

Under Yahweh's Wings

Ruth 1:22b – 2:23

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*Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas*

Well, I want you to turn tonight with me to the book of Ruth. I know we have some folks who have been in Awana and in other places over the last few months, and so you haven't been taking the journey along with us, so let me briefly give you a little review about this wonderful book and what we've learned so far.

It's a story about a family. It's a story about a family in the darkest of times. And I began by calling the first section of this book *Act 1 - The Far Country*. It's really described in the first five verses of the book of Ruth. It describes to begin with the desperate circumstances of the nation during the time in which these events unfolded. Notice verse 1, "Now it came about in the days when the judges governed." These were the darkest 300 years of Israel's history. Politically there was no central authority so every man did that which what was right in his own eyes. Religiously, it was a time of gross idolatry and morally it was an unbelievable time of wickedness and those things are illustrated profoundly in the book of Judges.

But verse 1 goes on to say, "... it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land." Just as God, because of the disobedience of His people, brought invading armies from the surrounding areas, He also brought famine because of their rebellion and idolatry. For several years, God withheld the rains that were so crucial for Israel's survival. So the story then is placed in a time when the judges ruled, when the people had sinned against God and were experiencing His punishment, His chastening, a time of famine. In the middle of such times the writer tells us about the disastrous choice of one family.

Verse 1 says, "... And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons." One man, rather than choosing to humble himself in repentance and to trust God to restore the rain and the crops, decided to take matters into his own hands; to uproot his family from the land that God had given him and his ancestors; from his neighbors, from his extended family and ultimately from the worship of God Himself and move to Moab of

all places. Moab a place where the idol Chemosh was the one worshiped, where children were burned in the fire. This is where he decides to move his family.

Verse 2 says the name of the man was Elimelech, which means “my God is King”. It means he came from probably a devout Israelite home. And the name of his wife Naomi, which means *pleasant* and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, which mean “sick” and “pining”. Ephrathites of Bethlehem and Judah. Here is a prominent family in Bethlehem. A family of four, part of the aristocracy of Bethlehem. That’s what that Ephrathites means. And a family with a rich spiritual heritage of devotion to God. But they decide to leave all of that and to move to Moab.

Verse 2 says, “... Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there.” Rather than acknowledging that the famine was God’s punishment for the sin of the nation and repenting personally, Elimelech came up with his own solution. Leave Israel and put your family in the middle of idolatrous Moab. That’s his disastrous choice.

Verses 3 - 5 of chapter 1 detail the divine consequences of his rebellion:

Then Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.
[And] They took for themselves Moabite women *as* wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years.
Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.

Think for a moment about what struck this family within one ten-year period. Within ten years this small family of four experienced a famine in their own country; A sinful decision to move away from their own country to a pagan land of idol worship. Then came the unexpected death of Naomi’s relatively young husband; the marriage of their two boys to women who worship the false god Chemosh; the barrenness of her two daughters-in-law. Both of her sons were married for ten years without children and then came on top of all of that tragedy the death of her two very young sons. Still in the prime of life they died suddenly and unexpectedly.

Now that brought us out of the far country to the second act in this great drama, the journey home. This section is the remarkable story of the repentance and a story of spiritual restoration. The theme of this second half of chapter 1 is this: Yahweh demonstrates Himself to be a Savior by restoring the land from drought and famine to food; by restoring Naomi from sin to repentance, and by converting Ruth from idolatry to salvation. The hero of the second half of the first chapter is not Ruth, it's God. It's God who snatches victory from defeat, who snatches rescue from idol worship, this is God.

Now this act is composed of three scenes. First of all there's the spiritual restoration of God's child. In verses 6 - 14, you have the restoration of Naomi who had obviously been complicit in her husband's sin because after his death shortly after they arrived there, she stays knowing that means her two boys are going to marry idol worshipers. But God brings her to repentance, and she decides to return. He restores her to Himself.

The second scene in this act, is that of the spiritual salvation of God's enemy in verses 15 - 18. This is the conversion of Ruth, a pagan idolatress. One who worshiped the god that called for the sacrifice of infants. And God in an amazing act of grace reaches into this country filled with idol worshipers and draws this woman to Himself; uses even the rebellion of this family as a part of that salvation.

