Hymns typically celebrate the presence of the LORD in the Temple and ordinarily focus upon some particular aspect of God's power and goodness. Here the focus is upon God's defense of the poor and disenfranchised.

**Hebrews 9:24-28**

The author of Hebrews artfully combines apocalyptic, end-of-the-world language with the language of philosophy to achieve a powerful message to readers who must have been very sophisticated in both worlds of thought. Christ's sacrifice was not only a death in this world but also a sacrifice made upon the altar of a perfect sanctuary in the heavenly world. Christ's second appearance at the end of the age will join that ideal world with ours.

**Mark 12:38-44**

Public scribes earned their living by creating important documents such as bills of sale, adoption papers, and marriage contracts. To create such documents scribes needed to know how to write and what to write, *i. e.* they needed to understand the law. Scribes, therefore, functioned much as lawyers do today, creating and even interpreting the contracts and other official documents necessary for the conduct of human affairs. Most often scribes in the time of Jesus aligned themselves with the political-religious party of the Pharisees.

The Treasury of the Jerusalem temple was somewhere in the Women's Court, the court where both men and women might assemble. See also John 8:20. Women could not enter the next court, the Court of Men.

© Fred L. Horton, All rights reserved.