

**TITLE:** “The Invisible Hand of God?” **TEXT:** Ruth 2

**OPENING:** Have you ever felt like your life circumstances feel completely random? Like you have stumbled into a less than ideal situation by accident, sometimes wondering where God is in all of it. Only to realize later that it was God all along? Like losing a job only to later find a better one that changes your life. Today, this is what we see in Ruth 2.

In Ruth 1, Naomi lost her husband and sons, leaving her hopeless in a foreign land. Ruth, her Moabite daughter-in-law, chose to stay with her, stepping into an uncertain future. Yet, in Ruth 2, we see God’s unseen hand weaving their story into His plan of redemption.

**MIT:** Today, we will explore how God’s providence works through everyday acts of kindness that protect, provide, and lead us toward His greater plan of redemption. We will see this by how God’s providence puts us in the right position, how God’s kindness is revealed through His people, how God’s kindness restores hope, and how God’s plans points to His story of redemption.

### **GOD’S PROVIDENCE PUTS US IN THE RIGHT POSITION (vv. 1–3)**

“Now Naomi had a relative on her husband’s side. He was a prominent man of noble character from Elimelech’s family. His name was Boaz. <sup>2</sup> Ruth the Moabitess asked Naomi, “Will you let me go into the fields and gather fallen grain behind someone with whom I find favor?” Naomi answered her, “Go ahead, my daughter.” <sup>3</sup> So Ruth left and entered the field to gather grain behind the harvesters. She *happened to be* in the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was from Elimelech’s family.”

**INTERPRETATION:** The author does a great job in the literary structure to get us readers to take notice. Here is what I mean, it almost seems like Ruth is here by accident/coincidence. It reads, *She happened to be in the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was from Elimelech’s family.*” But what we know as we read the book is that she was not there by accident. Not once do we see God speaking in this entire book. His name is mentioned but He does not speak. Though you can see His hand in everything going on in the entire book, especially in this moment of her going to this specific field to glean. We tend to forget that God is present in everything going on in our life, down to the details. We also have issues with wanting to know all the details before we trust God in certain situations or scenarios. Right?

**ILLUSTRATION:** Like Ruth stepping into this unknown field, God often wants us to walk with only enough light to take the next step, trusting His plan. But many times, before we commit, we want God to give us the whole picture. We want God’s light to shine all the way to the end of the plan. God doesn’t always work like that. He gives us what we need when we need it. Nothing more, nothing less. This is the beauty of God’s providence; He puts us in the right position at the right time for His right purposes. God’s unseen hand is always at work in the lives of his people, and he is arranging circumstances so He may do things through us.

**APPLICATION:** This week, when you face uncertainty, pray for God’s guidance and take one step forward, trusting He’s leading you. Maybe you’re unsure about a job, a move, or a ministry opportunity; trust that God is positioning you for His purposes. Just like here in the field with Ruth.

**Transition:** Ruth’s presence in Boaz’s field was no accident; it was God’s providence setting her up for a blessing. But how does God make that providence tangible? Through the kindness of His people.

### **GOD’S KINDNESS IS REVEALED THROUGH HIS PEOPLE (vv. 4–9)**

4 Later, when Boaz arrived from Bethlehem, he said to the harvesters, “The Lord be with you.” “The Lord bless you,” they replied. 5 Boaz asked his servant who was in charge of the harvesters, “Whose young woman is this?” 6 The servant answered, “She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the territory of Moab. 7 She asked, ‘Will you let me gather fallen grain among the bundles behind the harvesters?’ She came and has been on her feet since early morning, except that she rested a little in the shelter.” 8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Listen, my daughter. Don’t go and gather grain in another field, and don’t leave this one, but stay here

close to my female servants. 9 See which field they are harvesting, and follow them. Haven't I ordered the young men not to touch you? When you are thirsty, go and drink from the jars the young men have filled."

**INTERPRETATION:** I have not given any background on the "gleaning" from the field custom. It was a practice back in that day to allow the poor, widows, people traveling, foreigners to glean from their fields. Now, not everyone did it, but it was common. It allowed those who had little to get something. It was a type of welfare system set up by God so those forgotten didn't starve. God used people who He had blessed, to bless others. Here with Ruth, not only did God provide for her through Boaz, but she also received protection. God works to do this through each of us. This is why God puts such a high emphasis on obedience.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Imagine someone who prays but never does anything else. While praying is important, God doesn't expect us to sit on our hands and only pray without ever becoming willing to be used by God to become an answer to someone else's prayers. Let me give you an example, imagine if Boaz here simply prayed but did not allow these people to glean from the field according to God's word. Boaz didn't just pray, he acted, and we see God's kindness through it.

