

**The Book of Ruth**  
**Under Yahweh's Wings (Part 2)**  
**Ruth 1:22b-2:23**  
**September 13, 2015**

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

Well, I have already enjoyed greatly our journey through this little Old Testament book called Ruth. I'm just struck every time I open the pages and study it how much is there that, through all the years I've read it, I have missed. And it's a joy to bring it out to you as we walk our way through what the Lord has to teach us here.

I want us to begin tonight in one verse. Ruth 2:12. It falls in the section that we'll study, and in some ways the expression that occurs in this verse is key to understanding the entire book.

Notice Ruth 2:12. This is Boaz to Ruth: "May [Yahweh] reward your work, and your wages be full from [Yahweh], the God of Israel [Notice this expression.] under whose wings you have come to seek refuge." Under whose wings you have come to seek refuge. It's fascinating here that Ruth and all of us who seek refuge in the true God, the God of the Bible, the God of Israel, we're compared to baby birds that seek refuge, a baby bird that seeks refuge under the wings of its mother.

There are a number of references to this affect in the Old Testament. Regarding the exodus from Egypt, Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 32:11 of God, "Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions." But more personally, throughout the Old Testament this image continues. Psalm 17:8, "Keep me [God] as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of Your wings." Psalm 36:7, "How precious is Your [steadfast love], O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings." Psalm 57:1, "Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, for my soul takes refuge in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until destruction passes by." But that's not all. Psalm 63:7, "... You have been my help, And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy." There's a secure place, a place of protection, in the shadow of the wings of God. Psalm 91:4, "He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge."

And even in the New Testament Jesus our Lord uses this image. In Matthew 23:37, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.” There’s a tenderness, there’s a relationship, there’s a sense of security, there’s a sense of protection that the baby bird feels under the wings of its mother. And that’s the description of God toward those who have taken refuge in Him. It’s that picture.

The way that factors into the Book of Ruth is clear. The point in Ruth 2 is that both of these women have sought refuge in Yahweh under His wings, in His protection. Naomi had repented and returned to her God after the stay in Moab. Ruth the Moabitess, who had worshiped Chemosh the God of Moab, involved in child sacrifice her whole life, she now had believed in Yahweh, Israel’s God. Since these two women had come to believe in Israel’s God, had come to seek shelter, to seek refuge under His wings, Yahweh had assumed full and complete responsibility for their care. So, in chapter 2 the writer shows us the ways that God cares for His own. He cares for those who have sought refuge in Him.

Now just to remind you the flow of this little book, I’ve broken it into a series of acts, as a play. It’s mostly narrative, and so we’re looking at it as a sort of play that unfolds. And in Act 1 I’ve entitled *The Far Country*. This section, beginning in 1:1 - 5, describes *the desperate circumstances of the nation* at that time. It was a dark period, the period of the judges, the darkest in Israel’s history. And there was a desperate famine in the land as well, as a result of God’s chastening on their sin and rebellion.

But in the midst of those desperate circumstances, there was also *the disastrous choice of one family*. We learn about that family early in this book. The family of “Elimelech.” Which means, his name means “my God is king.” Came from a devout family that believed in Yahweh. But when trouble came into the nation, rather than being a part of the repentance and the restoration, he decides to take his family and move to idol worshiping, Chemosh worshiping, Moab, where children were offered in sacrifice to their god. The disastrous choice of one family.

And verses 3 - 5 of chapter 1 describe *the divine consequences of their rebellion*. It’s really a

remarkable story. In ten-years-time—think about where you were ten years ago. In ten-years-time, there was a famine in their country; they made a sinful decision to move away from Israel into a pagan, idolatrous land; then came the unexpected death of Elimelech, Naomi’s young husband; the boys married idolaters, their two boys married Moab women who worshiped the false god, Chemosh. And within those same ten years both of Naomi’s sons were married for that entire period of time, or most of it, without children, barren (likely because of what they may have done with their first-born children); and finally, both of her sons died as well—prematurely and unexpectedly. Truly, disastrous and divine consequences. That’s Act 1, *The Far Country*. That’s what happened when they strayed in rebellion from God.

