

Ruth: Portraits of Redemption  
**Portrait of Location – Pt 1**  
Ruth 2:1-16

## I. What If Where You Are Isn't Where You Think It Is?

**WE ARE PEOPLE WHO TEND TO HAVE A HARD TIME SEEING VALUE IN THE PLACE WHERE WE ARE.**

### Ali Hafel and the Golconda Diamond Mine

- The tragic parable of Ali Hafed is that he launched out in search of something before he ever looked where he already was to see if he already had it.

This points the reality that we can be a people who have a hard time seeing value in the place where we are.

- Often we believe that to acquire that which will satisfy us, we have to get something we don't have...
- Or we have to move to a place we are not so we can find something that isn't currently available to us.
- But that's not how SATISFACTION WORKS...finding the value in what you already have is the definition of satisfaction.

Listen to Paul's words after he'd been through the some tough situations and circumstances:

### Philippians 4:11-12

**<sup>11</sup> Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup> I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.**

PAUL LEARNED WHAT ALI HAFED HAD NOT...AND TO UNDERSTAND THE LANGUAGE AT THE BEGINNING OF RUTH 2 WE NEED TO SEE THIS:

- PAUL IS SAYING THAT WHEREVER THE LORD LEADS ME, WHEREVER HE HAPPENS TO DIRECT MY LIFE...
- IF I CAN REMEMBER THAT HE IS THE ONE WHO HAS ME THERE THEN I'M MUCH MORE LIKELY TO BE ABLE TO FIND CONTENTMENT IN LESS-THAN-IDEAL CIRCUMSTANCES!

### Psalm 37:23

**The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way.**

### Ephesians 2:10

**10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**

LOOK:

- **PAUL SAYS IN EPHESIANS THAT GOD HAS LAID OUT PATHWAYS TO BE WALKED BY THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN RAISED TO NEW LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS**
- **THE PSALMIST SAYS IN CHAPTER 37 THAT THOSE WHO ARE DELIGHTING THEMSELVES IN THE LORD FINND OUT THAT THEIR STEPS ARE ORDERED, DIRECTED, INTENTIONALLY ALIGNED FOR THEM BY GOD**

**So when we get back to Paul we see...he's just walking by faith that as he has been redeemed by God and as he is doing his best to delight in the Lord (to live a good and righteous life), wherever he finds himself is NOT a SURPRISE TO GOD.**

- **So he trusts that whether he's in a place where there's somewhere to sleep or nowhere to sleep...**

- He trusts that if he's at a table full of food or a table full of famine...
- In ALL situations he chooses to believe that his steps are actually ordered,

For us, along with Paul and Ruth, the issue is NOT finding another place to be but instead it is looking closer at where I am in order to understand why the Lord might have led me here in the first place.

## WHAT IF WHERE YOU ARE ISN'T WHERE YOU THINK IT IS?

### II. Why Are You Here...Not Here, But Right Here?

#### A. The Question that We Frequently Ask is, "Why Am I Here?"

1. we don't always say this out loud
2. we often phrase it differently
  - a) why is this happening to me?
  - b) what else could go wrong?
  - c) how long is this season going to take?

THESE ARE THE QUESTIONS THAT REVEAL THE DEEPER QUESTION "WHY AM I HERE?"

BECAUSE WE'RE NOT REALLY ASKING "WHY AM I ON EARTH, OR WHY DO I EXIST?" – THAT'S A HIGHER LEVEL PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL QUESTION...

- we have a lot of churchy answers about why we are here: to worship and glorify God, to love each other, to witness and introduce people to Jesus, etc...
- but those answers don't exactly help us when life is confusing, or when we go through struggles and difficulties, when our families are threatening to fall apart or our bodies are experiencing problems, etc...

BUT THE POWER OF THE QUESTION "WHY AM I HERE?" IS PROBABLY BETTER STATED BY MOST OF US IF WE ASKED, "WHY AM I RIGHT HERE?"

- not "why do I exist?"
- but, "why am I in this particular place?"
- Lord why have you led me to this?
  - o Why am I in this PARTICULAR job?
  - o Why am I in this PARTICULAR marriage?
  - o ... PARTICULAR home?
  - o ... PARTICULAR relationship?
  - o ... PARTICULAR physical condition?
  - o ... PARTICULAR church?