It reminds me of the story of George Müller when he prayed for food, and God sent a baker and milkman, using their actions to meet the orphans' needs. Today, that looks like a neighbor dropping off groceries for a struggling family, God uses our kindness to show His care.

**APPLICATION:** We need to be available and willing to allow God to show His kindness through us. Boaz took an invested interest in this moment because I believe God laid it on his heart and he listened. When we exhibit this kind of kindness, you can rest in knowing it came from God. Every day we wake up, we need to be aware of God's willingness to give us another day for His purposes. We must also be very attentive, pay attention, and be available for those moments God want to work His kindness through us.

**Transition:** Why is being reminded of God's kindness working through us so important? It can seriously restore hope in people. Boaz's kindness was more than provision; it gave Ruth a place to belong. God's kindness working through His people restores hope, as we see in verses 10–16.

### **GOD'S KINDNESS RESTORES HOPE FOR US (vv. 10–16)**

<sup>10</sup> She fell facedown, bowed to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor with you, so that you notice me, although I am a foreigner?" <sup>11</sup> Boaz answered her, "Everything you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband's death has been fully reported to me: how you left your father and mother and your native land, and how you came to a people you didn't previously know. <sup>12</sup> May the Lord reward you for what you have done, and may you receive a full reward from the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge." <sup>13</sup> "My lord," she said, "I have found favor with you, for you have comforted and encouraged your servant, although I am not like one of your female servants." <sup>14</sup> At mealtime Boaz told her, "Come over here and have some bread and dip it in the vinegar sauce." So, she sat beside the harvesters, and he offered her roasted grain. She ate and was satisfied and had some left over. <sup>15</sup> When she got up to gather grain, Boaz ordered his young men, "Let her even gather grain among the bundles, and don't humiliate her. <sup>16</sup> Pull out some stalks from the bundles for her and leave them for her to gather. Don't rebuke her."

**INTERPRETATION:** Remember, Ruth was an outsider in Bethlehem. She was a Moabite who, if not protected, may have been harmed because Jews despised Moabites. They had a history of hostility. But here she is receiving undeserved grace and generosity from someone who doesn't even need to give her the time of day. Boaz not only allowed her to glean from his fields, but invited her to eat with his workers which would have protected her. So instead of Ruth feeling hopeless, she now has a renewed hope because of Boaz's kindness. It also gives her a sense of belonging and security. This was a big deal to her, I mean, look at how she responded in verse 10.

Have you ever experienced that in a low time of life? A kindness from someone who had no reason to show kindness to you but because they did, it strengthen your faith or gave you hope.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I was in a very hard spot in ministry at one point. I won't get into detail, but I was taking hit after hit after hit. Y'all, it was bad. It broke me. I questioned everything. My leadership, my calling, everything. I felt alone, and it seemed like God was absent. One day I contacted this other pastor, who didn't even know me, we knew people who knew each other but that's it. This guy listened to my story on the phone. I felt bad, because here I am dumping on this guy who didn't know me from Adam. Do you know what this guy did? Apparently, before becoming a pastor & seminary preaching professor, he was a pilot. He got into a plane, found a small local airport, flew out to me and took me out to lunch. Y'all! God knew exactly what I needed. God used this man to strengthen my faith to build me back up.

**APPLICATION:** God uses our acts of kindness to strengthen and renew faith because it reminds others of God's care. People need to know that God still cares! God loves to use your kindness to be the channel to restore someone else's hope. That hope will ultimately point to God's Himself. So what does that look like for you? Maybe someone you know or may run into this week needs encouragement. Maybe someone needs a visit from you. Be willing to be used by God to build up someone's hope, just like Boaz with Ruth.

**Transition:** Ruth's restored hope points to something even greater. It points to God's plan to redeem His people. In verses 17–23, we see how God's kindness through Boaz reveals His story of redemption.