The final scene in act 2 is Naomi's own spiritual perception of what had happened. Her spiritual perception was that she was experiencing God's chastening. Look at verse 21, chapter 1. When she returns to Bethlehem she says, "Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?" She says why do you call me pleasant, that's what her name means. And then she makes two statements that explain why she believes she should be called something entirely different.

First of all, "the Lord has witnessed against me." This is legal language from the courtroom. She is the accused; Yahweh has found her guilty of sin against Him and in light of that sin, notice "the Almighty has afflicted me." Shaddai has inflicted calamity or disaster upon me. The word afflicted is often used, the Hebrew word, to describe the disasters that God sent to fulfill

the curses in the Mosaic covenant. This is the language of divine chastening. Naomi believed on her return to Bethlehem that all she had experienced was the result of the divine chastening in her life. So that's Act 2.

Act 1, *The Far Country*. Act 2, *The Journey Home*. Now tonight we come to the third act in this great drama. And I've called Act 3, *Yahweh's Protection and Provision*. They're back in Bethlehem, Naomi's back in Bethlehem. Ruth now has accompanied her, as a new convert to Yahweh and this chapter unfolds beautifully to illustrate how God cares for His own.

You see, the book of Ruth, provides a personal portrait of the cycle of sin and deliverance that occurred during the period of the judges. The other guys are preaching on Sunday night through the book of Judges, and they've illustrated that the cycle of the judges was one of disobedience, followed by God's judgment, followed by the repentance of the people, followed by God's deliverance and restoration.

That national cycle is repeated in this book, but in the life of one Hebrew family. Tonight we see that fleshed out on a personal level. The final part of that cycle; God's deliverance of Naomi through her newly redeemed daughter-in-law Ruth. Let me read for you just part of this section. I'll begin reading in 1:22.

So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." So she departed and went and gleaned the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

Let's stop there. The point of this section and really the rest of chapter 2, is that through His providence God always cares for those who have come to find refuge in Him. Remember now, Naomi and Ruth are now both genuine worshipers of Yahweh. Naomi has repented and returned to her God, and Ruth has recently been converted from the worship of Chemosh, the Moabite deity, to embrace Yahweh the Living and True God, the God of Israel. In addition to that, both of these women are widows. In addition to that, Ruth is a sojourner in the land of Israel, and she is practically an orphan since she left her parents, you remember, back in Moab.

In this section then we see the heart of God. The heart of God to care for the needy; to care for the disadvantaged. But especially to care for those who belong to Him. He cares for their immediate needs in this chapter, their immediate need for food, frankly, for that very day. But at the same time, God sets in motion a series of circumstances which He planned to care for their long-term needs as well.

Now this third act in the story of Naomi and Ruth consists also of three scenes. Tonight we are just going to make it through the first of these three scenes. The first scene really just sets up the meeting between Boaz and Ruth that begins in verse 4 and following. This first scene demonstrates this: that Yahweh arranges human circumstances to care for His own. He arranges our lives, the circumstances, the details of our lives, to ensure that He cares for those who belong to Him.

Now the last verse of chapter 1 that I read for you is a sort of transition verse between chapter 1 and 2. The first half of the verse summarizes the events of chapter 1. Notice how verse 22 begins, now "Naomi returned and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab." That summarizes what has already transpired.

The second half of that verse sets the time and the place of chapter 2. Now "they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest." So, the following events occur in Bethlehem. You remember, Bethlehem means the house of bread and in the time was the barley harvest. When was that? According to the oldest calendar that's been found in Israel, the Gezer calendar,

barley harvest began in late April or early May. Now this is a crucial detail to the story on several levels. It shows first of all that God had removed the drought from the land.

You remember back in chapter 1, she heard that, notice verse 6, that “the Lord had visited His people in giving them food.” And so they return, and they return during the harvest. There’s, food again. He ended the famine and food would now be easily available for these two recent widows. Because it was the time of the harvest, they would be able to gather enough food to last them through the coming dry season. You know, we’re not used to thinking like this. When we lack food, we make a grocery list, and we go to the grocery store. It doesn’t work like that in an ancient agricultural society. Instead, you have to think during the harvest time, I’ve got to store away enough food to last me to the next harvest time. And so they arrived at a key time in God’s goodness and providence.