Act 2 describes *The Journey Home*. Beginning in 1:6 and running through most of the rest of chapter 1, this section details the remarkable story of God. This isn’t about Ruth. This isn’t about Naomi. This is about their God, who demonstrates Himself to be a Savior in various ways. He restores the land of Israel from drought and famine to food. He restores Naomi from sin and rebellion to repentance. And He converts Ruth from idolatry. He snatches her out of the middle of the country of Moab in an act of divine grace and draws her to Himself unto salvation. That’s The Journey Home.

Last time we studied the Book of Ruth together, we began to look at Act 3. Act 3 in this wonderful drama is a story of *Yahweh’s Protection and Provision*. It begins in the middle of verse 22 of chapter 1 and runs all the way through 2:23. Ruth, that is, the Book of Ruth, provides a personal portrait of the cycle of sin and deliverance that occurred to the nation throughout the period of the judges. The cycle was disobedience, followed by God’s judgment, followed by repentance, followed by God’s deliverance. That national cycle is repeated in this book, but it’s repeated in the life of just one Hebrew family, and really, one Hebrew woman, Naomi. In Ruth 2, we see fleshed out on a personal level the final part of that cycle: God’s deliverance of Naomi through her newly redeemed daughter-in-law and through a relative named Boaz. Let me read for you just a portion of this text, and we’ll read the rest as it unfolds. But look at Ruth 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 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.

We looked at this passage last time and considered exactly how it fits into this third act, a story of Yahweh’s protection and provision. We learned that through His providence, God always cares for those who have sought refuge in Him. This third act in the story of Naomi and Ruth consists of three scenes. The first scene sets up the meeting between Boaz and Ruth. And again, we looked at this last time. It is this: *Yahweh arranges human circumstances to care for His own*. He arranges our lives—we sang it together tonight, didn’t we? He weaves together the moments of our lives so all the glory He receives. That’s exactly what He does in these lives. He weaves their circumstances together in order to care for them.

Notice verse 1 of chapter 2. “Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband.” He was a relative of Naomi’s husband. He was “a man of great wealth.” He was a wealthy, influential landowner. And, at the same time, that word hints that he was a man of noble and excellent character. Which, of course, we discover him to be as this little book unfolds. Verse 1 goes on to say, he was of the clan of Elimelech, Naomi’s dead husband. His name was Boaz, which probably means something like “strength.” And as we later discover, remarkably, this man Boaz was the son of Salmon (possibly one of the spies sent into the land, you remember, to spy it out) Salmon and Rahab the Canaanite harlot who repented and believed.

Verse 2 says, “And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, ‘Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain.’” You see, at this point they had exhausted all of their resources. They’ve already liquidated all of their assets. They’ve sold the field that Naomi’s husband

owned. They have nothing. Ruth's plan was simple: let me go behind the harvesters and pick up any ears of grain that they left uncut or that accidentally dropped. She'd probably learned from Naomi that this is prescribed by the Law of Moses, required of faithful Israelites. And so she said let me go do that; it's barley harvest time; at least we'll have food to eat. Naomi agreed. If they we're going to survive that year, this had to be the plan. And so, verse 2, "Naomi said to her, 'Go, my daughter.'"

Verse 3 says, "So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers." And literally, the Hebrew text says this: "Her chance chanced upon the portion of the field belonging to Boaz." I love that. It's supposed to be ironic. It's supposed to say this is anything but chance. Imagine this: she lands on the portion of the field that belongs to a relative, Boaz. So she goes out into the barley crop.

This is what a barley field looks like at harvest time there in Israel. And this is what it looks like once it's been harvested, with bundles lying around the field ready to be picked up, ready to be tied together and picked up and taken to the threshing floor. Here's what the grain looks like. The darker grain is barley. The lighter grain is wheat. And the corresponding breads that they produce.

