

[Read the text]

We see the merciful providence of God:

There is a fascinating phrase used here in verse 3: *she [Ruth] happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz.*"

- The providence of God provided for the poor, the widow, and the immigrant. Gleaning was a part of God's economy and His way of taking care of people.
- The language of the text draws special attention to Ruth's chance arrival the field owned by this Boaz.
- But was it chance? What is by luck that Ruth ended up in this field? What is fate or destiny that led Ruth to this field?
 - This is what the worldly culture will teach us. It says to us that things happen by chance and that some people are just luckier or more fortunate than others. It tells us that fate or destiny brings people together.
 - Luck presumes a universe without God. With luck, the universe operates on blind chance. We then buy into the idea that smart enough or quick enough or pretty enough or if we do the right things then we can swing luck in our favor. It is our own way of talking about a works based righteousness.
- Instead, it wasn't chance at all. It was the merciful hand of God. Thus, this language does not intend for us to see God as removed from this, but rather all over this. It's as if God is screaming... "don't you see, I've been doing this all along." I sent the famine. I visited my people. I brought you back to Bethlehem "at the start of the barley harvest. That same hand that had done all of that has now led Ruth to the field of Boaz.
- Proverbs 16:9- "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps."

We see the gracious provision of God (8-13)

Verses 8-9 show us that all of the resources of Boaz begin to work in the favor of Ruth. First, what are we told about Boaz in this chapter?

- Verse 1 tells us that he was a noble man and a man of wealth. This establishes for us the means of Boaz.
- Verse 4 tells us that Boaz was a man of God. He prays a blessing on his servants which was indicative of his character. Even there, we are beginning to see the type of person that Boaz is.

In that vein, Boaz notices Ruth and shows her great kindness, **even though she is a foreigner**. He provides food by telling her to work in the midst of the field. He provides protection by telling the young men not to assault her. And he provides for her thirst by allowing her to drink from the water collected by the men.

Verses 10-13 brings an extremely important conversation between these two. In this text, Ruth humbles herself and asks a pivotal question: *Why have I found favor in your eyes?* This is the pivotal question, not only for Ruth, but for all of us. Why do any of us find favor?

- The word used for favor is also used for the word "grace" in the Old Testament.
- Ruth acknowledges all the reasons why Boaz shouldn't show her this kind of treatment.

- She is a Moabite... a statement that is continually used throughout to describe her. The author wants us to remember that Ruth was a foreigner here. This automatically makes her unworthy of this kind of treatment by Boaz. Thus, Ruth doesn't expect this kind of kindness. She actually expects the opposite.
- This is quite different from most of our attitudes of today. We expect kindness and are usually astonished if we don't get our "rights". We forget our unworthiness because we feel entitled to the kindness of God.

But why? Why does Boaz treat her this way? Well, verses 11-12 tell us more.

- You left your home: This would be reminiscent of God's call to Abram in Genesis 12. Will you leave everything and follow me? What human refuge do you need that can provide more for you than God can? Ruth had demonstrated that she trusted "Naomi's God" more than she trusted her own family, her own people, or their gods.
- You found shelter under the wings of God: Boaz here uses an image that was common through the Ancient Near East. It's the picture of God as the mother bird offering her wings of protection to the defenseless young. God is taking care of Ruth and using Boaz to do that BECAUSE she has sought refuge in Him. She has proven that there is no other human refuge in whom she can trust.
- You have shown kindness to Naomi: What Ruth had done for Naomi had travelled fast. Her kindness to Naomi was proof that she had taken this refuge. She was committed to her because she was committed to her God.
- So the message of the Gospel is clear: God will have mercy on anyone (Palestinian or Israelite or American) or anyone who takes refuge under the wings of God.
 - God is looking for those who those who will take refuge under His wings. Those who will leave father and mother and homeland and all human refuge and declare boldly and unequivocally that he is their life and shelter.

God's gracious provision overflows to Naomi:

- Verse 14 tells us: "[Ruth ate until she was satisfied and she had some left over." That is the graciousness of Boaz toward Ruth and the graciousness of God toward us. He gives us until we are satisfied... and then there is some left over.
 - There is a little verse in James 4:6 that says: "He gives more grace..." More grace than we deserve. More grace that we can fathom. More grace than we could ever repay. He gives more grace.
- Ruth then continues to work until sundown and she returns home and she feeds Naomi of the food. She has taken care of her mother-in-law.
- Naomi sees the other side of the sovereignty of God. Chapter one gave us multiple instances where Naomi saw the strong hand of God against her. While she didn't see her own culpability in the matter, she was correct that God had orchestrated these events in her life.
- Now, she recognizes that the Lord's kindness has been extended to them.
- Notice Naomi's statement in 1:21: "I went away full and the Lord has brought me back empty..."

- This emptiness opened the door for God to move in the life of Naomi. Her emptiness allowed Ruth to glean in Boaz's field. Her emptiness opens the door for all that will transpire after this.
- We need to reach that place of brokenness, of emptiness so that we can see the work of God manifested in our lives. What are you holding up as a prideful barrier that prevents God from breaking through?
- Romans 8:28 tells us that "all things work together for the good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose." This verse is right in the middle of Paul talking about suffering. That means that whatever you've gone through, God can use that. God has a plan for your brokenness. He has a plan for your emptiness. He has a plan for your hurt. What seems like nothing but an obstacle to you, God sees as an opportunity to present His Son to the world.