

Get Involved: Pray



EMBRACE Prayer Group March 2017

The Old Testament book of Ruth is a wonderful story of a young immigrant woman who becomes an integral part of the people of God.

It's set in the time of the Judges, a turbulent period of Israel's history. There is more than a suggestion that God's people, rescued so recently from slavery in Egypt, have forgotten their God-given responsibilities to care for the vulnerable. (cf Deuteronomy 10:12-22)

In contrast, Ruth, a foreigner, models what it means to care for her aging and widowed mother-in-law. She feeds for her, taking on back-breaking work of gleaning in the harvest fields. Like Ruth, the vast majority of migrants want to pull their weight.

As a foreign woman Ruth is also potentially vulnerable. The risk of physical and sexual abuse is clearly stated by Naomi (2:22). We need to be mindful that those far from home are also often open to exploitation and abuse in Northern Ireland.

Boaz, the other hero, is the model of a good employer. He is someone who watches out for the vulnerable and generously seeks to protect them; even when that involves a cost to himself.

Also, and interestingly as we approach Easter, he is a messiah-like figure, described as Ruth's "kinsman-redeemer". In her marriage to Boaz, Ruth becomes an integral part of the people of God. Jesus the Messiah, in coming into the world as a stranger, is our Redeemer. He puts Himself on the line for us. In Him, our status is changed. We become part of the family of God.

The story of Ruth has much to say. It's predominantly a good news story. Ruth, the foreign national, is a blessing to God's people. She becomes the great-grandmother of David, Israel's greatest king. Yet an even greater King is to come from David's line and that is Jesus. Fascinatingly, in the introduction to his gospel Matthew lists Ruth as one of the ancestors of Jesus.

Ruth, an immigrant woman, has a hugely significant and positive impact on God's people. How do we view those who come in to live in our communities? What steps do we take to ensure that they are fully integrated?

Prayer Points

- Pray for those who have come to live and work in this country and who are far from the familiar support structures of home.
- Ask God to protect them from unscrupulous employers and gang-masters.
- Pray for understanding for employers, so that they take account of the particular challenges facing immigrants
- As we approach Easter, invite God to remind each one of us of how Jesus Christ came into our world to be our Redeemer.
- In light of that, pray that the eyes of God's people would be opened to see the need and reach out to those who are strangers in our midst; ensuring that they are fully integrated into our communities and churches.

Contributed by Richard Kerr