A lot of us know why we're "here" (to love God, to be a worshipper, etc...)...I know why I'm here God, but why am I RIGHT here?

#### B. A Text to Change our Tone

1. Understanding the tone with which we speak goes a long way to helping us understand what we are ACTUALLY saying.

When a 16 year old finally passes their driving test, their friends and family will ask, "Let me see your license." When that same 16 year old passes the speed limit 2 week later, another person will ask, "Let me see your license."

Same question. Very different tone. Right?

- God asked, “Adam where are you?”
- God wasn’t asking with an inquisitive tone like He’d somehow lost Adam, He was asking with a Fatherly tone because Adam had lost himself.

SOMETIMES **THE WAY THAT WE ASK GOD QUESTIONS, OUR TONE, REVEALS MORE ABOUT US THAN THE QUESTION ITSELF.**

- It reveals something about us
- It reveals something about our understanding of who God is

**So asking God, “why am I here?” can either be an inquiry of purpose or an indictment of dissatisfaction.**

- **ACCUSATION:** “God what are You doing to me?” “God, why don’t You love me?”
- **ANTICIPATION:** “God, why do you have me and Ali Hafed and Ruth the Moabite in **THIS** place? Could there be more where you have me than what I’ve seen?”
  - God, is there something in this marriage that You knew I needed to be a part of?
  - God is there something at this church, in this job, with this diagnosis, at this time that You knew was hiding acres of value and worth?
  - God am I a puzzle piece in **THIS** situation that helps reveal the fullness of what You are doing?
  - What have I not seen yet?

RUTH FINDS OUT THAT SHE’S NOT JUST IN A FOREIGN LAND, IN A RANDOM FIELD, BUT SHE FINDS OUT THAT SHE’S IN THE MIDDLE OF A SOVEREIGN SET-UP...AND **THIS PARTICULAR FIELD, AND THIS PARTICULAR LAND OWNER, AND THIS PARTICULAR TIME PERIOD** ARE GOING TO REVEAL MORE THAN SHE EVER COULD HAVE IMAGINED!

**WE NEED TO BECOME THE KIND OF PEOPLE WHO KNOW GOD WELL ENOUGH TO LOOK AT THE PLACE WHERE WE ARE WITH FAITHFUL ANTICIPATION – SO WE’RE ASKING THE QUESTION OUT OF A GENUINE SENSE OF EXPLORATION INSTEAD OF ASKING AS A PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE STATEMENT OF IRRITATION TOWARD OUR FATHER.**

- **What if we stopped complaining to God about where He’s led us...**
- **And instead began asking the question, “God help me to see the diamonds that I have not yet seen in the place where You have brought me to.”**

2. **What is happening in our text (Ruth 2:1-16) is not going to change our question, but change our tone**

- a) It is easy to ask, “Why am I **RIGHT** here?” with a sullen, weary and hopeless voice.
- b) But what is revealed in Ruth 2 **HAS THE POWER** to cause us to ask the **SAME** question with a tone of hope, of expectation, of faith, and even with a little bit of excitement!

WHAT RUTH 2 IS GOING TO TELL US IS THIS: IN THE PLACE WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW, THERE IS A VALUE ALREADY PRESENT THAT YOU CANNOT FATHOM.

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO LEAVE THE PLACE WHERE GOD HAS LED YOU TO IN ORDER TO FIND THE RICHES OF GOD’S REDEMPTION, YOU NEED TO LOOK WITH EYES OF FAITH AND EXPECTATION.

**THREE THINGS IN THE TEXT HELP US TO BELIEVE THAT THE GROUND ON WHICH YOU ARE STANDING (RIGHT HERE) IS MORE VALUABLE THAN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS.**

### III. Three Things To Know About Where You Are Right Now

#### A. You Aren't Here By Accident (Ruth 2:2-3)

1. Ruth sets off to go to work under a Hebrew law in Leviticus 19 that gave a RIGHT to the impoverished to glean

#### **Leviticus 19:9-10**

9 "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. 10 And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God.

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God built into the very fabric and structure of the economy of Israel the idea that you don't take everything that is "yours," you leave a certain amount for those who do not have anything.

