

Ruth 2 – A God who protects

Recap

- In chapter 1 we saw the difficult circumstances Naomi and her family had been through
 - Famine in Judah, move to Moab, death of her husband and 2 sons,
 - Blow after blow that had caused Naomi to question God and declare that the hand of the Lord is against her and dealt bitterly with her
 - She never doubted God's sovereignty but doubted his goodness.
 - Naomi was so oppressed by all the bad things that she has lost sight of any signs of hope as they appear.
 - She knows God rules over all, both national affairs and person but has forgotten that even in the difficult experiences God is working for the good of his people.
 - Maybe in this pandemic you have questioned God's goodness?
 - Glimmers of hope break through the darkness don't be as blind as Naomi when hard times come.
- God's providence allows the bad to happen, but it also provides the good things.
 - Even in chapter 1 there were glimmers of hope
 - God lifted the famine and opens a way for Naomi to return to her people
 - Naomi has the gift of an amazingly devoted and loving daughter-in-law
 - God has preserved a kinsman to continue Naomi's family.
 - In her bitterness Naomi misses all these rays of hope but through chapter 2 as Naomi and Ruth settle in Bethlehem the mercy of God becomes so obvious that even Naomi will recognise it.

The whole book of Ruth teaches us about a God who provides and in chapter two we are going to see God's providence resulting in protection.

As we walk through this chapter together, I want us to look at the characters of Boaz and Ruth before wrapping it up with what this chapter teaches us.

Boaz: A godly man (A God-saturated man)

- One of the first things we learn about Boaz is that he is a relative of Elimelech
 - Naomi's deceased husband.
 - The very opening of chapter 2 shows us that things are nowhere near as bleak as Naomi suggested in 1:11-13 when she says there is no future hope for her family
 - In that culture if a man died it was the duty of a brother or close relative to marry the widow and continue the dead man's name.
 - This is what a kinsman is.
 - Naomi said there was no one but here is Boaz.
 - The first glimpse of real hope.
- We learn more about Boaz

- We learn that he is wealthy – a man of standing.
- But more importantly in v4 we see that he is a man of God in the way he greets his workers.
 - Boaz’s relationship with God had saturated his whole life and even affects the way in which he interacts with his workers.
 - Boaz was concerned about his workers and wanted them to know the blessing of the Lord.
 - Our relationship with God should saturate and affect every part of our lives.
- A generous man.
 - We see that in his interaction with Ruth and what he provides for her.

Ruth: A woman of great character

- In this chapter we learn three things about the character of Ruth
 - Her initiative
 - Ruth doesn’t wait to be told what to do by her mother-in-law instead she heads out to work. She is the stranger, but she heads out.
 - Ruth has committed herself to Naomi with great devotion and takes the initiative to work and provide for her.
 - Her humility
 - When she arrives at the field, she doesn’t assume the right to glean instead she asks the servants for permission
 - Gleaning is picking up the leftovers the bits the reapers missed
 - There is a law in the old testament that tells reapers to not go back and pick up these bits themselves but leave them for the poor.
 - She puts herself below the servants by asking for their permission.
 - Her industry
 - Ruth is an incredibly hard worker.
 - In v7 we see the servants telling Boaz that she has worked from early morning until now without even resting for a moment
 - V17 shows us she continues to work until evening, then once she has finished gleaning, she beats out what she has gleaned, measures it and then takes it home to Naomi.
 - The writer goes to this length to show how hard Ruth works because they think it’s a good example to follow.
- May we be people like Ruth who take initiative to care for others, are humble and meek in our approach and work hard.
 - These are all worthy traits.

