

Ruth part 3

Ruth chapter 2

INTRODUCTION

It all started with a famine in their home place which caused them to make the decision to leave for the land of Moab, (contrary to the command of God) Then there's death of Naomi's husband Elimelek, the further act of disobedience in the marriage of Naomi's two sons to Moabite women, and the subsequent death of Naomi's sons.

One blow after another causing Naomi to say (1:13, 20), *"The Lord's hand has gone out against me . . . the Lord Almighty has made my life very bitter."*

(PAUSE)

But signs of hope begin to appear for Naomi:

1. The famine in Israel is over
2. And an amazingly devoted and loving daughter-in-law has committed her life to being by Naomi's side.

Naomi knows God exists and she understands he is Sovereign.

Ruth, what an incredible lady:

- A woman with faith that sees beyond the present bitter setbacks.
- A woman free from the so-called securities and comforts of the world and her home.
- A woman with the courage to venture into the unknown with God.
- A woman with radical commitment to the only true and living God.

(PAUSE)

We ended last time with devoted Ruth and bitter Naomi settling in Bethlehem.

And what a difference a day makes!

Here in chapter 2 the mercy of God becomes so obvious that even Naomi will see it.

LET'S READ the next part of the story.

Ruth ch 2

[1] Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, from the clan of Elimelech, a man of standing, whose name was Boaz. [2] And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." [3] So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech. [4] Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem

and greeted the harvesters, "The Lord be with you! " "The Lord bless you! " they called back. [5] Boaz asked the foreman of his harvesters, "Whose young woman is that?" [6] The foreman replied, "She is the Moabitess who came back from Moab with Naomi. [7] She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter." [8] So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. [9] Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled." [10] At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me---a foreigner? " [11] Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband---how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. [12] May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge. " [13] "May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant--- though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls." [14] At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar." When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted

and had some left over. [15] As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, "Even if she gathers among the sheaves, don't embarrass her. [16] Rather, pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her." [17] So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah. [18] 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. [19] Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you! " Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz," she said. [20] "The Lord bless him! " Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers. " [21] Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "He even said to me, 'Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.' " [22] Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else's field you might be harmed." [23] So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

PRAY

MAIN SECTION

In V1 we're introduced by the author to a relative of Naomi from her husband's side. His name is Boaz.

Ruth, committed to Naomi as she was, needs to make provision for Naomi and of course herself so she decides to glean in the fields; follow the harvesters as they cut and gather the crops, lifting the grain they had left behind—a perfectly legal and common practice in those days.

As it turned out...Ruth found herself working in a field belonging to a man named Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek – ha! a relative!

What an absolutely wonderful coincidence...that of all of the fields she could have visited Ruth should just happen to arrive at the field belonging to a relative!

What is a coincidence?

" a remarkable concurrence of events or circumstances without apparent causal connection"

Or

"a striking occurrence of two or more events at one time apparently by mere chance"

Interestingly there's no word for coincidence in the Hebrew (the original language of the Old Testament).

In the Greek (the language of the New Testament) the

word coincidence is a combination of two words: *sun* and *kurios*.

Sun means “together with,” and *kurios* means “supreme in authority.”

- “*something that occurs together by (supreme in authority) God’s authority/providence.*”

I like that! The ancient Greek language is so much more expressive than English.

I like this definition of coincidence: “*a manifestation of God in our lives*”.

A reminder to us of the fact that He is in control and that *in all things He works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

(PAUSE)

GOD has brought Ruth to a relative’s field. And now in verse 4 we learn something about this relative, Boaz.

Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters “The Lord be with you!”

Boaz unashamedly followed the Lord in every part of his life.

There was no differentiation between the sacred and the secular, he lived out his life of obedience, praise and worship to God at all times.

He took God to work with him.

He understood the words of Psalm 139

[7] Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? [8] If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. [9] If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, [10] even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

APP

Many so-called believers are one thing at church on Sunday and quite another at work on Monday.

When you go into your office or into your lab or into shop or into your factory, what kind of person are you? Do you take the Lord with you?

Boaz did.

He greeted those who were under his employment with a blessing *"The Lord be with you"*.

He's essentially saying *"May God's presence and favour satisfy your soul"*.

And they returned the blessing to him *"The Lord bless you"* (PAUSE) ...what a wonderful place to work!

(PAUSE)

If you'd met Boaz for the first time and your wife when you got home said "well, what's he like? Is he tall is he short is he fat is he thin?" What would you say? You'd say – *He's a man of God. He turned up and he said "The Lord Bless you", and everyone shouted back "and the Lord bless you too".*

Boaz brings to the circumstance of every day life the one with whom he has been spending time!

Like Naomi, Boaz knew the Lord!

(PAUSE)

Our faith in God should be evident to all...it's not just for church on Sunday, but at work tomorrow morning too.