The fact that it was harvest time plays another important part of the story, and that is, it provided the remarkable opportunity for Ruth to meet the third key character in this story. He’s introduced to us in 2:1. “Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.”

Now the author of this book here relates four important details about this man. First of all, notice he was a kinsman or a relative of Naomi’s husband. Go over to 4:3. You remember eventually Boaz sits down with the closer relative in the gate to decide who’s going to get the property, and oh by the way, who’s going to have to marry Ruth. And verse 3 says, “he said to the closest relative, ‘Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land [now watch this] which belonged to our brother Elimelech.’”

We don’t know for sure what that means. Typically, the kinsmen redeemer, that’s the issue here, was either an actual brother, could have been an uncle, or could possibly have been a cousin, but a close relative, nonetheless. So, Boaz was not directly related to Naomi, but rather was related to her husband Elimelech, was either his brother, his uncle or his cousin.

Back in 2:1, we are also told that this is a man of great wealth. Now this is a little bit difficult to interpret because this Hebrew expression can mean several different things. It can mean a

valiant warrior. It's used that way for example in Judges 6:12, "The angel of the Lord appeared to ... [Gideon] and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.'" Same expression as here. But since there is no hint in this book of Boaz being a warrior that's probably not what we have.

Secondly, it can mean a man of wealth as it's translated here. This may be what the author has in mind since we're soon going to discover that this man, in fact, is wealthy. He has a large field, he has servants, he has sufficient supplies for himself, for his servants and even to give away.

But this expression can also refer to a person of excellent character. In fact, this same expression translated "a man of wealth" or "a man of great wealth" in verse 1 is used of Ruth, and clearly, she was not a person of great wealth.

Go over to 3:11. "Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you [Boaz says to Ruth] whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are [and here's the female version] a woman of excellence." So, the phrase can speak of a noble or an excellent character.

By the way it's also used that way in Proverbs 31:10, of the virtuous woman, "An excellent wife, [same expression, again in the feminine form] who can find? For her worth is far above jewels." So, I think, probably these last two are both implied.

Boaz was a prominent, wealthy, influential landowner in Bethlehem. He was also probably an Ephrathite just as Elimelech had been. Therefore, he was one of the aristocrats, one of the blue bloods in Bethlehem. But he was at the same time a man of noble and excellent character. Now verse 1 adds a third important detail about this man. He was from the family of Elimelech. The word family is better translated clan. In other words he belonged to the same division of the same Jewish tribe as Naomi's husband. That's going to become very important later in the story.

And finally, we are told that his name was Boaz. There's a lot of discussion in the scholarly literature about the source of this name. What does it mean? We can't be absolutely certain what it means, but many scholars believe it contains the idea of strength, not physical strength so

much as a strength of character, a strength of person. But we do know one other fact about this man when we learn that he is Boaz.

Turn to chapter 4, and notice verse 21, “to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed.” Now on the face of it that doesn’t tell us much, other than the name of Boaz’s father. But now turn with me to the New Testament, to Matthew’s gospel and the genealogy of our Lord and we learn something more about this man.

Matthew 1:5, “Salmon was the father of Boaz ...” we already knew that, but notice what it adds, “... by Rahab.” This is a remarkable thing. Boaz was the son of Salmon. By the way, Salmon may very well have been, and many conjecture that he was one of the spies who first encountered Rahab when they went into the city of Jericho. We can’t be sure of that. But regardless, he was the husband of Rahab, the Canaanite harlot who repented and believed. Rahab was Boaz’s mother, a Canaanite prostitute who came to genuine faith in Christ. You can bet that influenced how he thought about and dealt with Ruth.

Now with that explanation we are ready to go back to Ruth and to see what happens next. Ruth 2:2, “And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, ‘Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain.’”

This is important at this point. I don’t think we really grasp how desperate these two women were. Whatever supplies they had brought with them from Moab have now run out. So Ruth immediately has to begin to think about how they can actually survive, how they can acquire the food they need just to keep on living. And she has a plan. They’ve arrived at the beginning of the barley harvest and so she intends to glean, the word is. That word means to gather the scraps left by those who are harvesting the grain, the barley. In other words, she’s going to come behind the reapers and pick up any ears of grain that the harvesters either left uncut with their manual slings or that they accidentally dropped.

