

**ENGAGE**

This week we continue a sermon series on the Book of Ruth, titled, "From Ruin to Redemption". This week we will be looking at Ruth 2. My focus will be on God's providence through difficult situations

**EXAMINE****A. Ruth gleans in Boaz's field.****1. (1) Naomi's kinsman: Boaz.**

There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz.

a. Naomi had a kinsman: Naomi was related to this man Boaz through her deceased husband, Elimelech. We don't know exactly how he was related, but he was.

b. A man of great wealth: During the time of famine, when Elimelech, Naomi, and their whole family had left the Promised Land and went to Moab, Boaz had stayed behind – and God provided for him. In fact, God made Boaz a man of great wealth.

- i. Ten years before, Naomi and her family made a choice, and it was a choice made in a hard time – a time of famine. But they didn't have to make the wrong choice they did. The people of Bethlehem had not perished from hunger. They were still there. And they were blessed more than Naomi's family.
- ii. Sometimes we justify wrong choices because of difficult circumstances. But God will strengthen us, and bless us, to make the right choice, even in difficult circumstances.
- iii. "The exact expression rendered a mighty man of wealth is elsewhere translated 'a mighty man of valour' (e.g., Jdg. 11:1). We perhaps get the force of it by thinking of our word 'knight.'" (Morris)

c. A kinsman: This introduces an important word in the book of Ruth – the ancient Hebrew word *goel*. To say that Boaz was a *goel* (a kinsman) was more than saying he was a relative; it was saying that he was a special family representative. He was a chieftain in the family.

**2. (2-3) Ruth happens upon Boaz's field.**

So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." Then she

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left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

a. Please, let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain: Leviticus 19:9-10 commanded farmers in Israel that they should not completely harvest their fields. They were commanded to “cut corners” in harvesting, and always leave some behind. Also, if they happened to drop a bundle of grain, they were commanded to leave it on the ground and to not pick it up.

- i. This was one of the social assistance programs in Israel. Farmers were not to completely harvest their fields, so the poor and needy could come and glean the remains for themselves.
- ii. This is a wonderful way of helping the poor. It commanded the farmers to have a generous heart, and it commanded the poor to be active and work for their food – and a way for them to provide for their own needs with dignity.

b. Then she left: So, Ruth, on her own initiative, set out to glean in the fields to support her and her mother-in-law Naomi. This showed a wonderfully hard-working spirit in Ruth, and it was spiritual also – she would not have been more spiritual to sit back at home and pray for food.

c. She happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz: It says that Ruth happened to come to that place and certainly, that is how it seemed to her. But it was not how it actually came to pass. Ruth came to that field because God was guiding her.

- i. This shows us some of the wonderful way that the invisible hand of God works. If Ruth would have stayed home and waited for a “spiritual” feeling, she probably might have waited a long time – and still probably would have gone to the wrong field. Instead, Ruth experienced the very natural moving of the supernatural hand of God.
- ii. Many times when we are really walking in the Spirit, we can only see the invisible hand of God by looking back. If we spend too much time trying to look for His hand ahead of us, we can make problems for our self.

### **3. (4-7) Boaz learns of Ruth.**

Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, “The LORD be with you!” And they answered him, “The LORD bless you!” Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?” So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, “It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. And she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’ So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house.”

a. The LORD be with you: This shows us something of the heart and character of Boaz. Apparently, his workers loved him and had a good relationship with him. You can often tell the

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real character of a man in authority by seeing how he relates to his staff and by how they think of him.

b. And she said, "Please let me glean and gather": As the supervisor reported to Boaz, he told of Ruth's submissive attitude. There is a sense in which the gleaning was hers by right – after all, she could have quoted Leviticus 19:9-10 back at him. But she kindly and properly asked for the right to gather in his field.

c. So she came and has continued from morning until now: Ruth may not have known it, but she was under inspection. The supervisor was looking at what kind of job she did and he was impressed that she did a good job. And the fact that she did a good job was important, because it made a good impression on Boaz.

- We are under inspection also. At times when we don't know it, we are being watched by others to see how we will walk with God. And what they see will make a difference.

