

Message #5

Ruth 2:2-18

Imagine being David on that day his dad said take this food and go check up on your brothers. The assignment is not glamorous. In fact, it is almost as if it is a menial servant's job. That assignment was part of an amazing sovereign plan of God to bring David into national recognition.

Imagine being that boy who had 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. He was just tagging along with the crowd and the Lord borrowed his lunch. That little lunch ended up feeding thousands and putting this boy in the eternal word of God.

Sometimes God works in what seems to be normal, mundane circumstances of life.

GOD SOVEREIGNLY AND MYSTERIOUSLY WORKS THROUGH THE SOMETIMES HUMILIATING AND DAILY CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE TO CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE AND ACCOMPLISH HIS ULTIMATE SOVEREIGN PURPOSES.

God does not bless lazy men or women. God is sovereign over every bit of this whole story. He has the last verse of the book in mind- King David. There are ten sovereign realities to see here:

REALITY #1 – Ruth takes the initiative to do what she can to help provide for the needs. **2:2**

To this point, Ruth has not been in any real major role in the book. She wanted to go with her mother-in-law, but she has been kind of behind the scenes. But in the timing of God, that is all about to change. God was sovereignly at work in this story and He had a major sovereign surprise for Ruth. God's sovereignty works hand in hand with human responsibility. The concept "will work for food" is Biblical.

Ruth was an outsider in the land of Israel, but she knew that both she and Naomi needed food. Naomi was old and depressed, but Ruth was young and strong. She went to Naomi and requested that she be able to go to some field to glean some grain.

Ruth is not demanding this, she is requesting this. She would not do something without Naomi's approval. **What she wants to do is go out to a field and get some of the leftover scraps. This was leftover from the harvest.**

Now by going to the field she was hoping that she would find favor in the eyes of the owner of the field and he would let her go into the field. She was not an Israelite, so she would be dependent upon the favor of the owner of some field to be able to do this.

We know from Leviticus 19:9, 10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19 that the O.T. law required that the harvesters specifically and purposely leave some grain and grapes in the field for those who were poor so they could get something to eat. It is specifically mentioned that three groups of people for whom this was to be done were "widows" and "aliens" and "orphans" (Deut. 24:19).

Naomi was a widow and Ruth herself also was a widow and being a Moabite alien certainly met the criteria. She certainly would have been a good candidate to glean from some field.

Ruth is not a presumptuous, pushy woman. She is a quiet, submissive woman. She did not automatically assume the owner would let her do that, so she said she hoped she would find favor.

After she made her proposal to Naomi, Naomi said, “Go, my daughter.” Naomi seems to have backed off from her temper outburst that blamed God for everything and proclaimed she had nothing. She agreed and told Ruth it was okay to go.

You do not expect the great sovereign will of God to be worked out here. But it was.

REALITY #2 – Ruth went to a field where other people were reaping to glean some food. **2:3**

Ruth went to a field where people were gleaning and she “happened to come” to a portion of a field that was owned by Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

This is not some insignificant detail. Ruth doesn’t know this. She is just trying to find a field where she can glean some food and it turns out it happens to be a field owned by a relative of Naomi. From Ruth’s perspective, she is just looking for some field to glean some food; from God’s perspective, He is secretly directing her to the exact field He wants her.

Daniel Block says this “happened to come” chance arrival is providentially controlled by God on two accounts (*Judges, Ruth*, p. 654).

- 1) Boaz will be the man who owns the field in whose eyes she will find favor.
- 2) Boaz was from the same family as her deceased father-in-law Elimelech.

REALITY #3 – Boaz comes from Bethlehem to his field while the reapers were gleaning. **2:4-7**

At this point, Ruth does not know Boaz except Naomi had apparently mentioned that they had a rich relative in the family whose name was Boaz (2:1). Ruth didn’t know him and Boaz didn’t know Ruth.

Fact #1 - Boaz comes from Bethlehem. **2:4a**

We learn here that at about the same time Boaz shows up to the very field where Ruth was gleaning. This is not a coincidence. Ruth is there and Boaz shows up to this specific field. This is the sovereign plan of God. It is specifically stated that he came from Bethlehem.

This is important because eventually Bethlehem will be the city of David and it will also be the city where Jesus Christ will be born. This seemingly small point is very big in the program of God.