It's barley harvest. There's a field. There are potential crops that she can gather, and they can survive. And so, she goes. And her chance chanced upon the portion of the field belonging to Boaz. God had arranged all of the circumstances for the good of Ruth and Naomi, and, as we'll discover, Boaz as well. At the same time, (And I noted this for you as we ended last time.) at the same time that He was caring for these three people, these three individuals, He was also ensuring what He wanted to happen three generations later when their great grandson, David, would be born. But Ruth and Boaz also had to meet that day, so that more than 1,200 years later, their greatest ancestor, our Lord Jesus Christ, could be born. It all came from her chance chanced upon the field belonging to Boaz. In other words, Ruth and Boaz had to meet in that field that day, so that 3,000 years later God could save you. When Ruth happened by chance upon that field, it was an act of remarkable, divine providence, because it brought her across the path of a gracious man who was going to care for them, and because he was of the same clan as

Elimelech, Naomi's husband, which becomes a very important part of the rest of the story.

Now tonight we come in the second scene of this act to learn this: not only does Yahweh arrange human circumstances to care for His own (as we've discovered), but Yahweh also uses the obedience and compassion of the righteous, those who belong to Him, to care for others who belong to Him. He brings across their path a remarkable man. In the dark days of the judges, evil was rampant. If you doubt that, read the Book of Judges. Read the last several chapters of the Book of Judges. These were dark times. Righteous people were hard to find. But in order to care for these two women who belonged to Him, who had sought refuge under His wings, God orchestrated their circumstances to bring across their path a righteous man, a righteous man.

Look at verse 4, "Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem." The word "behold" here expresses the writer's amazement, his amazement at what will happen—both the fact of Boaz' arrival and, as we'll see, the remarkable timing of this arrival. "Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, 'May the Lord be with you.'" May Yahweh be with you. Now, use your sanctified imagination here and put yourself back in this time. The harvesting would have started very early that morning, and they would have worked hard through the morning hours. Sometime late morning, Boaz (in whose field Ruth had providentially landed and whose wheat she was gathering) comes out of the city to check on the progress of the reapers. And with his first words we get a glimpse of the kind of man this was. In a day of spiritual darkness, apostasy, idolatry was rampant, Boaz' first words to his employees are "May [Yahweh, the true and living God, may He] be with you" as you work today. Truly a wonderful workplace. And his servants and his day laborers replied to him. Look at verse 4, "They said to him, 'May [Yahweh] bless you.'"

This is a powerful reminder, by the way, that if you work in a secular workplace, as most of you do, be wise, but don't stop being a Christian. Here was a righteous man who believed in Yahweh and whose commitment to the true God permeated his everyday interaction with his employees and with his servants. What a stark contrast he was to his times. It's just a reminder, isn't it, that even in the darkest times God still has a remnant? If you're feeling discouraged about the condition of our country, remember, God has yet "seven thousand ... who have not [yet] bowed the knee to Baal." Don't give up on God. He's able to continue His work in the darkest of

times.

God intended to care for Ruth and Naomi, and so He providentially caused their lives to intersect with that of a righteous man in remarkably, dark times. That interaction occurred through what I would call an ordinary providence. The Puritans used to talk about extraordinary providences, unusual expressions of God's providence. What happens here was just an ordinary providence, but it was no less remarkable.

It's likely that the scope and magnitude of this harvesting operation was massive. Often in the case of wealthy landowners like Boaz, they would employ a hundred, two hundred, reapers and gleaners, reapers and gatherers. Typically, the male workers would come through and cut down the grain, and the female servants would often come behind and gather the wheat together, the barley together, and bundle it. Most of these dozens to hundreds of people would be working and toiling in the field, over that massive field I showed you. But as many as (a certain percentage) ten to twenty of them may be taking a brief break at any point in time, just like in a normal work operation that you'd be familiar with.

It was likely a busy, bustling environment like that that the conversation that takes place next occurred. Notice verse 5, "Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, 'Whose young woman is this?'" Boaz asks his foreman, his supervisor of the harvest, a question. And the question is hard to know exactly what he has in mind. "Whose young woman is this?" He may have meant, whose dependent is she? He recognized that she was in no way connected to him. Whose dependent is she? Or he may have meant, in whose service is she? Assuming since she was connected with his servants who were gathering the harvest, that she was also someone who was employed by someone else, was a servant to someone else. Or he may have meant, whose daughter is she, or whose wife is she, or to which family does she belong? We can't be absolutely sure, but regardless, the key thing is Boaz notices her and knows that she is not part of his household, not part of his servants.