#### 4. (8-9) Boaz speaks kindly to Ruth.

Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."

a. Stay close by my young women: These were Boaz's female field workers, who tied together the cut stalks of grain. Boaz told Ruth to stay close to them, so she would be well taken care of.

b. Do not go to glean in another field: God was blessing Ruth already and all because He guided her to Boaz's field. Boaz knew that if Ruth stayed in his fields, she would be blessed and find:

- In Boaz's field, Ruth would find companionship (among the young women).
- In Boaz's field, Ruth would find protection (Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you?).
- In Boaz's field, Ruth would find refreshment (when you are thirsty).
  - i. The kindness of Boaz was wonderful. At this time, we have no indication of a romantic attraction between Boaz and Ruth and we have no idea how Ruth looked (even if she was pretty, she was probably pretty ragged from a whole day of hard work). Yet Boaz extended this kindness to her.

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- ii. We find it pretty easy to be kind to others when we can see a potential pay-off from the investment of our kindness. Yet true kindness is shown when we extend ourselves to others who, as far as we can see, have nothing to give us.

### 5. (10-13) Ruth thanks Boaz for his kindness.

So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?” And Boaz answered and said to her, “It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.” Then she said, “Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants.”

a. Why have I found favor in your eyes?: Ruth’s attitude was wonderful. Some of us would have said, “Well it’s about time someone noticed! I’ve been working hard all day. Now God will give me the blessings that I deserve.

- We never see Ruth asking why all the hard things have come upon her in life. Instead, she asks why this good thing has come. This is a significant difference in attitude.

b. Since I am a foreigner: This was constantly on Ruth’s mind. She was a Moabitess, and not an Israelite. She knew that on the basis of national background, she didn’t belong. This made Boaz’s kindness to her all the more precious.

- The Bible says that we should be kind to the strangers among us, but this also applies on another level. Since our society is no longer structured around the family, for many people, their most important circle of association is their friends. Sociologists call this “tribalization” – we become part of a little “tribe,” a little circle of friends. The command to love the stranger means that we should not only associate with those of our own tribe, and that we should always welcome those outside of our tribe.

c. It has been reported to me: This is a dynamic of small-town life; everybody knows everybody else’s business. Yet it also shows that Ruth’s devotion to Naomi mattered – it was noticed.

d. The LORD repay your work and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel: Fittingly, Boaz encouraged Ruth as if she were a new convert to the God of Israel. In many ways, Ruth stands as an example of a new convert.

· She put her trust in the God of Israel.

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- She has left her former associates.
- She had come in among strangers.
- She was very low in her own eyes.
- She found protection under the wings of God.
  - i. In the same way, older Christians should be like Boaz unto younger Christians who are like Ruth. “Observe that he saluted her with words of tender encouragement; for this is precisely what I want all the elder Christians among you to do to those who are the counterparts of Ruth.... I want you to make a point of looking out the young converts, and speaking to them goodly words, and comfortable words, whereby they may be cheered and strengthened.” (Spurgeon)
  - ii. Significantly, though these words were said to Ruth, they were also a prayer unto God for Ruth. Christians should pray for one another, especially older Christians should pray for new converts.

e. The LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge: Boaz especially knew of Ruth’s commitment to the God of Israel. This was his way of showing kindness and encouragement to a young believer in the LORD.

- Under whose wings: This is a beautiful picture. “The imagery is probably that of a tiny bird snuggling under the wings of a foster-mother. It gives a picture of trust and security (cf. Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 63:7).” (Morris)

f. Let me find favor in your sight: This was a very polite way of saying “thank you” to Boaz. Ruth was almost overwhelmed by his kindness, and was polite enough to say, “Thank you.”

## **6. (14-16) Boaz continues to show great favor to Ruth.**

Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, “Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.” So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back. And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.”

a. Dip your bread in the vinegar: Perhaps now, we see the first hint of a romance. Boaz showed great kindness and favor to Ruth at mealtime. It would be enough to have just invited her, but he also invited her to share fully in the meal, even the privileged dipping.