Fact #2 - Boaz asks God to bless the reapers. **2:4b**

Boaz was a spiritual man and he pronounces a blessing on the people who are working for him and gleaning. He says, "May the LORD be with you." He was a great boss. He was an employer who wanted God to bless the people who worked for him.

Notice the people who worked for him loved him because they responded "May the LORD bless you." These are the employees who do not have nearly as much as Boaz has and yet they want God to bless him. He was a great man to work for; otherwise, they would have never said that.

Fact #3 - Boaz wants to know who is in charge of the reapers. **2:5a**

Obviously Boaz had many people working for him and he had a field manager or field supervisor whose job it was to oversee the gleaning. He apparently had spotted the reapers and he noticed a "young woman."

Fact #4 - Boaz wants to know the identity of the young woman in his field. **2:5b**

It is clear that Ruth caught his eye and it did not take long for her to catch his eye. God is sovereign in this. It is not just a coincidence when some girl or woman catches your eye. God was in this and Boaz wanted to know who she was.

Now it is obvious that Boaz has no knowledge of who Ruth is at this point. All he knows is there is a new reaper out in his field who appears to be out of place. So he wanted to know her identity.

Fact #5 - Boaz is told by the supervisor the identity of the woman in the field. **2:6-7**

There are five ways this supervisor identifies Ruth. It is interesting that in his identification of the woman, he apparently at this point doesn't know her name.

(Identification #1) - She is a Moabite woman. **2:6a**

(Identification #2) - She is a Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from Moabite land.
2:6b

Boaz obviously knew Naomi because she was in his family.

(Identification #3) - She came and asked if she could glean from the field. **2:7a**

She got permission before she went out and started gleaning, which is how the supervisor found out who she was. She did not just walk out in a field; she sought permission first. She didn't know whose field it was.

(Identification #4) - She has been here since morning. **2:7b**

She is not some lazy woman. She doesn't quit easily. This would lead us to conclude it is later in the day since she got there in the morning before Boaz showed up.

(Identification #5) - She has been sitting in the house for a little while. **2:7c**

There was obviously some sort of shelter or house near the field. This would be a place where one could take a break and get out from the hot sun and get to some shade. This would also provide protection for workers and gleaners in the case of storms. She had been gleaning since morning and obviously she was tired and she was taking a little break.

I think this speaks highly of Boaz, who obviously had some sort of structure there.

REALITY #4 – Boaz speaks to Ruth. **2:8-9**

Ruth does not speak to Boaz, but Boaz takes the initiative to speak to Ruth. He starts off by saying, "Listen carefully," but then he says, "my daughter." This is amazing for this is the first time he has met this girl and he already considers her to be a close relative. By virtue of the fact that Boaz calls her his daughter, there is obviously an age gap here.

Message #1 - Do not go to glean from any other field. **2:8a**

Boaz says I don't want you going to any other field. She did not need to go to any other field to look for food. She will get all she needs here. There will be no need to leave this field.

Message #2 - Stay here with my maids. **2:8b**

She is to consider herself to be part of the family of Boaz, specifically stick with the maids who work for him.

Message #3 - You watch and reap when and where my own maids reap. **2:9a**

She was to keep her eyes on fields where his own maids were reaping and she was to join them. She was to watch where they went to harvest grain and she was to follow them.

Message #4 - My servants have been commanded not to touch you. **2:9b**

The times of the Judges were freewheeling and dangerous. This would refer to any form of harassment or misconduct concerning a Moabite woman. She did not need to worry about anyone harassing her because he had given a command that no one was to harass her or touch her or bother her. Daniel Block said this is "the first anti-sexual harassment policy in the workplace recorded in the Bible" (*Ibid.*, p. 660).

Message #5 - When you are thirsty, you go get a drink from our jars. **2:9c**

This was a tremendous blessing because Boaz is authorizing a Moabite woman to drink water from a jar drawn by an Israelite man. Boaz supplied good water for his workers and he is authorizing Ruth to drink freely from it.

REALITY #5 – Ruth responds to Boaz. **2:10**

There are two responses Ruth has in regard to Boaz:

Response #1 - Ruth responded physically. **2:10a**

Ruth fell on her face and bowed down before Boaz.

This response was out of tremendous gratitude for what Boaz had done. Ruth was overwhelmed with what Boaz had just done for her and said to her. She literally fell down and bowed down.

