

‘Call me no longer Naomi, *pleasant*, call me Mara, *bitter*.’

So speaks another widow with dead sons,

1100 years before Jesus gate-crashed that funeral at Nain.

It would be a double death with no husband, no son,

no social care-fund, no pension...

As good as dead with poverty and destitution beckoning,

a bitter lot indeed.

For Naomi rescue came from widowed Ruth,

her daughter-in-law, a foreigner, a Moabitess,

‘Wherever you go, I will go, your people my people,’

Ruth vowed as they beached back on Israel’s shores.

Immigrant Ruth worked hard, gleaning at the field edges,  
using the scraps neglected by the harvesters, to feed them.

Her devotion caught the farmer’s eye, one Boaz,

who shared his packed lunch with her.

Too old to glean,

Naomi bought her womanly wiles to the table sensing  
that something other than devotion had caught Boaz's eye.

'After the harvest, when Boaz is snoring, drunk as a lord,  
go and lie at his feet and er, see what happens.'

Love happened, and they lived happily ever after.

And so did we.

Obed, the love-child of Ruth and Boaz

Jesse, the son of Obed,

David, Goliath-slayer, king & heart-throb, the son of Jesse.

Jesus, our Messiah, the son of David...

'The Lord has turned his hand against me,' Naomi moaned,  
little realising that rescue was on the horizon, big time.

That widow of Nain might have made the same complaint  
until Jesus rocked up with life in all its fullness,

utterly gutted when he saw her weeping, σπλαγχνιζομαι,  
a gutted Greek word if ever there was one,  
his compassion paving the way for resurrection.

I wonder what happened to him, the Widow of Nain's son,  
or the woman who'd been bleeding for twelve years,  
or the religious young man Jesus looked on and loved  
and said 'Give away all you have and follow me.'

No names, no further details

just the offer of life when death was on the cards.

I guess most people here have looked death in the face.

But miraculously we have been given another day.

A day in which we can be canny like pleasant Naomi,  
compassionate like Christ, paving the way for resurrection.

This is the day the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.