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b. She ate and was satisfied, and kept some back: Ruth also may be awakening to some romance towards Boaz; she kept some back. She did not eat all that was offered to her, meaning that she didn't want to seem like a greedy eater in front of Boaz, and that she was sensible enough to take some home to Naomi.

- i. Ruth was satisfied, because she answered the generous invitation of Boaz. She was not one of the reapers, but she sat beside the reapers and ate as if she was one of them and she ate and was satisfied. In the same way, those outside the Kingdom of God and its promises can sit among the reapers, at the invitation of Jesus, and by faith they can eat and be satisfied.
- ii. "‘She did eat, and was satisfied.’ Your head shall be satisfied with the precious truth which Christ reveals; your heart shall be content with Jesus, as the altogether lovely object of affection; your hope shall be satisfied, for whom have you in heaven but Christ? Your desire shall be satiated, for what can even the hunger of your desire wish for more than ‘to know Christ, and to be found in him.’ You shall find Jesus fill your conscience, till it is at perfect peace; he shall fill your judgment, till you know the certainty of his teachings; he shall fill your memory with recollections of what he did, and fill your imagination with the prospects of what he is yet to do. You shall be ‘satisfied.’" (Spurgeon)

c. Let her glean even among the sheaves: This was more generous than the command in Leviticus 19:9-10. Boaz would allow Ruth to take some from among the already gathered sheaves of grain.

d. Let some grain from the bundles fall purposefully for her: This was also beautiful. Boaz wanted to bless Ruth, but he didn't want to dishonor her dignity by making her a charity case. So, he allowed some grain to fall, supposedly on accident, so that she could pick it up.

## **B. Ruth reports the day's events to Naomi.**

### **1. (17-18) She brings home the day's fruits to Naomi.**

So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. Then she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied.

a. She gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned: Yes, God blessed Ruth. Yes, people were generous to her. At the same time, she did work hard. This was a sun-up to sun-down day, and Ruth worked hard all day long.

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- We should use Ruth's example to glean everything we can from the Word of God:
  - Ruth worked hard.
  - Ruth had to stoop to gather every grain.
  - Ruth could only pick up one grain at a time.
  - Ruth had to hold on to each grain, and not immediately drop it.
  - Ruth took the grain home and threshed it.
  - Ruth took the threshed grain and winnowed it.
  - Ruth was nourished by the grain.

b. It was about an ephah of barley: This was about a five-and-one-half gallon tub (22 liters) of barley – a wonderful day's work to people who had nothing.

c. Gave to her what she had kept back: Besides all the barley grain, Ruth brought Naomi the food left over from the meal with Boaz. This was obviously a blessing for Naomi.

## **2. (19-23) Naomi praises God for His goodness to her and Ruth.**

And her mother-in-law said to her, "Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz." Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!" And Naomi said to her, "This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives." Ruth the Moabitess said, "He also said to me, 'You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.'" And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field." So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.

a. Blessed be the name of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead: Is this the same women who came into town saying, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me (Ruth 1:20)? Is this the same woman who said, the Almighty has afflicted me (Ruth 1:21)? Of course, it is! Now she sees more of God's plan unfolding, so she can see better how all things are working together for good for those who love God.

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b. It is good, my daughter: Of course, Naomi told Ruth, “Stay with this man Boaz!” Not only was he generous, he was one of our near kinsmen – the importance of which will be unfolded in the coming chapters.

## QUESTIONS

Focus on two questions:

1. What helps us remember that God is in control when things are not going well?
2. What hindrances do we have that make us forget that God is control?

## Other Questions

- How long do you think Ruth may have worked that day?
- Why did Naomi think someone had taken notice of Ruth?
- What can you determine about the character of Boaz from the reading of Ruth Chapter 2?
- 11. Consider how Boaz treated Ruth as a poor relative and the promise of God from the Scripture cited from Psalm 41 on the subject.
- Would you (or do you) have the same attitude towards your relatives who are in need?
- Have you ever struggled in helping someone because they are different from you?
- How do we start to see Naomi's attitude toward God changing in this passage?
- Why was she bitter before, but now she was recognizing God's kindness?
- What elements can you see in this passage that reveal the providence of God?

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