

Series: **Ruth**

Today's Title: "**God's Blessing and Hard Work**"

January 28, 2024 – *Ruth 2*

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**Objective:** To help people know the goodness of God and to repent and embrace God and His blessings.

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***Sanctity of Life Sunday*** was last Sunday.

We had this flyer in the bulletin to draw your attention to this, but we had multiple elements in our service last week and didn't have time to speak to this issue.

***But I'm taking the time today.***

In today's bulletin you'll find a short announcement which we hope will be informative about what is happening in our state. Use the QR code for more information.

There are pro-abortion groups who are gathering signatures on petitions to get an amendment to the AZ constitution on this November's ballot – to expand abortion in our state.

You may have encountered people asking you to sign a petition – and they are stating the petition is to protect women – or protect women's rights, etc.

**I want you to know this is a pro-abortion initiative.**

This is an attempt to have more babies killed – in the name of women's rights. Use the QR code on the screen for more information.

Why am I delving into this?

Because the Bible is crystal clear on this issue.

Abortion is a sin – it is the killing of an innocent human life.

In the upcoming **Aliens 3.0** series – which starts on **Feb. 18** – I will preach 2-3 sermons on this issue.

But until then – I wanted to make sure you were aware of this – and to encourage you to **1) Be involved politically** (salt and light) and **2) Be Biblical, not partisan** in your involvement. **3) Don't sign a petition.**

### *Opening prayer*

Historical events around the time of the events in the book of Ruth. (Source: Tim Mann)

- 1263 BC - 1st recorded naval expedition by Jason & Argonauts
- 1200 BC - start of Iron age.
- 1200 – 1150 BC - Account of Ruth based on reference to David
- 1154 BC - King Menelaus of Sparta died.
- 1180-1150 BC - Time of Helen of Troy - Trojan Horse event occurred.
- 1122 BC - smallpox in China
- 1095 BC - David
- 410 years before first Olympiad

It's always fascinating to see how the people we read about in the Bible – and the events in the Bible – relate in time with other historical events and people.

Remember... the Bible is not a collection of made-up stories or fairy tales.

It's a record of history – and a revelation of the one, true God and the truths about God – or theology and doctrine.

When we open the pages of Scripture – we’re opening up a history book – especially when we read narrative passages – like the one we’re studying right now.

**Turn to Ruth 2** – *p. 222*

Last week we looked at **Ruth 1** – and the difficulty the family experienced through the famine in Israel, specifically Bethlehem.

Then we read of the disaster they experienced as they sojourned in the country of Moab – the death of Naomi’s husband, Elimelech, followed by the death of her 2 sons: Mahlon and Chilion.

Chilion’s widow, a Moabite woman by the name of Orpah – decided to remain in Moab.

But Mahlon’s widow, Ruth, is determined to stay with Naomi – and to leave everything in Moab behind.

Her family – friends – her false god Chemosh, and Ruth repents of her idol worshiping life, and puts her faith in the God of Israel.

In the last verse of **chapter 1**, we read this:

**Ruth 1:22**

“So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.”

Returning at the beginning of the barley harvest was no accident.

God was orchestrating every detail – and their arrival at this time of the year would turn out to be a huge blessing for these 2 ladies – who had no means of provision or income.

Barley and wheat were planted in the Fall, and it ripened in the Spring – with barley maturing and ripening before the wheat.

The barley harvest would start in the month of April.

The wheat harvest would be in May – and in a good year extend into June.

*“Barley and wheat were planted in the autumn and ripened in spring. Barley matured faster and would be harvested sooner.”*

(Oded Borowski, Agriculture in Iron Age Israel, 1987, page 7 – from: <https://archive.gci.org/articles/harvest-seasons-of-ancient-israel/>)

## **Introduction...** vs. 1

In **vs. 1** the author gives us an overview of what we’ll read about in **chapter 2**.

“Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, *a worthy man* of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.”

It’s like watching a movie – and the opening scene is followed by a flashback to weeks earlier – so that you can understand more of what you just saw in the opening scene.

**vs. 1** is like the opening scene – and the rest will give us the backstory to **vs. 1**.

But... before we move on, we must take note of this guy “Boaz” and the description of him the author gives us.

**ESV** - “...a worthy man”

**NASB** – “a man of great wealth”

**NLT** – “a wealthy and influential man”

**NIV** – “a man of standing”

As you can see, our English translations differ slightly in how they translate these Hebrew words.

