

Ruth 2 – “From Gleaning to Grace”

Summary Statement:

In the second chapter of Ruth we see the initial stages of the Boaz and Ruth relationship, which is all by God’s providence. We see Boaz’s gracious protection and provision which leads to the promise of redemption to come.

Outline:

1. Providence in Plain Sight – 2:1-7
2. Protection through Compassion – 2:8-13
3. Provision in Abundance – 2:14-18
4. Promise of Redemption – 2:19-23

“Sometimes it seems easier to identify the hand of Satan than the fingerprints of the Savior.” ¹ It would be easy for Naomi and Ruth to be in the dumps, but God is at work through this story to bring about good.

1. Providence in Plain Sight – 2:1-7

2:1-2 - *There was a relative of Naomi’s husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz. ² So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, “Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor.” And she said to her, “Go, my daughter.”*

The writer of Ruth seems intent on highlighting the person of Boaz, mentioned for the first time here in vs. 1. Boaz is a main and prominent figure in the story of Ruth, but as of yet, he has not come on the scene as far as the narrative goes. But the writer injects him into the story at this moment to reveal what is to come. It’s as though the writer can’t help himself. He knows how the story unfolds, and he couldn’t have drawn it up any better if he tried. He’s kind of building this anticipation, almost to say, watch for this character, you’re not going to believe how this all comes together.

Now here’s some things we know about Boaz. He’s ***a man of great wealth***. It’s translated in other places as *valor* (Judges 6:2); *virtuous* (Ruth 3:3); *valiant* (1 Samuel 14:52); *power* (2 Samuel 22:33); *strength* (2 Samuel 22:40). The NIV translates it as a man of standing. The ESV says he was a worthy man. The NLT says he was a wealthy and influential man.

¹ Philips, W. G. (2004). *Judges, Ruth* (M. Anders, Ed.; Vol. 5, p. 307). Holman Reference.

- So we get the idea that Boaz is an upright, integral guy who has been blessed. We'll come to see that he was a man that served God.
- The meaning of his name is uncertain, but it's believed it may mean "in Him (the Lord) is strength".

And it would seem that he was a guy that leaned on the Lord and was strengthened.

Not only is he strengthened but it would seem he's loaded – **great wealth**. Now ladies, when looking for a husband, that's not the number one thing you should be looking for. Too many are looking to check all the boxes and find Mr. Perfect. They want someone tall, dark, and handsome. That's offensive to me! I check none of those boxes. I'm thankful for the grace of God who sent me a wonderful wife with poor eyesight.

- You see, the Lord doesn't want us seeking Mr. Perfect or Mr. Right. He wants us to simply live a life of faith, trusting Him and seeking to be the right person ourselves.
- Ruth will do that. She's not saying point me in the field of the biggest hunk out here Naomi. There's no indication she's even looking for someone. She's just going about her business faithfully and she will be blessed beyond measure. It's been said: 'Providence does not assist the idle.'

What's interesting is that we're told Boaz was **of the family of Elimelech**. They live in the same hometown. And yet when the pressure of a famine came, Elimelech moved his family to a foreign country while it seems Boaz stayed put. And here we see Boaz is a blessed man who holds some distinction. God took care of him!

- For ten years Naomi went through hardships in a foreign place while the people that she left seemed to manage just fine.
- It's a reminder that we can easily make some wrong choices if we're being led by our circumstances. That's walking by sight and not by faith.
- Even in hard times we need to be ready to follow God's will and Word, even when it doesn't seem to make sense.

Well, this story is all about the graciousness and love of God. Naomi turns things around and she will encounter the blessing of the Lord herself.

Ruth not only accompanies Naomi back to her hometown, but Ruth is now looking to provide for her. Ruth is ready to step out and do the hard work to bring home the bacon (ie. the grain).

Now Ruth's suggestion to go into some random field and begin to glean (gather) some of the grain, hoping to find favour from a stranger who will let her do this, may seem weird to us in our day. But in this day, this was a provision God put in their law for those that were in need. It was like God's built in welfare system.

- **Leviticus 19:9–10**, *"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰ And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord your God."*
- **Deuteronomy 24:19**, *"When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands."*

2:3 - *Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.*

So Ruth went on her way. She's new to town, she doesn't know anyone yet. She's already told Naomi she's just going to pick a random field and hope she finds favor. But we read that she ***happened to come*** to the part of the field that belonged to Boaz. That's huge. This isn't just happenstance. This isn't luck or coincidence. In fact, Rabbi's would say that *coincidence* is not a kosher word. Do we believe that?