Response #2 - Ruth responded verbally. **2:10b**

Ruth wanted to know why she had found such favor. This was grace. Carefully see what has touched Ruth. She could not believe Boaz even “noticed her.” She said I am a nobody, a foreigner, and she could not believe that a man like Boaz would even notice her.

How much more should we bow down before God? If she had this response to the grace of Boaz, should we not have this response to the grace of Jesus Christ?

REALITY #6 – Boaz responds to Ruth. **2:11-12**

Boaz responds to her and has three responses:

Response #1 - Boaz had heard a report of all the things Ruth had done for Naomi. **2:11a**

We see the importance of having a good reputation. The field manager had not identified Ruth by name, but when he mentioned she was a Moabitess, Boaz immediately connected her to Naomi. He had heard about all the wonderful things she had done for Naomi. Ruth was a quality daughter-in-law.

Response #2 - Boaz had heard a report of how Ruth left her own family to be with Naomi and her family. **2:11b**

Everyone was talking about this woman and she was now right before him. That story of how Naomi tried to get Ruth to go back and she wouldn't was a story Boaz had heard.

Response #3 - Boaz asks God to reward Ruth and bless Ruth for her love for the God of Israel.
2:12

Boaz takes this to a new level and asks God to bless Ruth. He asks God to repay her and reward her. In fact, Boaz pictures God as being like a protective bird under whose wings you have hidden.

REALITY #7 – Ruth responds to Boaz. **2:13**

There are four responses

(Response #1) - I have found favor in your sight.

I understand this to mean I can't believe I have found favor and grace in your sight.

(Response #2) - You have comforted me - you have given me great comfort.

(Response #3) - You have spoken kindly to me - Boaz had been very kind to her.

(Response #4) - I am not even like one of your maidservants - you have not treated me any different even though I am from another race.

REALITY #8 – Boaz responds to Ruth. **2:14**

Boaz was not done yet. What he had already done for her was amazing. But he even takes his responses up a notch.

(Response #1) - Boaz invites her to a meal.

About mid-day there was a pause in the action and the workers would eat a meal. Typically, a gleaner was not invited to join with those on the payroll. Boaz invited Ruth to come to the meal. This is a poor Moabite girl being invited to a rich person's banquet.

(Response #2) - Boaz invites her to dip her piece of bread in vinegar.

Now the word for vinegar indicates that this was some sort of wine condiment or sauce that one would dip dry bread into to spice it up and make it taste better. Ruth was invited to join in and do this. He would not make her eat dry bread because she was a Moabite.

(Response #3) - Boaz let her sit with the reapers and he served her roasted grain.

The striking thing here is that Boaz served Ruth himself. Ruth ate until she was full and even had some left. This is probably the first good meal she had had in many days.

At this point there is nothing romantic between the two. In fact, at this point with the racial and social barriers, this relationship between an Israelite and a Moabite would not seem to be able to go anywhere. But God had different plans.

REALITY #9 – Boaz commands his servants to take care of Ruth. **2:15-16**

When she got up to go out and glean, Boaz addressed his servants concerning Ruth:

Message #1 - Let her glean even among the sheaves. **2:15a**

Remember in verse 7, Ruth requested that she be permitted to glean behind or after the reapers. Boaz says you let her glean with them. Let her glean from the best, not the left-overs.

Message #2 - Do not insult her. **2:15b**

Do not do anything that would insult her or embarrass her, humiliate her or shame her.

Message #3 - Purposely pull out some grain from the bundles and leave it for her. **2:16a**

In other words, you do this for her. Pull out some grain and just leave it for her and give it to her.

Message #4 - Do not rebuke her. **2:16b**

Do not do or say anything to discourage her.

REALITY #10 – Ruth gleaned until evening and took it to her mother-in-law Naomi. **2:17-18**

An ephah of barley has been calculated to be about 5.8 gallons. She went back to Bethlehem and gave that to Naomi and also what was left from her lunch.

What an amazing day. A girl goes to try and find a job in a field. Not only gets a job in a field but is elevated in a way she never dreamed.

Why? God's sovereignty. Do not ever underestimate God's sovereignty in the job you have or the skills you have. Some jobs may seem menial, but no job is menial and you just don't know what God is doing.