### **GOD'S PLANS POINT TO HIS STORY OF REDEMPTION (vv. 17–23)**

<sup>17</sup> So Ruth gathered grain in the field until evening. She beat out what she had gathered, and it was about twenty-six quarts of barley. <sup>18</sup> She picked up the grain and went into the town, where her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She brought out what she had left over from her meal and gave it to her. <sup>19</sup> Her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you gather barley today, and where did you work? May the Lord bless the man who noticed you." Ruth told her mother-in-law whom she had worked with and said, "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz." <sup>20</sup> Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May the Lord bless him because he has not abandoned his *kindness* to the living or the dead." Naomi continued, "*The man is a close relative. He is one of our family redeemers.*" <sup>21</sup> Ruth the Moabitess said, "He also told me, 'Stay with my young men until they have finished all of my harvest.'" <sup>22</sup> So Naomi said to her daughter-in-law Ruth, "My daughter, it is good for you to work with his female servants, so that nothing will happen to you in another field." <sup>23</sup> Ruth stayed close to Boaz's female servants and gathered grain until the barley and the wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

**INTERPRETATION:** God's actions through Boaz in this passage culminates here in verse 20, "<sup>20</sup> Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, 'May the Lord bless him (Boaz) because he has not abandoned his *kindness* to the living or the dead.' Naomi continued, '*The man is a close relative. He is one of our family redeemers.*'" This word for kindness, is the Hebrew word "Hesed". It is used over 240 times in the OT with the majority of them pointing to, and shining a bright light on, God's loyalty, mercy, and covenantal love towards His people. It's the same word that is repeated over and over again in Psalm 136 saying, "God's steadfast love endures forever." It's a word that we call a durative action. It doesn't just happen once, it actually never stops. It's a love that remains and persists even though we mess up. Why? Because it's based on God's covenant promises not emotion or our faithfulness. It's based on God's loyalty and character. It's a kindness/love that costs something. When God shows hesed, He doesn't just feel love, He acts on it. His love moves toward us even when we're unworthy. This is the word that is used for Boaz' actions here. This is a huge deal to use it in this way. It also ties into this next concept of a "kinsman redeemer."

Let's read verse 20 again, "<sup>20</sup> Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, 'May the Lord bless him (Boaz) because he has not abandoned his *kindness* to the living or the dead.' Naomi continued, '*The man is a close relative. He is one of our family redeemers.*'" This is what God's people called the "kinsman redeemer." The kinsman redeemer had several roles:

- 1) Redeem property that was sold for a poor relative (Lev. 25:25)
- 2) Redeem a relative sold into slavery (Lev. 25:47-49)
- 3) And used here in verse 20, he was to marry a widow in the family, like a brother's wife, and raise up the dead's husband's children. The kids keep the dead husbands last name and all future children with the widow (Deut. 25:5-10). He becomes the family rescuer. Ensuring the family name, property, and people were not lost. It is a living symbol of covenant love. It was a selfless act that cost the redeemer something, according to Deut. 25:6, "so the dead husband's name will not be blotted out from Israel."

Boaz serves as a kinsman redeemer which makes him a type of Christ. This is a foreshadowing of something greater to come, which Pastor Brandon will get into more in Ruth 4. Heseb describes the heart of redemption, and the kinsman redeemer shows the action of redemption. Together in this verse they show us how God's redemptive love is both compassionate and active. Why is this so important to understand?

We see the fullness of this with Jesus taking the cross to redeem us. A selfless act that cost Him greatly, so, just like Ruth, a foreigner to the covenant can be redeemed. Jesus did this for us so our names will not be blotted out. So our names may be written in God's book of life. So we may be restored: by God adopting us, showing us our true identity, and inviting us into the inheritance He has for His children.

This is what Ephesians 1:5-14 is pointing to, <sup>5</sup>He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, <sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One. <sup>7</sup>In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace <sup>8</sup>that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding. <sup>9</sup>He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ <sup>10</sup>as a plan for the right time<sup>[s]</sup>—to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him. <sup>11</sup>In him we have also received an inheritance,<sup>[i]</sup> because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will, <sup>12</sup>so that we who had already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to his glory. <sup>13</sup>In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed. <sup>14</sup>The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory."

**Transition:** Ruth's story in Boaz's field wasn't just about grain, it was about God weaving her into His grand story of redemption, a story that finds its climax in Jesus' cross. Just as God placed Ruth exactly where she needed to be, He's writing your story too.

**ENDING:** Church... Ruth stepping into Boaz's field wasn't an accident and neither is your life. Picture a tapestry, every thread: your joys, your pain, your seemingly random moments; woven by God's unseen hand into His masterpiece of redemption. Just as Boaz redeemed Ruth, Jesus paid the ultimate price on the cross to redeem you, to write your name in His book of life. So, what's your next step? If you've never trusted Jesus as your Redeemer, come to Him today, find refuge under His wings. If you're a believer, trust His providence this week by taking one bold step: pray for guidance in a tough decision, show kindness to someone who feels forgotten, or share the hope of Jesus with a friend. May our speech honor His glorious name. God's not done weaving your story. Will you trust Him to lead you into the fields He's prepared for you? Let's pray.