Verse 6, "The servant in charge of the reapers replied, 'She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab.'" Notice that Boaz' supervisor tells him three

things about Ruth that are really important for him to know. First of all, she's a Moabite. She's a foreigner. She's not Israelite. Secondly, she belongs with Naomi. And notice the third thing. She's a young woman; she's a young woman.

That last expression, by the way, "young woman," suggests, as we'll discover later, that Ruth was significantly younger than Boaz. It's ironic, isn't it, that one of the greatest love stories in the Old Testament turns out to be that way? In fact, it's possible that Boaz was a similar age to Ruth's father-in-law, Elimelech. It's possible Boaz was old enough to be Ruth's father. By the way, that explains why in this story there's no hint of Boaz initiating any sort of romantic involvement with Ruth whatsoever. Instead, Ruth must take the initiative, because Boaz would not expect her to have any interest in him because of the significant age difference between them.

Boaz' supervisor reports on the conversation that he'd had with Ruth earlier that morning as the workday began. Verse 7, "And she said [to me], 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.'" Ruth had respectfully asked the foreman if she could follow behind the harvesters once their work was done and scavenge any loose wheat that remained. Verse 7 goes on to say, "Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now." Obviously, the supervisor had given her the permission that she had asked. Now typically, as I mentioned earlier, harvesting started shortly after dawn, so Ruth has been working hard for a number of hours. In fact, as we'll discover in a moment, Boaz comes sometime before noon, sometime before lunch. So, for a number of hours, Ruth has been working very hard.

Can I just say, this is a reminder that the reality of God's providence in caring for us doesn't undermine the call for hard work? Rather, God works through our hard work to accomplish His plan and provide for us. The Apostle Paul says, if someone is not willing to work, he shouldn't eat.

Verse 7, the report of the supervisor to Boaz goes on. "She has been sitting in the house for a little while." That is an extremely difficult expression to translate from Hebrew and to interpret. Literally—let me share it with you as it reads in the Hebrew, "This, her sitting, the house, a little." There you go. Make sense of that. This, her sitting, the house, a little. I think the NAS



has captured the essence here: “[She’s] been sitting in the house for a little while.” It seems most likely that what the supervisor is saying to Boaz is that Ruth had worked in the field with the others all morning. From early morning right after dawn until near lunchtime she had worked hard.

But here’s the remarkable thing. In God’s providence, she happened to take a break for a few minutes in a temporary shelter set up beside the field for the workers, and she happened to take that break, of all the times, when Boaz arrived. And he sees her. In other words, this is one of those ordinary providences that happened routinely in everyday life, and frankly, at the time just don’t seem to matter too much. But in retrospect, all of us can look back and see moments in our own lives when those small moments made all the difference in our lives. That’s one of those moments. The writer’s point (and I love this.), the writer’s point seems to be that Yahweh was involved even in the ordinary providence that caused their two paths to cross that morning.

We turn from that ordinary providence to a believer’s obedience and compassion. We see this in verses 8 – 16, a believer’s obedience and compassion. What follows in the text is the first conversation between Ruth and Boaz. Daniel Block writes, “From the first time Boaz opens his mouth, until the last words he utters at the end of chapter 4, his tone exudes compassion, grace, and generosity.” Notice what he says in verse 8. “Then Boaz said to Ruth....” Having spoken to the supervisor, having learned who she is, (She’s there in the temporary shelter having just taken a break.) when he arrives, he learns who she is, and he goes over to speak to her. He said to Ruth, “Listen carefully, my daughter.” The fact that Boaz referred to her as his daughter once again highlights the age difference between them. That is exactly, by the way, how Naomi referred to Ruth as well, which may mean that Naomi and Boaz are actually of similar age. It also highlights Boaz’ care for her and the sense of responsibility that he feels for her.

I think there’s a great deal of irony in the fact that both the romantic story of Boaz and Ruth, as well as the famous friendship between David and Jonathan, illustrate that relationships don’t have to be based on similar ages. David and Jonathan were likely 30 years apart in age, and here Boaz and Ruth may have been 20-plus years apart as well. Even though she’s an outsider, a Moabitess, notice, Boaz, when he says, “my daughter,” he’s promising to treat her like a loving

father.

