

The Hand of God Ruth 2

INTRODUCTION

Last week we focused on the parallels between Ruth in the book of Ruth and Mary in the Christmas story. **We stated that Christmas is the story of a young woman who made a radical commitment of faith to God and then journeyed to Bethlehem where she gave birth to a child who would change the world. Likewise, the book of Ruth is the story of a young woman who made a radical commitment of faith to God and then journeyed to Bethlehem where she gave birth to a child whose descendant would be the Child that changed the world.**

Last week we focused on the women. This week we focus on the men. Why? **The book of Ruth and the Christmas story are not only the story of a young woman who made a radical commitment of faith. It is also includes a righteous man who offered kindness, protection and provision to a young woman in her time of need.**

Before we dig into chapter 2, here's my sermon **summary**:

Ruth 2 tells the story of a _____ man who offered kindness, protection and provision to a young _____ in her time of _____. When facing _____, we, too, can _____ the Lord's _____ and _____ on the _____ His people.

I. "It just so happened...": enter _____ (2:1-3)

It seems somewhat strange that the author of Ruth tells us about Boaz, but then the story returns to Ruth. We are told Boaz was wealthy and influential, and a relative of Naomi's husband, Elimelech, but that's it. The writer is simply setting the stage for all that will come in the later scenes of the story.

Modern farming practices focus a great deal on efficiency and maximizing your yields and returns. We have expensive machinery that cuts the crops and separates the grain out, doing our best not to lose a single kernel. In Ruth's day, the harvesting was done by hand. Human beings often lack the precision and consistency of machinery, which meant that sometimes they would miss a plant, or they would drop a stalk or two while they were collecting everything. **Ruth was asking to go out into the fields and collect the things the harvesters had missed or left behind, so she could bring them home.** This would have been hard work that would probably not yield a lot of grain, but it was a way for poor people to provide food for themselves

Notice that instead of simply wallowing in self-pity, lamenting that God had abandoned them, Ruth took it upon herself to do what she could to provide for her and her mother-in-law. Naomi gave her blessing, and Ruth headed out to the field.

II. Boaz _____ Ruth (2:4-13)

Again, the writer intends us to see his tongue-in-cheek description of what happened. Not only did Ruth just so happen to find herself working in a field that belonged to a relative, but this rich and powerful man, who presumably owned many fields and had many workers just so happened to visit the field in which Ruth was working on the first day she went out to work. **He wants us to see that though none of this was planned by Ruth, Naomi, or Boaz, it was planned by God.**

Despite the army of harvesters in his field, Boaz noticed Ruth. This rich and powerful man noticed the poor woman gleaning in his fields and took the time to ask about her.

Boaz did not see Ruth as a foreigner any longer. Yes, she was from Moab, and she had probably been a pagan before. But she had declared that Naomi's God would become her God. Boaz reinforced that idea and said that since she had come to the Lord, the God of Israel, the Lord would take care of her. **It was an astounding statement and promise.**

III. A _____ point: the _____ of God at work (2:14-23)

A. Through the _____ of Boaz (2:14-18)

B. Through the _____ spoken by Naomi (2:19-23)

This section of the story ends with Naomi telling Ruth she should continue to work in Boaz's fields because she would be safe there. We learn that she worked through the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. She likely spent around 3 months harvesting in Boaz's fields. If she continued to come home with similar quantities of food, she would have collected more than enough to feed them for the next year.

The last statement of chapter two sets the scene for what will come in the final chapters. The writer reminds us that Ruth continued to live with Naomi. You might have been tempted to think Ruth and Boaz would end up together, but the writer says that for the immediate future, nothing happened on that front, but God continued to provide for Ruth and Naomi. And they were grateful for His hand upon them.

CONCLUSION

What can we take with us this morning?

- **Appreciate the impact _____ has on others.**

Everything about this passage is intended to encourage us to hold on to the Lord and live out our faith. There's instruction for us in the hard times, in the good times, and everywhere in between. The overarching message is this: God is faithful, so let's live like we believe it!

- **Faith is not an _____ for laziness.**

Trusting God doesn't mean doing nothing, it means trusting that He can use our meager efforts to accomplish His purposes.

- **God is _____, even when we can't _____ Him!**

From a human perspective, Ruth simply picked a field at random and happened to encounter a man who was overwhelmingly kind to her. This is a reminder that we don't see the whole picture. God does. **All throughout the book of Ruth we see the Lord's hand guiding and orchestrating events to bring about His good purposes.** In the times when it feels like your story isn't good, remember that it's not over. Keep holding on. Just because you can't see God working doesn't mean He isn't!

God is at work in the worst of times, laying the foundation for greater things to come, even when we can't see it. He was preparing the way for the Messiah through the dark days of the judges. **God works through ordinary people like Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz during tough times and continues to work today when things seem darkest. Our hope is in God's active care and providence, knowing He provides exactly what we need and guides history to its ultimate end and we get to be part of it.**

The book of Ruth is the story of a righteous man who offered kindness, protection and provision to a young woman in her time of need. And the Christmas story is also the story of a righteous man who offered kindness, protection and provision to a young woman in her time of need.