

WILD & WONDERFUL

DISCOVERING HOPE IN THE FACE OF UNKNOWNNS

October 10/11, 2020

Ruth 2:14 – 23

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MESSAGE NOTES

This week before we get into the text we will drill down into, chapter 2, I want to remind you of a few KEY details. We have 4 main characters:

1. Naomi — this is the woman who lost her husband and two sons. She has no children and has had no grandchildren. She is Jewish (that's important); Naomi is the main character of this story! Although named for Ruth, Jewish novella always begins and ends with the main character, the one being taught, instructed, cursed, led. The book of Ruth begins with her plight and ends with her holding her grandchild (said to be a child of Naomi's). Naomi is the main character, but the book tells the story of her struggle with faith, loss, and grief. Is God still good and for me when I suffer?
2. The second character, Ruth — Ruth is the hero. Ruth is the hero, and she is NOT Jewish, she is a Moabite. The story of Ruth begins with "In the days when the judges ruled" that is a euphemism for "When the nation of Israel couldn't be obedient, this Moabite could!"

Two stories I want you to keep in mind as we read: keep relating this story to Abraham and Sarah in the Old Testament and The Good Samaritan in the New Testament:

Abraham and Sarah left Ur to follow God to a place they did not know, leaving family and religion. God would eventually give Sarah a baby as a result of His faithfulness. Ruth and Naomi will go to a place they do not know (Ruth — Moabite, not familiar), and Naomi will begin her journey with "I am empty" (barren). Her story ends with a baby in her arms, God's faithfulness.

The Good Samaritan in Luke 10: it is not the good Israelite (believer) who does right, but the hated Samaritan. **Naomi will lose faith, while Ruth (the Moabite, pagan) will be faithful to her commitments and be shown righteous through their care of the poor and hurting.**

3. Boaz — the wealthy land owner who will show compassion on the two widows. He is often seen as the God-figure in this story, but he is not, he is the patron. The resource or agent of God's blessing, but not the hero. Because we want to associate masculinity, wealth, and heroism as defining features of the godly, but for Ruth quiet tenderness, inner strength, fidelity to relationships and commitments is heroic.
4. Finally, God — the unseen, rarely spoken of Provider who is pulling all the strings behind the scenes. His fingerprints are all over this story.

Chapter 2:14

This word "glean" is a reference to Levitical law that you were only allowed to make one pass in your field to harvest and even then not to the edges of your field. What fell out of your hands or was not gleaned on the edges was for the poor and widows in your community. (Implications for us on not living paycheck to paycheck but having enough to share)

Ruth goes out to glean and "as it turned out" ends up in Boaz's field. We know this is God's handiwork. She has been gleaning, and we come to mealtime.

Two things to notice:

1. Notice Ruth is called over by Boaz, but she sits closer to him but still with the workers.
2. Boaz the word for offered is “heaped.” Take note that again and again Boaz is more kind than is demanded of him. More kind than the law obligates him to be. Boaz is just a generous person, and we will discover that he has that reputation around town. **Extravagance, not obligation is noteworthy.**

Verses 15 – 18

Remember Boaz HAD to let her glean BUT he didn’t have to let her gather this closely (as they bundle the grain). He again is going BEYOND what is required of him!

“Reprimand her” means to embarrass her. Don’t embarrass people who are in need. The primary way we do this “trumpets our giving”: “Did you notice how kind I am!?” “Did you notice I just gave this away!?” In our modern world we see Social Media influencers trumpet their giving or what is often called virtue signaling. Don’t do this; you embarrass the people in need and show your real motivations for giving in the first place.

“About an A-pha” — This is a HUGE amount of barely! A testimony to Ruth’s industriousness and Boaz’s generosity. This would have weighed in excess of 40 lbs.! She is strong and clearly determined! This would be about two weeks’ worth of wages in 1 day!

But lastly notice — everytime Ruth leaves an interaction with Boaz (here in chapter 2 and again in chapter 3) Ruth leaves with food to eat, and the first thing she does is go and share with Naomi! Selfless, ministry-minded. Boaz is just the patron; RUTH is the hero. God has been good to me and provided for me, and I ALWAYS assume God’s provision to me is intended to bless another!

Verses 19 – 23

Three things I want to point out in this last section:

1. Notice the question Naomi asked, and the answer Ruth gave:
 - a. Naomi asks a question of geography — where in the world did you glean so successfully? But Ruth responds with an answer of affiliation, “with his workers.” I am not the recipient of luck, God has made me one of his workers or clan.
 - 1 – Generosity from others has a way of making us feel valued and love. When you give till “WOW!” the recipients feel like the kind of people that can be loved this way, that deserve it! And we all deserve to feel loved by the community of God!
2. Verse 20: “He is one of our guardian or kinsman redeemers.” This is one of the most important words in the entire book. A kinsman-redeemer was a lawful affiliation between clan members. Not precisely blood relative, but near relatives to whom both law and custom gave certain duties — Levitical marriage or purchasing back land a relative had to sell for financial reasons or purchasing a family member who was sold into slavery because of debt. Naomi mentions for the first time his existence (shows the dark hole grief has put her in!), but again Ruth dodges the implication. Naomi, I’m not looking for an arrangement, “he said stay with my workers till the end of harvest” = I have a job and food for us for a few months!
 - a. Character isn’t looking for quick fixes or easy outs. No character makes and lives with hard decisions. Psalm 15:4 – **Whose walk is blameless? The one who keeps an oath even when it hurts!**

Three Ways Ruth’s Story Reminds us to live our story:

1. We need to start telling stories of being wrong!
2. We need to start living stories of inconvenient faithfulness.
Character does more good than wealth ever can!
3. We need to start living lives characterized by giving more than is owed!
Living out a generous lifestyle is a matter of intention and determination.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What new detail or feature of the story of Ruth sticks out to you?
- What is something Brian said in this week's sermon that struck you as helpful?
- What features of Naomi's story do you relate to? Why?
- What features of Ruth's story do you relate to? Why?
- Why do you think it was important for God to illustrate that character can come from "outsiders" in a time when Israel wasn't obeying?
- Describe a time in your life when you had lost hope that God would answer your prayers or "bail you out."
- Describe a time you could have helped someone out and chose not to, only to later regret that choice.
- How do you order your resources (think wealth or loanable goods) so that you have something to give or share?
- Talk about how or when it is hard for you to live below your means in order to have something to share with others, the church.