

Last week we began our study in Ruth and saw that, like her, we must choose the right priorities, the right place, the right people and the right provider.

As we continue through this story we are left with a ray of hope at each point along the way. God is a God of grace. Even in the midst of struggle and trial, we do not struggle alone but God is with us, leading us home just as He was leading Ruth and Naomi home.

Ruth 1:²² *So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.*

God is a God of perfect timing. You might remember that Bethlehem translates as ‘house of bread’ and they have arrived at the “House of Bread” right when the grain was being harvested. The Lord is working through these circumstances for His glory and for Ruth and Naomi’s good.

In this reading we see a glimmer of hope for this family, and we also see a glimmer of hope for the human race. In Boaz we see a type, a picture, of Christ. We have pictured for us in the story the redemption that Jesus would accomplish for His people. Boaz will prove to be a kinsman redeemer for Ruth and Jesus is our redeemer. We were just as hopeless and destitute as Naomi and Ruth. We are from a cursed race of people, we were foreigners, we had nothing to hope in except the Lord. Ephesians 2:¹² *remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.* ¹³ *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

The Lord has lavished His love upon us, the excluded and the foreigner. He has worked out all the details.

1. The Lord is in All the Details

This is where we get introduced to Boaz. When the writer says that he was *a worthy man*, he means a man of character and valour. Boaz was highly respected in the community. He was very wealthy and at the same time very generous. Boaz took care of his workers and saw to it that justice prevailed.

Another important point to make about Boaz was that he was *of the clan of Elimelech*. There is where the ray of hope comes from. When everything looks hopeless we catch another glimpse of grace. Naomi knew that there were relatives but the story is written in a way that suggests she wasn’t too keen on her nearest folks. It was part of God’s provision for a widow that, if she was left without a son, she was to be cared for by her husband’s brother, who would take her as his wife. If you want to read more about that it’s in Deuteronomy 25 and Leviticus 25. They were to even have children so the family name would

continue. If land was sold because the family were in crisis, it was to be bought back by family members. These acts were to be voluntary by the next of kin. However, to failure to redeem a widow or an orphan brought great shame on the person who would not play their part.

Into this situation that Naomi and Ruth face steps Boaz. In this time in Israel when people are doing whatever they want Boaz is obviously respected by his workers. We see that in the way they greet him.

It's one thing to be a Christian while we are with other Christians; it's a totally different matter to be a Christian all the time especially while out in the workplace. This is the picture we get of Boaz, he was someone who wanted to do what was right.

Meanwhile back at the ranch...

Ruth and Naomi are still in a bad situation.

Ruth's attitude is much different from that of Naomi's. While Naomi is stewing in her bitterness and self-centeredness, Ruth takes the initiative to go and find food. Ruth 2:2 *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 favour.'*

Verse two is very interesting in its original. It actually says, **And Ruth the unfavorable Moabite said to Naomi.....**

The Message translation says, 'Ruth, the Moabite foreigner... I've already said that it's important to remember the significance of Ruth being an outsider.

There is something equally important to note here though. Boaz has fairly significant ancestry. Can anyone tell me what is significant about him? What about who his mother was?

Rahab was significant because she was the prostitute who hid the Israelite spies when they were preparing to attack the city of Jericho. She told them she had done it because she realised that their God was, 'God in heaven above and earth below.' Because she protected the spies she was, in turn, protected by and then accepted into the people of God.

So here is the son of a woman, a prostitute, and an outsider now in a position of honour within his community. But his mother will have told him what she's seen and how blessed she was by God, and he is now returning that.

So, when Ruth comes along she was hoping to find favour from God. She has no reason to believe that anyone will actually show her favour, but God has all

the details worked out. She ends up in the field of a man who understands what it is to be the outsider

It took real courage, as a foreigner, to go into the fields to glean, particularly at this point in Israel's history.

Gleaning allowed the poor to go in after the harvesters and collect whatever was left over. For a foreigner, especially a female foreigner, to glean all alone was extremely dangerous. As a foreigner and as a widow Ruth has the right to walk into a field and begin to glean, however, she doesn't do things like that. She asks permission to glean.