- This is nothing less than the providential leading of God. God is moving all things along to bring about His good for His glory.
- God is working behind the scenes, or you could say, behind the seen. We may not always see Him working, but we need to believe that He is at work and bringing all things together for good to those who love Him and are the called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).
- The book of Esther is a book where God is not mentioned at all. Many wondered if it really belonged in the canon of Scriptures because it seemed a very unreligious book at face value. But God is all over this book, working in the background. His divine presence and providence is all over it.
- Providence comes from the words 'pro' (before) and 'video' (to see). In other words, God sees all and knows all from the beginning to the end and from the end to the beginning. The prevailing of His will in all situations is what we would refer to as His providence.

2:4 - Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, “The Lord be with you!” And they answered him, “The Lord bless you!”

Once again, as Ruth happened to come to the field of Boaz, it was at this time that Boaz happened to come out and see the workers. God is orchestrating all these things so perfectly.

- Can I just say how often I’ve heard people say I’m never going to meet someone where I am. Once again, they look to change their zip code in hopes of better opportunities.
- Yet here’s Ruth, she’s just busy doing what needs to be done and it’s the Lord that brings the right person at just the right time. Stay occupied with the Lord and serving Him, all these other things will be added by the Lord in His timing.

And we continue to see this outstanding character of Boaz as he comes and greets his workers with: **The LORD be with you!**

And in so doing Boaz invokes the personal name of the Lord – Yahweh. Boaz is in relationship with the Lord and desires to bring others before the Lord.

- Wouldn’t it be nice to have a boss where they come along saying, May the Lord bless you and be good to you!

And the workers aren’t muttering anything under their breath or trying to avoid this boss. There seems to be a genuine joy and appreciation of each other, for the workers respond back: **The LORD bless you!**

Boaz is a picture of our Saviour, our Redeemer. And like Jesus, Boaz points people to God. Jesus came to reveal God. He provided the way for us to know God and be in relationship with Him.

And Boaz treats his workers with grace and kindness.

- **John 15:15**, *"No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you."*

2:5-7 - Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?” ⁶ So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, “It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. ⁷ And she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’ So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house.”

Notice the servant is not mentioned by name, he remains anonymous. It's just like the work of the Holy Spirit who has come to gather a bride for Jesus and make Him known. The typology is so clear and consistent.

- **John 15:26**, *"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me."*

The servant lets Boaz know this is the young woman that came back from Moab with Naomi. Word has probably circulated around town, but Boaz has yet to meet her. The servant relays to Boaz how she came to end up in his field and shares what a hard worker she has been.

2. Protection Through Compassion – 2:8-13

2:8-9 - *Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. ⁹ Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."*

Again we see the virtue of Boaz. This is not some scheme Boaz is doing to try and woo Ruth. He has no idea that she would even be interested in him. There's an age difference and he isn't expecting any romance to be blooming here. Plus, Ruth has been working in the field all day. She's probably looking a little dirty and dishevelled to where Boaz is probably thinking, this girl needs a spa day.

But look at the way that Boaz treats her. He gives her placement, protection, and provision.

Placement – Don't go to another field but stay here.

- In the same way Jesus calls us to remain in Him. He is the way the truth and the life. There's nothing that we're going to find in the fields of the world that will bring any more satisfaction or joy than what we have in Jesus.

Protection – Boaz let the boys know to not lay a finger on Ruth. He let's them know that if anything happens to Ruth, he owns a large field and some shovels and he can make them disappear pretty quickly. The boys are probably thinking, what happened to *the Lord be good to you*, Boss? Yea, *you better be hoping the Lord will be good to you after I'm done with you*.

- Aren't you thankful for the protection we have in the Lord? He is a refuge for us, a mighty fortress. We are to run to Him where we find safety and help.

When we are not abiding in Him, we can be easy pickings for the enemy.

Provision – Boaz made sure to supply what Ruth needed for her sustenance.

Working in this heat you would need to have lots of water. Ruth will be able to partake from the supply Boaz provided for his workers (even though Ruth wasn't technically one of his employees).

- Our Saviour has called us to come and partake of what He has provided for us. He wants to fill every one of our needs so that we are satisfied. **John 4:14**, *"but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."*

2:10 - *So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"*

Ruth can't believe what she is hearing. She doesn't know this man from Adam. She's just trying to provide for her and Naomi when she's just been showered with blessing. She's not computing why she, a foreigner, would receive this sort of favor. We may wonder why ourselves? The answer is that there is no reason!! This is all about grace! This word favor is elsewhere translated as grace. It's unmerited favor. Ruth did nothing to deserve this.

