

Ordinary People, Extraordinary God

A study of the book of Ruth

Part 3: Providentially Filled- Ruth 2:1-17

Tonight, we continue our study of the book of Ruth. Last time, we ended with a new setting; the barley harvest was taking place in Bethlehem. Naomi was bitter, feeling she had gone away full but come back empty, due to the loss of her husband and sons. As we begin chapter two, we'll meet Boaz and come to see how this man is part of God's providential plan.

1. Working in the fields

- So many people pray to God when things are going poorly. They cry out for help!
- We often bemoan our situation, especially when it comes to financial hardship.
- Far fewer are motivated to work while we wait, leaving the results to the Lord.
- God's purpose for our lives is not to make us comfortable, but to make us conformable to the image of Christ. He often uses hardships for this purpose.
- We find Naomi still bitter, but Ruth is willing to work and trust God.
- The answer to both women's prayers will be greater than they could have ever imagined, and it will fulfill God's promise to Abraham generations before.
- **A new character: Vs. 1; "Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, from the clan of Elimelech, a (worthy/noble) man of standing, whose name was Boaz."**
- The Hebrew name 'Boaz' means, 'in him is strength.' He seems to be a wealthy, honorable man and a pillar of the Bethlehem community.
- The Hebrew word translated as 'relative' can mean a wide range of familial relationships, so we aren't told (at first) how closely Boaz was related to Elimelech.
- **Can't sit still! Vs. 2a; "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.'"**
- Ruth didn't depend on her mother-in-law, and she didn't sit and wait for charity; she went to work, depending on the Lord to bless her efforts.
- She was hopeful that God's people would obey God's Law and commands.
- **Deut. 24:19; "When you are harvesting in your field, and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back and get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands."**
- Notice the reciprocal blessing in the harvest. A farmer was only allowed to glean their fields once, not go back and strip them bare.
- The needy were blessed by the harvest's abundance, and the harvester was blessed for their obedience and charity. God's people are told to be charitable.
- Naomi answers out of their shared need. **Vs. 2b; "Go ahead, my daughter."**

2. Perfect timing

- A providential place. Vs. 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."*
- God sent Ruth to the field of Boaz, the relative of Naomi's husband. This was no accident, not luck, and not by chance, but the providential guidance of God.
- A providential moment. Vs. 4a; *"And behold"* or *"Just then"*. Suddenly, with perfect timing, Boaz comes to the field where Ruth is working. He greeted the workers.
- Boaz checked on the men hired to work the fields and talked to the foreman.
- *"The LORD be with you"* and *"the LORD bless you!"* A common greeting/response.
- A providential glance. Vs. 5b; *"Whose young woman is that?"*
- Ruth is noticed because she is a woman among men, or because of her hard work, or both; either way, God places Ruth in Boaz's field of sight.
- The foreman describes who Ruth is and the nature of her work ethic.
- Vs. 7b; *"She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter."*
- The people of God knew that God was sovereign, but they might not expect Him to prove His sovereignty in the moment of the mundane parts of life, such as labor.

3. A favorable conversation

- Pragmatic, protection, and provision. Vs. 8-9; *"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. 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 gave her sensible advice. Why go elsewhere? I have the grain you need.
- Boaz protected her and surrounded her with other girls, likely his servants.
- Boaz not only provides opportunity and protects her from the male workers but also ensures her future, so that she doesn't faint while working, giving her water to drink. Later, he will provide a meal for Ruth.
- Vs. 10b; *"Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?"* Ruth is shocked by the grace shown to an outsider.
- The humility of Ruth is also on display. She did not demand, she did not expect, she only received grace from the owner of the field. She sees herself as less than one of the servant girls.
- Boaz speaks a blessing. Vs. 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."* Speaks of her conversion and relationship with God.
- Boaz acknowledges that all belongs to God. He and Ruth are provided for by God.

- After the meal, Ruth goes back to work, and Boaz ensures she goes home not only with a full stomach but a full sack of grain to share with Naomi.
- **Vs. 16;** *“Rather, **pull out some stalks** for her from the bundles **and leave them** for her to pick up, and **don’t rebuke her.**”*
- **Ruth’s hard work was rewarded.** The worker is worth their wages. She worked hard. She even processed the sheaves and extracted the grain. A large amount.
- **Vs. 17;** *“So Ruth gleaned in the field **until evening**. Then she **threshed the barley** she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah.”*
- An ephah was about **22 liters, 30 pounds, or almost 6 gallons** of barley. This provided around **10 days of food**.
- Naomi felt empty and bitter at the beginning of this chapter. Now, both she and Ruth are well provisioned and full.
- Next time, the LORD will begin to heal and root out her bitterness while continuing to bless Ruth through Boaz.

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3. A _____ conversation

- _____, _____, and _____. *Vs. 8-9; "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.** 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."*
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- Notes:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.