Boaz was a man of ‘wealth’, ‘strength’, and social standing.

He was unashamed of his masculinity, and he was a provider and protector.

He was faithful to God – and all indications are that he was a successful businessman, and he was a boss who was kind and respectful to his employees.

When Boaz approached, you knew he was a man of strength and influence.

As we walk through our text today, we’re going to look at it through the 5 conversations that make up the chapter.

Each conversation has a spiritual theme – which I have noted in your notes, and we’ll focus on these themes as we move through the account.

### **Conversation #1: Naomi & Ruth.** vs. 2-3

God’s providential guidance in our life.

**Read vs. 2-3**

Let's first talk about 'gleaning' since this is a foreign idea and activity to us.

Gleaning was a provision in the O.T. Law – the Mosaic Law – to provide a means for the poor to have food.

In the Mosaic Law we read...

**Leviticus 19:9-10** (also: Deuteronomy 24:19-21; Leviticus 23:22)

“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.

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.”

Gathering food through gleaning what was left in a field or vineyard after the harvesters were done would require work and the part of the one who needed help.

***Gleaning was hard work.***

This was not a handout per se.

It was a form of charity, but the needy person would have to roll up their sleeves and work to receive the provision they needed.

Ruth seeks Naomi's permission to go and glean – probably because they are now in Naomi's home country – and hometown – and it's likely Ruth wants to make sure she's not breaking any social taboos or cultural norms in doing this.

**vs. 3** - The sovereignty of God directs Ruth to glean in Boaz's field.

“and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech.”

[God's leading in my life – how He led me into the ministry – when I never had any interest in the ministry.]

**Proverbs 16:9**

“The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.”

## **Conversation #2: Boaz & his worker.** vs. 4-7

The blessing of work.

Do you realize work is a blessing from God?

In the Garden of Eden – before the Fall – before sin entered the race – God commissioned Adam to work!

We are created for work – for purpose.

**Read vs. 4-7**

**vs. 4** – Boaz arrives at his field – probably 1 of the fields he owns – and greets them. You get the sense that he respects his workers – and they respect him.

**vs. 5** – “Whose young woman is this?” – Tone of voice???

**vs. 6-7** – The foreman brings Boaz up to speed – and informs him that this is the “young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.”

He then tells of her seeking permission to glean – which was not required by the O.T. Law, and of her hard work – with only 1 short break.

There is no victimhood here.

No sense of *“I deserve something... I deserve what you have.”*

To a guy like Boaz, this woman’s politeness and her work ethic is impressive.

But as we’ll see in a moment, he already knows a lot about Ruth – even though this is the first time he’s seen her.

### **Conversation #3: Boaz & Ruth.** vs. 8-14

Seeking spiritual refuge in God’s goodness and protection.

It’s easy to be impressed with Ruth’s work ethic – and we should be.

It’s easy to be impressed with her politeness and her general attitude that is humble and unassuming.

She doesn’t expect people to serve her.

She’s willing to serve – and to work hard to receive / earn a benefit.

But if we focused on those things – we would miss the most important thing about Ruth.

### **Read vs. 8-14**

The most impressive thing about Ruth is her repentance.



Her change.

She left her old way of life – left Moab – her family, friends, her false god.

She left everything she ever knew – because she realized it was all wrong – false.

She realized there was a true God – and she had been worshiping false gods.

**vs. 12 – “The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, *under whose wings you have come to take refuge!*”**

Boaz cut to the heart of the issue.

Ruth’s spiritual commitment to the God of Israel.

Boaz knew all the other wonderful things Ruth had done after the death of her husband.

He knew how she had committed everything to Naomi – to stay with her.

But he also knew her commitment went far beyond Naomi.

She had committed herself to God – to His people – His nation.

### ***What about you?***

- What are you committed to?
- Who are you committed to?
- Are you committed to things in this life – without regard for the Lord and eternal things?

Jesus loves you – He has given Himself for you.

As Jesus approached Jerusalem – on what we celebrate as Palm Sunday – and in **Luke's** gospel, he tells us that Jesus wept as He approached the city.

**Matthew** tells us what Jesus said.

**Matthew 23:37**

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!

**Psalm 91:4**

“He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and buckler.”