By the way this is what the barley harvest looks like. This is a barley field in Israel, ready for harvesting. Here is a field that the harvesting process is underway. You can see sort of what that

looks like as it's cut down. It's not a neat and tidy process as with modern equipment. And here is what the grains look like of wheat and barley. Barley is the darker grains and the darker bread, wheat the lighter grain, with the lighter bread. You can see that this is what they were hoping to do, to get these grains from the field, from the pieces of grain, the stalks of grain that are dropped or that are accidentally left uncut and then to have the grain to make bread.

Now probably she had learned from Naomi, Ruth had, that the Mosaic law required the landowners to allow gleaners, to allow those who came behind the harvesters to get the scraps. This is stipulated in a number of places. Turn back to Leviticus 19, Leviticus 19:9, “Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. [The person who doesn't belong to Israel.] I am ... [Yahweh] your God.”

Turn over to chapter 23, chapter 23:22, “When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field nor gather the gleanings ... [In other words, don't go back and pick up the scraps.] You are to leave them for the needy and the alien. [The sojourner.] I am Yahweh your God.’ ”

Turn over to Deuteronomy 24:19, “When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf.... [That's a bundle of grain now that you've harvested and tied together. That's a sheaf. You've] ... forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, for the widow, in order that ... [Yahweh] your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.” And this isn't just true for grain. Verse 20, “When you beat your olive tree, [they would beat the olive tree to cause it to shed its fruit] you shall not go over the boughs again; [in other words don't go back saying I want to get every last olive] it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow.”

Same thing is true with the grape harvest.

“When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not go over it again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing.”

Now what do we learn from those verses? God demanded that those harvesting grain deliberately leave the grain in the corners of the field. In addition, they weren't to go back over the field after it had been harvested and pick up the scraps. Moreover, if in the process of all of that, they bound the bundle of grain together in a sheaf, and they accidentally forgot it and left it behind, they weren't to go back and pick it up. Instead, all of these things were to be left as God's way of caring for the poor, the disenfranchised, and the sojourner. You know you can see in this law the compassion of God for those who are needy. The point of these commands for us is crystal clear. God is concerned about the needy, especially among His people and so should we be.

What does Paul say in Galatians 6:10? "... while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially those of the household of faith." That's what God was doing with these laws.

You know the other thing we learn though is God's wisdom in this. We learn how God provided for the needs of the poor, and there's a way other than outright gifts. Those were not the only way to care for the poor, although at times that was appropriate. But another way that God provided for them was by giving them an opportunity to work and provide for themselves. This is what's going on here.

In fact, look back in Ruth, and look at verse 7. Ruth 2:7 "... she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.'" This is a report of the foreman, Boaz's foreman, to Boaz. "Thus she came and has remained from the morning..." She came early in the morning to the harvest fields as the harvest work began.

No go over to verse 17. “So she gleaned in the field until evening. [till dark, and] Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah [of grain] of barley.” Or an ephah of grain. You see Ruth worked from early in the morning until dark and then after dark she beat it out and winnowed it to get the grain. The result of her long day’s work was about 5 ½ gallons of grain. About enough to care for these two women for two weeks.

During the harvest time, you would have grabbed just a few hours of sleep, and then you would have been back up early morning, out in the field again gathering more. Because all you had to eat on the rest of the year is what you gathered during those months of harvest. So, one way that God provided for the poor required their working and their working hard. I think sometimes we lose sight of that in our efforts to help.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:10, Paul says, “... when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.”

So, back to Ruth and back to the story. God had established this provision, the Mosaic law, so that He could care for the poor, and clearly, at this point Ruth and Naomi are dirt poor. In fact, we’re going to learn later in the chapter that they didn’t have food for that day. The only way they had something to eat was what Boaz gave to Ruth at lunch. She carried some home so that Naomi could eat that night.

But don’t miss a key point here. It is an amazing act of God’s providence and an expression of His compassion that these two destitute widows arrived at the beginning of the harvest. Barley was the first crop harvested in Israel so they would be there and could gather through the entire season of harvest so that they would have enough to last them for the year ahead.

Now look at Ruth 2:2. “Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, ‘Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.’”