- The reason Ruth and Naomi will be able to eat that day is based on God's provision for those who do not have.
- God does not leave people without.
- The example of Jesus clearly upholds this command of God – Jesus cares deeply for those on the margins, for those who have not, for those whose lives, bodies or status had left them in impoverished places (either poor in spirit, mind or health).
  - He touches the leper
  - He calls the blind to himself
  - He feeds the hungry on the hillside
  - He treats the outcast with the same love as the insider
  - He EVEN touches the dead!!! If there has ever been an outsider it's them!
- a) So, Ruth sets out that morning to find a place to glean so she and Naomi won't starve to death
  - (1) Naomi isn't planning on doing anything
  - (2) Naomi did her time in the fields of Moab
  - (3) So this bitter and empty woman says, "you can go work if you want to...but I came back to starve..."

**How beautiful that the cloud of emptiness and depression will not keep Naomi from eating dinner than night?**

**Because God has brought a way for Naomi to be connected to the provision she needs, even when she isn't able to do it herself, God hasn't forgotten her.**

**Ruth in the fields and the Christ who touched the leper, the lame and the dead children of Israel reminds us that God has not brought us to a place where there isn't hope, where there isn't provision and where there isn't a future – no matter what.**

- b) Ruth 2:2 tells us that Ruth is simply trying to find somewhere to glean where she will find "favor", she is a Moabite girl in the wrong country - she's just trying to find a place where she won't be harassed or killed.

Don't let the end of this story (Boaz and Ruth marrying and having a baby, etc...) change what this moment actually was!!

**RUTH DIDN'T SET OUT TO FIND A HUSBAND, SHE SET OUT TO FIND DINNER!  
SHE WASN'T LOOKING FOR A MAN TO FULFILL HER ROMANTIC NEEDS, SHE WAS  
LOOKING FOR SOME GRAIN TO TAKE CARE OF HER GROWLING STOMACH!**

**2. But the author starts to play with words here:**

- a) this is an intentionally used, literary tool
- b) there is nothing random about where Ruth winds up...it is far too beneficial, and the writer wants us to pay attention to this fact - so the word "happened" is used.
  - (1) this is the Hebrew word *qarah* - which does mean to "chance to be present" and to "happen to meet"
  - (2) But *qarah* also has an interesting other meaning from usage: "to build with beams" - it is speaking about the laying of beams onto one another in the process of building
  - (3) The old lexicon actually says it this way: "to make the beams meet one another"

This isn't speaking about random sticks falling on each other, or trees collapsing in a pile during a storm...NO, THIS WORD THE AUTHOR USES SUGGESTS THAT THE HAPPENSTANCE, OR SENSE OF RANDOMNESS IS A ONE-SIDED THING - **THE BEAMS MIGHT NOT KNOW WHY THEY ARE PUT TOGETHER, BUT THE ARCHITECT WHO IS ARRANGING THEM CERTAINLY DOES!**

Ruth has no idea, but will soon find out, that the field she "happened" to walk into just "happens" to belong to a man of great resources who also just "happens" to be a member of her mother-in-law's tribe, and he "happens" to be single and looking, and the whole situation just "happens" to be shaping up in a way that might seem to suggest that none of this is actually JUST HAPPENING, but maybe it is being directed by the hands of One who loves everyone involved and has a plan for their life...maybe?

**WHEREVER YOUR LIFE HAPPENS TO BE HAPPENING, IT IS NOT HAPPENSTANCE...IT IS THE PROVIDENCE OF YOUR REDEEMER'S WORK IN YOUR LIFE.**

**WHERE GOD LEADS US IS THE PLACE WHERE WE EXPERIENCE AND ENCOUNTER REDEMPTION - BEFORE WE KNOW IT'S HIM, IT'S ALWAYS HIM!!!**

**SO, WHAT CAN CHANGE YOUR TONE?**

**TO KNOW THAT WHERE YOU ARE IS WHERE YOU HAVE BEEN LED BY THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE ON PURPOSE!**

- BECAUSE IF PROVIDENCE LED YOU THERE, THERE'S PROVISION THERE
- IF PROVIDENCE LED YOU THERE, THERE'S ABUNDANCE THERE
- IF PROVIDENCE LED YOU THERE, THERE'S MORE THERE THAN YOU THINK!