- This is all picturing for us what our Redeemer, Jesus, has done for us! None of us deserved His favor. None of us did something to earn His blessing. We are all recipients of His great grace simply out of His love for us!
- **Ephesians 1:7**, *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"*

And it brings Ruth to her knees in thanks and gratefulness, as it should bring us to our kneed in daily appreciation of the grace that's been bestowed upon us.

- **Ephesians 2:11–13**, *"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."* That's GRACE!

2:11-13 - *And Boaz answered and said to her, “It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. ¹² The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.” ¹³ Then she said, “Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants.”*

Boaz knows exactly what Ruth has done. She's given up all things. She's walked that Calvary road where she has forsaken everything she knew, she has laid her life down so she can experience life with God. And Boaz says there will be a full reward for you. The Lord repay your work.

- What a good reminder that is for us. When we go all out for Jesus, you will never have to wonder if it was worth it. When you recognize what you've been saved from and what you've been saved into, you'll see that the Lord is good and we have received a full reward.
- **Colossians 3:24**, *"knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."*

Ruth again is in awe of how she's being treated. She's a foreigner and yet she's being brought in like family. And it continues to get better...

3. Provision in Abundance – 2:14-18

8:14 - *Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, “Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.” So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back.*

She's invited to the table where she's breaking bread with Boaz. This foreigner becomes like one of them. She's given privilege that other gleaners typically didn't experience.

And notice, there's bread and vinegar (most translations say wine or wine vinegar). Bread and wine – the elements of communion. I think this is where the romance begins to bud a little. It's why communion is so essential to the church. It's where we come together at the Lord's table that we're reminded of His great love for us. The sacrifice He made, all out of love for you and me. Communion is that reminder of the grace we've been given by our Redeemer and Saviour.

2:15-16 - *And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. ¹⁶ Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.”*

Boaz once again goes well beyond what the law required. He continues to shower Ruth with grace upon grace.

2:17-18 - *So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. ¹⁸ Then she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied.*

An ephah of barley was about 5.5-6 gallons of barley. This was enough supply to last these two women for a couple weeks or more.

Plus Ruth brought the leftovers from mealtime to share with Naomi. This is a very significant haul and it's caused Naomi to be pretty surprised and curious where Ruth has been gleaning.

Remember, up until this time Ruth doesn't know the significance of who Boaz is.

4. Promise of Redemption – 2:19-23

2:19-20 - *And her mother-in-law said to her, “Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you.” So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, “The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz.” ²⁰ Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!” And Naomi said to her, “This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives.”*

Naomi is thinking, you've hit the jackpot today. Naomi who went to Moab full and came back empty is realizing that God has shown His kindness to them.

- We may go through some valleys and pits but never discount what God is able to do through it all.

Naomi now begins to share with Ruth how amazing it is that she happened to come to Boaz's field – for he is a close relative. He is a kinsman redeemer (*go'el*).

The idea of a Redeemer is explained in Leviticus 25.

- Every 50th year (year of Jubilee) land and slaves would be given back to their original owners.
- But if it was sold due to poverty, it could be bought back before the year of Jubilee by a close relative – the kinsman redeemer (*go'e'l*).
- This is what Jesus has done for us. We were in poverty due to sin, we had nothing. But Jesus paid the price that we were unable to so that we could be redeemed and set free!

2:21-23 - *Ruth the Moabite said, "He also said to me, 'You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.' "* ²² *And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field."* ²³ *So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law."*

So Ruth continued to glean in Boaz's field while she dwelt with Naomi. This shows the sweetness of her character in continuing to be a blessing to Naomi. She doesn't look to jump ship the moment she finds a potentially better fit.

Chapter 2 reveals how Ruth has been blessed by the Lord for placing her faith in Him. Her blessing has come through provision and care. The next couple of chapters will see this beautiful relationship between Boaz and Ruth unfold even more where even greater blessings will come.

"In Boaz we see illustrated many of the excellencies of Christ. Boaz was a man of great wealth (vs. 1). He was compassionate to the stranger, who had no claim on his favors (vv. 8, 9). He knew all about Ruth, even before she met him (vs. 11) even as the Lord knows all about us even before we come to know Him. He served Ruth graciously, and all her needs were satisfied (vs. 14). He granted her protection and prosperity for the future (vv. 15, 16). In these acts of grace we see a foreshadowing of our blessed Redeeming Relative's mercies to us." ²

Points to Ponder:

1. Think about the Providence of God. He is orchestrating all things to carry out His purposes and plans, even when it's hard to see.

² MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments* (A. Farstad, Ed.; pp. 290–291). Thomas Nelson.

2. Stay faithful in the mundane. Ruth went about being faithful in her daily tasks, yet trusted in God's provision and care.
3. Reflect on the grace that has been bestowed on you. We deserve nothing, yet we have receive everything in Christ.