This morning, as we continue gleaning faith lessons from the Book of Ruth, we are reminded again of how God develops people of character as He shows His lovingkindness. This is the word hesed in Hebrew—the attribute of God that expresses love that binds one to another. Let’s recap just a bit before we continue in Ruth 2. In chapter 1, a famine grips Judah. A man named Elimelech moves to Moab, a pagan land, with his wife Naomi and their two sons. There in Moab, the sons take foreign wives. Their father, Naomi’s husband, dies; then, the sons both die, and Naomi decides to head home to Judah. One of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, accompanies her, declaring a conversion to Naomi’s God. At the end of chapter 1, we begin to see a ray of hope: verse 22 reveals that the two women return to Judah just as the barley and wheat harvests take place.

Family, this narrative confirms God’s grace in ordinary people. God’s purpose interacts directly with human decision-making. In verse 1 of chapter 2, we are introduced to Boaz, and we begin to see the providence of God unfold. Look with me at verse 3: “she [Ruth] just so happened” to take up gleaning in the field of Boaz. Now Boaz, we discover, is the “kinsman redeemer” of Ruth through her marriage to Naomi’s son. The kinsman or guardian redeemer has, according to Levitical law, the privilege and responsibility to act on behalf of a relative who is in trouble, faces danger, and experiences need. The Hebrew term is *goel*; it means one who delivers or rescues. Family, listen. Ruth is a beautiful picture of the church while Boaz, whose name means strength, is a picture of Christ, our rescuer, our redeemer, the providential hand of God moving to redeem and rescue us. Ruth’s story confirms that God is at work in each human life, whether the person is aware or not. In Ruth’s weakest hours, it was the strength and supply of the kinsman redeemer that provided and sustained. In verse 2 of chapter 2, Ruth asks her mother-in-law Naomi to let her “go into the field” and pick up the leftovers. She went out to glean the leftovers to feed herself and Naomi. But God positions her for greater blessings (see verse 4-12 at the end of this text).

Church, listen. The providence of God protects (Ruth 2:9), positions (2:9), and provides (2:15). Providence is the divine, sovereign, purposeful involvement of our God. He governs and sustains us for His purposes as we take refuge in Him. In her weakness and need, Ruth has God’s strength support her, working in the background of her life as her kinsman Boaz becomes her redeemer. Ruth is the object of God’s grace, even though she doesn’t necessarily perceive His acting in her life. Look at verses 15 & 16: “As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, ‘Let her gather among the sheaves and don’t reprimand her. 16 Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don’t rebuke her.’” God supplies blessings, provision, and supply on purpose out of His abundance and His *hesed*, His lovingkindness (Galatians 1:3-4\*). Even though Ruth is unaware, Boaz works on her behalf. Clearly, our lives are not designed to run according to chance or circumstance.

Christian, we have a sovereign God who governs our lives, doing His work on purpose for *His* purpose. Let me make an important point: LONG before Ruth ever makes it to Boaz’s field, the grain has been planted, and the crops have matured into readiness for harvest. God makes provision for Ruth before she ever arrives at her place of need. And God is making provision for you before you are aware of your need. God is aware of your circumstances before you are. And there is nothing that we experience that is beyond His ability to care. Before we know we need a savior or redeemer, Christ offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice for our sin.

I offer one last thought for today, one more lesson from Ruth 2: Keep your eyes on the field of your redeemer, the place of blessing, of protection. Boaz knows there might be temptation for Ruth to try another field. She enters Boaz’s field desperate and empty. But she is about to leave it full and blessed. Our God knows her back story. He knows her condition, and He

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\*Galatians 1:3-4

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father

knows our condition and our needs. And He deals with us in His abundance, providence, and lovingkindness. But listen, we need to keep our eyes on His field, that our wages will be full (see verse 12). Look at Ruth 2:14: “14 At mealtime Boaz said to her, ‘Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.’” Ruth is invited to share a meal with her kinsman redeemer. She is not treated as a foreigner. He is the one who owns the field and provides the blessings. She is a Moabite. Boaz could ignore her, could dismiss her, but Ruth, who has gone into a field to glean leftovers has now found herself eating a meal with the owner. What a picture of grace! Oh! And look! The scripture account tells us that “he serves her”! He personally attends to her needs. And she is satisfied. Moreover, she has some food left. Just as Boaz supports and personally blesses Ruth, our redeemer personally attends to our needs. And our Savior, like Boaz with Ruth, personally invites us into an intimate relationship; John writes, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” How comforting it is to know that the God of creation is actively, personally involved in our lives, exhibiting His hesed, His loyal love? How are we responding to this kind of redeemer?

Passage in support of this sermon:

1 Now Naomi had a relative on her husband’s side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz.

2 And Ruth the Moabite 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, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.

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

“The Lord bless you!” they answered.

5 Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, “Who does that young woman belong to?”

6 The overseer replied, “She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi. 7 She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.’ She came into the field and has remained here 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 the women who work for me. 9 Watch the field where the men are harvesting and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on 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 asked him, “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 put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servants.”

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, “Let her gather among the sheaves and don’t reprimand her. 16 Even 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.[a] 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 guardian-redeemers.[b]”

21 Then Ruth the Moabite 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 the women who work for him, because in someone else’s field you might be harmed.”

23 So Ruth stayed close to the women of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.