Jesus wept – because for years, the people had rejected the Lord and actively fought against His prophets – even killing some of them!

All God wanted to do was to bring them close – to bless them and protect them.

But they refused to be ‘gathered’ under the wings of God.

In response to Boaz’s kindness and insight, Ruth is amazed and shocked (in a good way) at his treatment of her and the respect he is giving her – a foreigner.

According to the social norms of the day - she realizes he is treating her with extraordinary kindness and grace.

A bit later (vs. 14) “at mealtime” (lunch?) – Boaz invites her to join him and his workers.

He offers her food: roasted barley – bread – and dipping sauce!!!

***She ate until she was full.***

It's not detailed in the text, but you get the sense that eating until she was full was not something she was able to do in her and Naomi's current situation.

**A full belly.**

Do we realize what a blessing this is – to eat until you're full?

How uncommon that is in many parts of the world – and throughout much of human history – the ability and blessing to eat until you're full?

Even to the point of having leftovers? (14b – “she had some left over.”)

Well... Boaz gives her a 'to-go box' for her leftovers – which we'll read about in a bit.

*This is a real sweet passage.*

What kindness – grace – provision – blessing.

Ruth is experiencing the incredible blessing of God – through the kindness and goodness which Boaz shows her.

She has sought refuge under the wings of God – and He has provided more than refuge or shelter.

He has provided ample blessing to her – in so many ways!

This is what God loves to do.

He loves to bless you! He loves to pour out His love to you.

Will you seek Him – seek refuge in Him??

**Conversation #4: Boaz & his worker.** vs. 15-16

Generosity toward those in need.

**Read vs. 15-16**

His grace and generosity continue after lunch.

Boaz is going far beyond what the O.T. Law required.

He is telling his workers to be extra generous to Ruth – to provide her more than just the gleaning harvest.

He instructs his workers to treat her kindly.

“...do not rebuke her.”

**Conversation #5: Naomi & Ruth.** vs. 17-23

God’s multiple blessing in difficulty.

Ruth continued to work hard – “until evening.”

Then she goes ‘home’ to Naomi.

**Read vs. 17-23**

vs. 17 – “an ephah of barley” would weigh about 20-25 lbs.

This was a huge amount of barley grain to gather from gleaning.

Naomi is in shock – this is not normal for gleaning!!

Boaz even told Ruth to continue gleaning in his fields – with his young women (other workers) not only to protect her from assault, harassment, or rape – but to continue providing for her and Naomi – through the end of the wheat harvest!!

*As Ruth tells her of the day – it gets even better.*

Back in **chapter 1**, Naomi was filled with bitterness. In the midst of her heartbreak over the death of her husband and both of her sons, she had convinced herself that God’s hand was against her.

Maybe it was due to guilt in her own heart for choosing Moab over Israel.

We can only speculate what might have driven Naomi to such bitterness – even to the point of wanting to change her name.

**But God was not against her.**

In fact, the entire time – God was with her – providentially guiding her along a path of His choosing – a path that would lead to personal blessing – but also salvation blessing for the entire world!

Naomi immediately recognizes that Boaz is one of Elimelech’s close relatives.

We’ll get into this more next week – but under the O.T. Law, Boaz was obligated to take Naomi and Ruth into

his home – to provide for them – as a way to extend the family name of Elimelech and Mahlon.

***Apply it...***

Have faith that God is working.

No matter what you're going through – God is at work.

You can take comfort that He is in control.

You can be confident in the future – because He has a plan.

He loves you and has not abandoned you.

Are you stuck in **chapter 1**?

Are you experiencing pain – loss – difficulty – disaster in your life?

Are you becoming bitter toward God – toward others?

God wants you to turn the page – and with all intentionality – move to **chapter 2**... Live in **chapter 2**!!

It may not make sense...but repent... turn your back on Moab – and go back to Israel.

In **chapter 2** you find blessing.

You discover God is on your side – providing not only physical, but also spiritual blessings to you.

**Turn the page to chapter 2.**

Work hard.

Be humble.

Receive help when it's offered.

Rejoice in God's blessing and kindness.

Follow Jesus – put your faith in Him for the forgiveness of your sins...

And have faith in His provision for your life – His guidance for your life – His promises to you to never leave you or forsake you.

Come and rest in the goodness of God – the mercy and grace of Jesus.

*Close in prayer*