Ruth 2:3 *As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.*

The writer of the book is using a literary device to show the readers that from Ruth's vantage point there was nothing out of the ordinary going on. If you were to ask Ruth why she was in that particular field she would have had a logical answer. Perhaps this field was the closest to her home. Perhaps it had more grain than the other fields...who knows why from a human standpoint she was there but God had everything planned out in advance. His plan was working perfectly. From God's vantage point she didn't just happen to go to Boaz's field. Not only that, it doesn't sound much like guidance! God often only guides us as we start moving out – Ruth hoped to find favour; she found a safe place in the field or a relative (although she didn't know that) and it was only as she did that that she found favour. Are you waiting for some absolutely clear, 'Paul on the Damascus road' experience before setting out with God? It's ok to look for favour from God, but sometimes you actually have to step out to find it.

2. Boaz Shows Favour

Boaz sees Ruth working in the field and asks who she is. He's told that she is the one who came with Naomi and that she has been working hard all day. Tradition has it that Boaz was a middle aged bachelor, just waiting for the 'right' woman but there is nothing in the story that says anything about his family life.

There is something there though as he tells her he has heard of what she has done for Naomi and that he would like to help her. He goes far beyond what would be expected, allowing her to work with his harvesters, keeping her safe and encouraging her to stay with his workers, rather than going somewhere else.

We need to remember that there was nothing Ruth could do other than trust God. She receives favour from Boaz – it is unmerited grace
He speaks to her kindly
She is invited to eat with him
She has extra left over
Boaz arranges for food in the future
She receives an abundance – enough for her and Naomi. She went home with enough grain to last them several weeks – vastly more than anyone would be expected to glean in one day.

There is nothing we can do to make God love us more. When the Lord shows us mercy and grace, He doesn't just give us a little. God is not a penny-pincher when it comes to showing His people favour. He lavishes it upon us.

Ephesians 1:3 ³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. ⁴ Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. ⁵ God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. ⁶ So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son.^[b] ⁷ He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. ⁸ He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

Naomi explains that Boaz is one of their 'kinsman-redeemers'. This is an important concept through the bible. To redeem means to buy back something, or someone, that had been sold. There is a cost to the one who redeems and it is this that underlies our redemption by Jesus. 1 Peter 1:18-19 ¹⁸ *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.*

All of us, whether we believe it or not, have had our sins paid for by Jesus, but we need to ask him to forgive us. Forgiveness of sin is available to us through faith that Jesus is the Son of God, that he died and rose again. Note that Peter says he was chosen before the creation of the world. It is all part of God's plan from beginning to end.

Ruth 2:12 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.* Boaz recognises that Ruth has come to God for refuge, just as his own mother had done all those years ago, and so he decides to help her. It is an amazing picture of grace in action. It also speaks about how we, as God's people here, welcome the stranger, the poor, the dispossessed. And it's about more than simply getting away from the "you're sitting in my seat" attitude. We need to be generous, patient, encouraging and always show God's love. Just as Boaz was used as an instrument of God, God wants to use us.

Who is it that you could show kindness to and be that instrument of God for them? God supplied Ruth food but it was through the kindness of Boaz that He did it. The Lord can rain manna from heaven when He wants, but most of the time He uses His people to meet needs.

This is not just a story of love between Ruth and Boaz. The whole thing is also a picture of God's love for people. I've said it before, but it's worth repeating – you can't really understand the New Testament without knowing the Old Testament. I said earlier that Boaz is a type of Christ – that was something that was talked about a lot when I was growing up and, while it is possible to go to extremes with it, it is important. 'Types' are people or things that help us understand the person and work of Jesus. Adam: through one man sin enters – Christ takes away sin; Abraham, the father of nations – Christ of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named; Moses the shepherd – Jesus the Good Shepherd; Elijah the prophet and Samuel the priest; Jonah spat from the whale after three days – Jesus rose from the dead; the covering of the tabernacle coloured red – cleansing from sin required a blood sacrifice; the scape-goat had all of the sins of Israel placed on it and it was taken into the wilderness and left to wander, Jesus had the sin of the whole world placed on him. The OT is full of little pictures of Jesus and the story of Ruth points out that we are loved by God and receive his unmerited grace.

Romans 3:24 *Yet God, in his **grace**, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.*

Romans 5:17 *For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful **grace** and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.*

1 Tim 1:14 *The **grace** of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

2 Tim 1:9 *For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his **grace** through Christ Jesus.*