Notice what he urges her. Verse 8, “Do not go to glean in another field.” Stay here. Stay in my field. Furthermore, “Do not go on from this one, but stay here [Notice.] with my maids. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap and go after them.” He insisted that for her safety, she not only stay in his field, but she remains with his female servants. As I said, likely the male servants cut the grain, and the female ones came behind, gathered and bundled it. And so he says stay with my maids. But really, a better translation of that is “attach yourself to my maids” or “stick with my maids.” It’s the same word used earlier in the book when it says Ruth kept clinging to Naomi. Cling to my maids for your safety. And then notice, he assured her that she didn’t need to fear anything from the male workers in the field. He had warned them. Notice, “I have commanded the servants not to touch you.” In other words, not to harass you, not to mistreat you, not to take advantage of you.

But it goes on. Verse 9, “When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw.” Boaz here insists that Ruth drink from the water that his servants had drawn, his servants had brought out that morning from the well from Bethlehem, for his workers. This is extraordinary kindness. In that culture, usually women drew water for men, and foreigners drew water for Israelites. But Boaz says I want you to drink of this water. Think about what it would have cost her in time to have returned to the city of Bethlehem every time she needed to drink. He says I want you to drink the water.

Verse 10, “Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, ‘Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?’” Ruth is literally overwhelmed by Boaz’ generosity. And in a cultural show of respect and humility and gratitude, she literally prostrates herself before him. It was an external position of respect toward someone who was both older and more influential. What overwhelmed her—notice in what she says in verse 10. What overwhelmed her was that Boaz was unaffected by the fact that she was a foreigner, specifically a Moabite. Her question is, why? It’s because Boaz had heard all about her already.

Look at verse 11. “Boaz replied to her, ‘All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the

death of your husband has been fully reported to me.” He’d heard the whole story. He had never seen her, didn’t recognize her when he saw her that morning on the field, but once his supervisor made the connection, it all came back. He had heard her story. He knew what had happened. No doubt Boaz had heard that Naomi had freed both Ruth and Orpah from any legal or moral obligation to her after the death of her sons, and that Orpah had reasonably returned home to her family, to her nation, to her god. But Ruth’s response defied all explanation.

Verse 11, “How you left.” Literally, “how you abandoned your father and your mother.” Clearly, her parents were still living. By the way, this expression “how you left your father and ... mother,” this expression occurs only one other place in the Old Testament. And that’s in Genesis 2:24 when it’s the prescription for marriage: a man shall leave his father and mother. This is what she did. And he goes on to say, you left “the land of your birth, and [you] came to a people that you did not previously know.” She had previously had no experience with or interaction with Israelites apart from the family in Moab.

But in verse 12, Boaz gets to what impressed him most about Ruth. And it was her spiritual transformation. Notice what he says: “May [Yahweh] ... reward your work, and your wages be full from ... [Yahweh], the God of Israel.” Boaz here offers a kind of prayer for Ruth. That Yahweh would reward her hard work. That He would do so generously. Now why would he ask the God of Israel to do this for a woman who had been an idolater? He says here’s why: because “... under [His] wings you have come to seek refuge.” Like a baby bird, you have come to find shelter under the God of Israel. You believed in Him. Ruth had voluntarily placed herself in submission to and under the care of Yahweh. Undoubtedly, Boaz was thinking back to the day when, as Daniel Block puts it, “Ruth had transferred her allegiance from Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, to Yahweh, the God of Israel.” Ruth’s key commitment was not to Naomi, but to Yahweh. That’s what you need to get. That’s the point he’s making. She was committed to Naomi. She would care for Naomi. But her real commitment was to Israel’s God.

Now, that’s the chief reason that Boaz was being so generous to Ruth, but there were other reasons as well. I think he treated her this way because he was a righteous, compassionate man, and righteous and compassionate people do this when they run into people in need. As a

regenerate believer whose heart God had changed, he naturally loved and was kind toward others. And as a relative of hers, which he knew at this point, but she did not yet know, he felt a sense of responsibility toward her. And I think we also have to say that his response and kindness toward her was a direct response to Ruth's wish. Look back in Ruth 2:2, "Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, '... Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.'" It wasn't even really a prayer. It was more like a wish. But God heard, and He responded. We have to say that God had prepared Boaz' heart to express generosity to this woman. It's was God's way of caring for one of His own.