Why would she say that? I thought it was a law, they had to allow it. Well Ruth was a widow, and she was a sojourner in the land of Israel. So she was qualified to glean from the fields on

both counts. But the fact that she was a foreigner also made it likely that the locals would not be quick to accept her. That was why she had to find someone who would show favor to her.

Although the Mosaic law demanded that she be allowed to glean, greedy landowners found ways around the law. Their reapers would literally reap the field clean so there was nothing for the poor to have, so they would go to another field. Or the workers would leave some things as commanded, but then they would harass anyone who came to glean so that they could push them on to another field so that the landowner could keep the rest. Sometimes the owners would simply forbid gleaning altogether. Ruth's situation was worse because she was not only poor, she was not only a widow, but she was a foreigner. So she needed to find a landowner who would show her grace or favor. That was Ruth's plan.

Notice verse 2 says, "And [Naomi] said to her, 'Go, my daughter.'" Naomi agreed that if they were going to survive this plan had to be put in action.

Verse 3, "So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech." Now that's a strange expression: "the portion of the field belonging to Boaz." At that stage in Israel's history, grain fields were often not marked with fences and hedges. But rather, there would be one large field, and each person's section would be marked off with stones. This may be what it means. It may mean literally the portion the larger field marked off as belonging to Boaz. However, it's possible that the writer simply means the field that belonged to Boaz. Now that brings us to the second half of verse 3. And the second half of verse 3 is one of the most important statements in the book of Ruth and one of the most remarkable statements in all of the Scripture. Look at it. "... and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech."

Now you don't pick up all that's there in English. In the Hebrew text the statement is intentionally charged with great irony. Here's literally how it reads: "Her chance chanced upon the portion of the field belonging to Boaz." That's literally how the Hebrew text reads. "Her chance chanced upon the portion of the field belonging to Boaz."

Now this is a bit of a confusing thing for us. I mean pagans around Israel often spoke of chance. Here's one example, the Philistines in 1 Samuel 6:9. You remember with the ark they're trying to decide if God had brought the disaster on them or if not. And they said let's watch and see if this cart on which we've put the ark if the cows go by the way their own territory to Bethshemesh, then Yahweh has done "this great evil. But if not, then we will know that it was not His hand that struck us; it happened to us, [what?] by chance." Just by chance. That's how pagans thought.

But the Jewish people didn't think this way. This is not how Jewish people saw the world. In fact, Proverbs 16:33 shows us just how much they saw God involved in the details of our world. They said, "The lot is cast into the lap." This is a Jewish proverb, a common saying. "The lot is cast into the lap, but it's every decision is from the Lord." Every roll of the dice, to use a modern expression, is set by God.

So, why would a Jewish author say, "Her chance chanced upon the portion of the field belonging to Boaz"? It is to highlight exactly the opposite. It is to make a point. It is an intentional method to draw attention to how unimportant and how accidental this event appears, when in fact it carries such huge historic consequences. Daniel Block writes,

This is a deliberate rhetorical device on the part of the narrator by excessively attributing Ruth's good fortune to chance, he forces the reader to sit up and take notice, to ask questions concerning the significance of everything that's happening. The statement is ironical; its purpose is to undermine purely rational explanations and to refine the reader's understanding of providence. "In reality," [listen carefully; Block says,] "In reality, the author is screaming, 'See the hand of God here.' The same hand that had sent the famine and later provided food is the same hand that brought Naomi and Ruth to Bethlehem precisely at the beginning of the harvest and that is the very hand that **is** has now guided Ruth to that portion of the field belonging to Boaz.

It was by God's hand that Ruth comes to the field of a man, not only a man in whose eyes she would find favor, but a man who is related to her dead father-in-law Elimelech. She chanced upon a chance.

This is what theologians call God's providence. What is providence? Well, let me give you a dictionary definition. "It is a careful arrangement prepared beforehand for the accomplishment of predetermined ends." But let me give you a theological definition, this is from Thomas Watson. "It is God's ordering all issues and events of everything after the counsel of His own will, to His own glory."

That's what we're reading in Ruth 2:3. You see in creation God brings everything into existence. But in providence, God preserves everything that He made. We see that in a number of places like Hebrews 1, He upholds all things. Colossians 1, all things consist through Him, are held together. But He also governs everything that He created to insure that all the purposes for which He created them are accomplished. This is God's providence, and it is all inclusive.