(PAUSE)

This relative Boaz is a godly man.

He knows his team and he's aware of the arrival of a new face.

And seeing this new face (perhaps a pretty face), he says to the foreman:

V5

Whose young woman is that? And the foreman replied, "She is the Moabitess who came back from Moab with

Naomi. She said 'please let me glean and gather among the sheaves, behind the harvesters.'

And this tells us something more about Ruth, it tells us of her humility – although it was her right as a foreigner and as a stranger in poverty to go and glean among the sheaves, she actually came and asked for permission to do so.

We also learn she was committed and faithful in her work

V7

She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter.'

Boaz makes his way over to her and (v8) says

"My daughter listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't do away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.

Boaz promises to protect Ruth and to provide for her, and I can't help but see this as a foreshadow of one who would come to give ultimate protection and provision. As Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well – *I will give you water, "Everyone who drinks this water [the water that you are here to draw from*

the well] will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst."

(PAUSE)

Ruth's response to Boaz's kindness comes in verse 10:

...she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favour in your eyes that you notice me – a foreigner?"

I'm surprised you even speak to me Boaz.

Well, (V11) more evidence of the talk that took place in Bethlehem – apparently Boaz already knows about Ruth and what she has done for her mother-in-law since the death of her husband, how she left her Father and mother and came to live with a people she didn't know.

And so Boaz prays a prayer of blessing upon Ruth.

V12

May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

Ruth was staggered at what Boaz had said to her – ...after all she didn't even have the standing of one of his servant girls! She was a widow – a Moabite widow!

Yet there was more to come.

V14

At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar." When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, "Even if she gathers among the sheaves, don't embarrass her. [16] Rather, pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her." [17] So Ruth gleaned in the field until the evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah (about 22 litres of grain!).

That was a huge amount of grain.

Not only had Ruth lifted everyone one of those stalks, but she threshed them all too, and bagged them and then carried the grain home to Naomi, faithful and committed as she was to her promise to care for Naomi...

...And when Naomi saw how much she had gathered – plus the left over food that Ruth couldn't eat, Naomi in v19 asked the obvious question.

V19

*Where did you glean today? Where did you work?
Blessed be the man who took notice of you!"*

Ruth told Naomi all about Boaz – the relative she had seemingly forgotten about.

Now she remembers him! Naomi remembers him
now in V20

“May the Lord bless him! He has not stopped showing kindness to the living and the dead. (To us here and now and to our dead by caring for us in their absence) That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers.

He’s one of our kinsman redeemers?!?!?!? We’ll be looking at the concept of Kinsman Redeemer tomorrow evening but in short – Boaz is a relative who could step in and take the place of Ruth’s dead husband to continue the family line through her.

Naomi must have forgotten about him - all this talk of no hope for Ruth if she come to Bethlehem with her?!

(PAUSE)

Ruth told Naomi all about Boaz, and you can perhaps picture the scene *“O Naomi, he was so lovely, so kind, this is what he said to me - I’m not to glean anywhere else but in his field until the harvest is over”.*

Naomi of course thinks that’s a great idea and she says:

It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else’s field you might be harmed”.

So that's what Ruth does, she stays close to the servant girls of Boaz gleaning his fields until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

(PAUSE)

CONCLUSION/APP

Through it all, famine, the pain of death and separation, pain and sadness, God is working everything according to the counsel of his will.

It's much easier to believe in the providence of God when the sun's shining and the bands playing and everything seems to be coming together nicely and there's a great sense of anticipation, excitement and general encouragement.

But providence is more difficult to handle and to accept in the face of death, perhaps the death of your husband and your two sons. It's at times like that the doctrine of providence stands up and demands attention. Are you really in control God? Yes He is.

(PAUSE)

He's in control of the good times and the bad.

We need to hold on to this...

...God's providential care is seen so clearly in this story.

When life appears, as it must have appeared to Naomi, to be simply a jumble of unconnected threads, it takes you to turn the tapestry round in order to see how they form the most beautiful picture.

(PAUSE)

Every one of these undecipherable knots and threads are absolutely right and absolutely necessary for completion of the full picture

Corrie ten boom wrote this poem:

*My life is but a weaving
Between my God and me.
I cannot choose the colors
He weaveth steadily.*

*Oft' times He weaveth sorrow;
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper
And I the underside.*

*Not 'til the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly
Will God unroll the canvas
And reveal the reason why.*

*The dark threads are as needful
In the weaver's skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned*

*He knows, He loves, He cares;
Nothing this truth can dim.
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice to Him.*

*...but it's true: God does work for the good of those who
love him, who have been called according to his
purpose.*

We'll see more evidence of the providence of God next
time. For now...

LET'S PRAY