Verse 13, "Then she said, 'I have found favor in your sight, my lord.'" That sounds a little strange to our ears, but it's really nothing more than an expression of thanks. We could translate it something like this: you are so kind, or, you have been so gracious to me. She goes on to say, here's why, "for you have comforted me." This had to have been the first encouraging thing in her life since her husband died, since she left the land of her birth and she'd arrived in this land where she knew no one. "You have comforted me and indeed [you] have spoken kindly to your maidservant." Literally, that "spoken kindly," literally translated from the Hebrew is "you have spoken to my heart." In other words, you've spoken sympathetically, you've spoken compassionately.

I'm struck by why Ruth was amazed. Look back in verse 10. There she was amazed at Boaz' kindness in light of her race. She was foreigner, a Moabite. In verse 13, she's amazed at his kindness in light of her low class. Notice how she put it. She says, "maidservant." The Hebrew word that she uses for maidservant describes a female servant of the very lowest rank. But notice, Ruth doesn't even put herself at that level. She places herself even lower. I am not even on the level of your maidservants, I am beneath them, and yet you show me kindness. You just see the genuine humility of this woman.

Now, there's a break in time at the end of verse 13. Verse 13, as I've noted, occurred late morning when Boaz arrived at the field and this conversation has taken place. Verse 14, however, fast forwards an hour or two to the noon mealtime. And what Boaz does then is truly extraordinary. Verse 14, "At mealtime Boaz said to her, 'Come here.'" Come here. In the

ancient Middle East sharing a meal together held great significance. It's a testimony, I think, to Boaz and his humility that he himself was having a meal with the harvesters, with the workers. But in addition to that, he invites Ruth, a foreigner and a Moabite, to join him and his workers for their meal. And notice, he also invites her to share the food that he had prepared and brought for the harvesters. "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." You know, there's nothing new under the sun. This vinegar likely was a mix of olive oil and a sort of balsamic vinegar. If you've been to your favorite Italian restaurant, you've had that. Three thousand years ago they were doing the same thing.

Boaz' invitation to Ruth to join them for the meal had surprised his workers, even though they knew he was a gracious and generous man. But what he does next shocked them—I can promise you. Verse 14 says, "So she sat beside the reapers; and he [that is, Boaz, a man of importance, a man of wealth, a man of nobility, the man who owns the field] served her roasted grain." The Hebrew word implies that after Ruth had been seated with the harvesters, with his own hand Boaz served her roasted grain. In addition to the bread and the vinegar that had been prepared, they would roast fresh heads of grain (that they had just gathered) over an open fire in a pan with some oil. And that was a staple of the diet. They offered it to her. He offered it to her. Verse 14, "And she ate and was satisfied and had some left." Here's another glimpse of Boaz' generous nature. He not only gave her food to eat, but he made sure that she was completely satiated, she was fully satisfied. And then, no doubt, suspecting what was true, that she and Naomi had not enough to eat, he made sure that she had food left over, knowing that she would, as she did, take some to her mother-in-law.

What I want you to understand is, at this point there is no expectation on either Ruth's part or Boaz' part—there is no hint of anything romantic. Daniel Block writes,

Boaz took an ordinary occasion and transformed it into a glorious demonstration of compassion, generosity, and acceptance. Boaz was simply a good man sent by God to show favor to this woman. The wings of God are not only comforting to Israelites, they offer protection even for despised Moabites.

After lunch was over, Boaz gives further instructions. And rather than giving the instructions through the foreman, notice he gives these instructions directly to the workers. Verse 15, “When she rose to glean.” So, the meal’s over. She’s had enough. She has food left over. She now goes back out to the field. “Boaz commanded his servants.” He speaks to all of them just to make sure they get the message: this matters to me. “Let her glean ... among the sheaves, and do not insult her.” What Boaz is doing here is granting her special permission, different than the other gleaners. She doesn’t have to wait until the other harvesters are done and have left the area. She can glean among the sheaves before they’re gathered up. And the workers were to do nothing to insult her, to humiliate her, to shame her. And you know that very well could happen. She was a foreigner, and a poor foreigner who was having to scavenge pieces of wheat off a harvested field. And he says you better not mess with her in any way.