God’s providence

- As we look at the characters of Boaz and Ruth, we need to be careful not to miss the merciful providence of God behind all of this.
 - Ruth heads out to glean and 'happened' to end up on Boaz's field
 - That wasn't chance that was the merciful providence of God guiding Ruth.
 - Ruth happened to come to Boaz's field because God is gracious and sovereign even when he is silent.
 - As the proverb (16:9) says, "A man's mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps."
 - It also wasn't by chance that Boaz visited the field whilst Ruth was there
 - God had a plan

Boaz meets Ruth

- V 8 & 9 Boaz approaches Ruth and shows her great kindness despite the fact she is a foreigner.
- He willingly provides for her
 - Food – tells his workers to leave extra out and tells Ruth to stay in his field
 - Protection – tells the young men not to touch her
 - Water – allows her to drink from what the men have drawn.
- Boaz uses his wealth and godliness to care for Ruth and in effect Naomi.
- In response to all of this we see the most important verses in this chapter, v10-13
 - Ruth raises a profound question that we all need to ask God.
 - Ruth falls on her face and asks why have I found favour?
 - Ruth knows that she is a Moabitess.
 - From a natural viewpoint she has two strikes against her
 - foreign and a widow.
 - She does not resent this but accepts it.
 - As a non-Israelite she does not expect any special treatment.
 - Her response to Boaz's kindness is astonishment.
- How different that is from our culture.
 - People today expect kindness and are astonished and resentful if they don't get it.
 - But Ruth expresses her sense of unworthiness by falling on her face and bowing to the ground.
 - Proud people don't say thanks.
 - Humble people are made even more humble by being treated graciously.
 - Grace is not intended to lift us out of lowliness. It's intended to make us happy in God.

So why has Ruth found favour?

- V11 and 12 are crucial to answer this.
 - Boaz says it's because you have loved Naomi so much that you were willing to leave your family to serve Naomi in a strange land.

- But notice the reward comes from God not from Boaz
 - Boaz is merely the instrument God uses to show grace and favour to Ruth.
- God chooses to show favour to Ruth because she has taken refuge in him.
 - she has taken refuge under the wings of God and this has given her the freedom and desire to leave home and love Naomi.
 - She has not earned mercy from God or Boaz.
 - She is not their employee
 - They are not paying her wages for her work.
 - On the contrary, she has honoured them by admitting her need of them and simply taking refuge in their generosity.
- This is the message of the gospel in the Old Testament and the New Testament. God will have mercy on anyone who humbles himself like Ruth and takes refuge under the wings of God.
 - Admit you need God because without him you are helpless and hopeless.
 - You don't need to earn God's favour it is given as a free gift through Jesus to all who trust in Him.
 - We can't come in our own strength.
 - When we come to God, we need to humbly take refuge in Jesus and the forgiveness he offers.
 - Living under the wings of God is an amazing place of protection and freedom, why wouldn't you want to dwell there?
- God is not an employer looking for employees. He is an Eagle looking for people who will take refuge under his wings. He is looking for people who will leave father and mother and homeland or anything else that may hold them back from a life of love under the wings of Jesus.
- Boaz is going to redeem Ruth from her destitute, hopeless situation and that is what Jesus does for us.
 - Just as Ruth had no claim on Boaz's mercy so we have no claim on the mercy of God, yet we receive it when we come in Jesus.
 - Boaz took the initiative to seek Ruth, Jesus took the initiative to seek us.

What do we learn from this passage?

- As Christians even in the dark times we must live by faith in God trusting in His sovereign providence in our lives.
 - Ruth believed that God loved her and would provide for her, so she set out to glean.
 - Do you live believing God loves and will provide for you and live by faith?
- We live trusting in the grace of God in our lives

- Grace is favour bestowed on someone who doesn't deserve it and cannot earn it.
 - That is how we come to Jesus.
- We live in hope because Jesus rescued us.
 - In Naomi we see the hope appear now Boaz is on the scene.
 - Light breaks through the darkness and bitterness and there is hope once more
 - Naomi has hope because of who Boaz
 - Was – a kinsman
 - Did – showed kindness
 - Said – His words revealed a love for Ruth and desire to make her happy.
 - Without Jesus we have no hope. But because of who Jesus is, what he did and what he says to us in his word we live in hope.
 - This hope is not a flimsy feeling but a firm certainty that enables us to face any situation.
- No matter how you may feel today, how difficult your circumstances may be, you can rejoice in hope today as you receive the grace of God in your life through faith in Him.