Turn with me to Psalm 135. I want you to stay with me because this is coming to a very personal application. Psalm 135:5,

For I know that ... [Yahweh] is great
And that our Lord is above all gods.
Whatever ... [Yahweh] pleases, He does,
In heaven and [whatever He pleases He does] in earth, [and] in the seas and in all
[the] deeps.

Daniel 4:35, has Nebuchadnezzar saying this:

"All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
But ... [the true God] does according to His will in the host of heaven
And *among* the inhabitants of earth;
And no one can ward off His hand

Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’”

And I love Ephesians 1:11, We have been “predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.” This is our God.

So, go back to Ruth. What was God doing in Ruth 2:1 - 3? God was arranging all of the circumstances for the good of these people. For Ruth’s good, for Naomi’s good, for Boaz’s good, for their immediate good. These women needed food that day. But they also needed care for the rest of their lives and God is in the process of looking out for their long-term good as well. At the very same time, listen carefully, at the very same time God is doing that, God was arranging these circumstances to insure what He wanted to happen three generations later when He would keep His promise to Jacob and raise up a king from the tribe of Judah, David the great-grandson of Ruth and Boaz. Leon Morris writes,

This passage points to the truth that men do not control events, but that the hand of God is behind them as He works His purpose out. It was the fact that she came to this field and no other that was to lead to her acquaintance with Boaz and the subsequent marriage with all that involved, including for example the birth of David.

That’s amazing, that’s amazing. But even that wasn’t all that God was doing that day, in that field outside of Bethlehem. Ruth and Boaz, listen carefully, Ruth and Boaz had to meet that day, in that field so that 1,200 years later their greater, their greatest Ancestor could be born, our Lord Jesus Christ. And we can even go one step farther than that. Ruth and Boaz had to meet in that field that day so that more than 3,000 years later He could save you. Because it was from their meeting, in that field that the Messiah came, and He purchased your redemption. In a sense all of human history hung on God’s providentially directing Ruth to that field, that day.

Do you realize, do you understand that it’s no different with you? God in His providence governs everything He created to insure that all the purposes for which He created them are accomplished. Ephesians 1:11, He “works all things after the counsel of His will.” That’s just

not biblical characters; that's you. That's your life; that's your circumstances. There is never truly chance in the life of a believer. God just as intricately arranges the details and circumstances of your life as He did the life of Ruth that day.

We learn here by the way that God's providence isn't simple. You know, when we think about the things that happen in our lives what's the question we ask? Wonder why this is happening? Wonder what God's trying to teach me? What's the one thing God is doing? What's the one lesson God's trying to teach me? Listen, that is way too simplistic of a view of God. Was God doing just one thing that day in that field? Absolutely not. God is so much bigger than that. Our God is always arranging the circumstances of our lives to bring Himself the ultimate glory and to care for those belong to Him, just as He did with Ruth and Naomi.

Listen, I don't know what you are going through right now. I don't know what all the circumstances of your life may be. I don't know what's happening in the lives of those you love, but I can promise you this: God, our God, the One True and Living God is every bit as much involved in those circumstances as He was that day in the field outside of Bethlehem. And He has a purpose; He has a plan. I can promise you that whatever is going on in your life or going on in the life of those you love, you can trust God. He's powerful enough to do what He planned, and He's kind enough to do what's for your good.

Yahweh moves heaven and earth to care for His own. Think of what He did to snatch Ruth from her paganism. Think of what He did to bring Boaz and Ruth together in that field that day. Think of what He did to accomplish your salvation. Listen, God is big enough; He's big enough for you to trust Him.

Let's pray together.

Father, forgive us. Forgive us for thinking so poorly of You. Forgive us for our weak, puny views of You.

Father, thank You that in a remarkable verse buried in a small book in the Old Testament, You have breathed a fresh breath of Your grandeur, Your greatness across our souls. Oh God, we worship You as the God who orders all things after the counsel of Your own will. The God who governs every detail of everything, who moves heaven and earth to care for Your own.

Father, forgive us for not trusting You; forgive us for not trusting You with the details of our lives, for looking at the things that happen to us and questioning and asking why. Oh Father, help us instead to say blessed be Your name.

We pray in Jesus name, Amen.