Not only that, verse 16, “Also you shall [purposefully] pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.” As the harvesters cut and the women bundled the wheat, they were to intentionally pull out some of that wheat and sort of leave these little piles there to make it easier for her, leave them lying on the field. And when she picked them up, they weren’t to rebuke her for doing so. What an amazing man. What an amazing story. But again, I want to remind you that Boaz is not the hero of the story. God is. This is a story about God caring for His own.

So, what are the lessons for us from this wonderful act? Well, the first lesson is God always cares for His own. If you have sought refuge in God, if you have, to use this beautiful image in verse 12 of chapter 2, sought refuge under His wings, He has assumed full and complete responsibility to care for you. That doesn’t mean you won’t go through lean times. Obviously, Ruth and Naomi did. But it means in the scope of your life, God will make sure you are cared for. I love what David said. My dad, who had ten children (I’m the youngest of ten children.) My dad often said this to us. He would quote David’s words: I was young and now I am old, but I’ve never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread. God cares for His own.

But that’s not the primary point of this passage. I think the primary point is this: one of the main ways that God cares for His own is through the obedience and compassion of the righteous. You

see this message again and again in Scripture. Our compassion for others. Matthew 25:40, You remember, at the judgment of the nations there at the end of the tribulation period, the king will answer and say to some, “Truly I say to you, to the extent ... you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.” When we care for our brothers, it’s like we’re doing it for Christ. And this is our heart. This is what we do. Romans 12:10, “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; [and] give preference to one another in honor ... devoted to prayer [verse 13], contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.” Galatians 6:10, “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially ... those who are of the household of the faith.” Hebrews 6:10 says, “For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name.” How? How have you shown love toward God? “In having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.”

And of course, 1 John makes this point again and again. Turn there with me for just a moment. First John and look at chapter 3. First John 3, and notice verse 14, “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.” Verse 17,

Whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

True believers love their brothers and sisters in Christ and care for their needs. Chapter 4:20: If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, [he’s] a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom [he’s] not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

And how do we manifest that love? Not merely with word (back in verse 17 of chapter 3, verse 18 rather) but rather with deed: if you have the world’s goods and you serve them. You see, you and I have the responsibility, both in obedience to God’s Word and because of the compassion and mercy that God has produced within our hearts, to care for those in need. Do you own that responsibility? Boaz got it. He saw it. Do you see it?

How can you be the hands and feet of God to help care for His people? Well first, establish relationships with the people in this church. Establish relationships. And then when you hear of needs in their lives, move to meet those needs on behalf of Christ. Visit the sick. Care for our shut-ins. Make food for those who are in crisis, either because of a death in the family or because of sickness or surgery. Give regularly to our benevolence fund, out of which we serve the families in our church. God cares for His people through the righteous, just as he did with Boaz. You need to own that responsibility.

But let me put it the other way. What if you find yourself in need, or you find yourself in the middle of a crisis? You need to understand that a primary way God intends to care for you is through the righteous. So, don't be hesitant, don't be resistant to accept the compassion of fellow Christians. Don't be too proud. When you do that, you miss the blessing of God's caring for you through them, and they miss the blessing of ministering to you on behalf of Christ.

By all means, pray for the needs of your fellow Christians. But as Boaz himself became the Lord's answer to his prayer, when we pray for the needs of our brothers and sisters, understand this, God may very well use us to be the answer to those prayers. John 13:35, Jesus puts it this way: "By this [will all men] know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we are amazed at Your providence in the lives of Boaz and Ruth and Naomi, and we're amazed at Your providence in our lives. Lord, we're so grateful that You take care of Your own. We, like they, have come to seek refuge under Your wings. Thank You that You have fully taken the responsibility to care for us as You did for them. And Father, thank You that You often do so through the righteous.

Help us to be Your instrument to meet the needs of the people around us, to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. And Father, help us when we find ourselves in need to accept Your kindness through them.



Lord, thank You that You care for us. May we care for one another.

We pray in Jesus name, Amen.