

## Ruth 2: 1-16 “Under the Wings of the Lord”

### Introduction

- At some point in your life, I'm sure you all have met people who changed your life. Don't many Christians say that meeting Jesus completely changed their life? Martin Buber, Jewish philosopher, said “living is meeting (encounters)”.
- Today we look again at the book of Ruth. In Ruth chapter 2 Ruth and Boaz meet. This unexpected encounter completely changes the life of this poor foreign widow from Moab. And not only that, but it affects the course of the whole country of the people of Israel. We'll look at that future of Israel later, so today let's focus in on this surprising encounter.

### Ruth 2: 1- 6

<sup>1</sup> Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

<sup>2</sup> And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor.” And she said to her, “Go, my daughter.”

<sup>3</sup> So she set out 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 clan of Elimelech.

<sup>4</sup> And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, “The Lord be with you!” And they answered, “The Lord bless you.”

<sup>5</sup> Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?”

<sup>6</sup> And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, “She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

<sup>7</sup> She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.’ So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest.”

<sup>8</sup> Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women.

<sup>9</sup> Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn.”

<sup>10</sup> Then she fell on her face, bowing 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?”

<sup>11</sup> But Boaz answered her, “All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before.

<sup>12</sup> The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!”

<sup>13</sup> Then she said, “I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants.”

<sup>14</sup> And at mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come here and eat some bread and dip your

morsel in the wine." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over.

<sup>15</sup> When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her.

<sup>16</sup> And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her."

- What is made special mention of in this passage we just read? Ruth's sincere faithfulness, and Boaz's generosity. So first let's look at the brave faithfulness of Ruth, not fearing to take a risk. Second, in response to her bold faithfulness, Boaz's attitude of generosity, overflowing in lavish grace, that saves a poor widow.
- Also, it isn't highlighted on the surface of this passage, but let's unravel the ultimate work of the Lord, his guidance working behind the scenes of Ruth and Boaz's story. ① Ruth's risk-taking faithfulness, ② Boaz's generosity, and ③ the Lord's guidance.

### 1. Risk-taking Faithfulness

- As soon as Ruth arrived in Bethlehem, in order to provide food she immediately started gleaning in the fields. Because as Ruth 1:22 tells us, Naomi and Ruth "came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest."  
<sup>2:2</sup> And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." <sup>3</sup> So she set out 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 clan of Elimelech.
- Gleaning means gathering up the grains that happen to fall in the field when the grain is harvested, for your own food. Ruth and Naomi were poor widows just returned from Moab. They did not have the slightest idea how they could earn a living. They wouldn't even have known where their next meal was coming from.
- And the harvest season would soon be over. Ruth quickly found the thing she could immediately do, and went to glean in the fields. However, a trial was awaiting her. The author of Ruth is constantly reminding us she is from Moab. And Ruth herself says she wants to go to glean, "after him in whose sight I shall find favor". What does this mean?
- Ruth was a poor widow from a foreign land gleaning in the fields of Bethlehem, a Jewish community. Would the farmers treat her as an outcast, or a nuisance just in the way? Even if a farmer was kind to fellow Israelites, that doesn't mean he would necessarily show pity to a poor woman from their enemy country of Moab.
- And surely it was not just Ruth, but other poor people gleaning. Ruth would be among desperate people scraping together their food for the day; she's concerned that without a person "in whose sight I find favor", as an outsider

she may not be able to glean their food. Or if an argument or fight broke out among the gleaning poor, the farmer might kick all of them out.

- And it seems Ruth made a particularly bold request.
  - <sup>6</sup> And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.*
  - <sup>7</sup> She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.' So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest."*
- Ruth makes a special request to the leaders for permission to gather among the sheaves. Normally, people would gather whatever grain happened to fall where the workers were harvesting with sickles. But Ruth asks if she can glean from where the women are gathering into sheaves the grains of wheat the men have harvested. It was a shrewd, impudent request. Maybe she'll be cast out, banished from the field all together.
- Maybe Ruth made this bold request because there wasn't fallen grain to gather in the field, or perhaps there was some but not enough to provide for dinner that night. The modern equivalent of gleaning would be like collecting aluminum cans for food. The lead harvester, a bit tired of this foreign Moabite widow, didn't have the authority to give her an answer and puts her off. So Ruth, even though she was risking being kicked out, patiently waited in the field.
- The faithfulness we see in Ruth is a model of faith for all who trust and rely on Christ. She is not just a foreigner, not a weak woman. Even in a reality of facing trials, she bravely faces the challenge before her without wavering. She is taking a risk, and living faithfully.
  - Mary, the mother of Jesus, was also no more than a poor young woman. But she took a risk and accepted, received the message the angel gave her. Knowing her own weakness, she believed in the grace of the Almighty God and accepted the trial, took the risk of birthing and raising the Savior. God fulfills his gracious plan through people who face challenges with courage, take risks to faithfully tackle the work at hand.

## 2. Generous and Lavish Faithfulness

- Unexpectedly, the field Ruth was gleaning in belonged to an acquaintance, a relative, of Naomi. When Boaz arrives at the field, the leader tells him Ruth's special, impudent request.
  - <sup>8</sup> Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women.*
  - <sup>9</sup> Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn."*
- Here we see it does not matter in the least to Boaz that she is from Moab. The leader of the field distances Ruth, twice emphasizing she is from Moab.

But Boaz gives Ruth complete protection, so that she can gather as any woman of Israel. Deuteronomy says,

*Deut. 23:3 "No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the Lord forever, 4 because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way, when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you."*

- However, Boaz invites Ruth to stay in his fields, following the young women in gleaning, so that she has plenty to eat. In other words, he's giving his permission for her to gather even among the women who are gathering the harvested wheat into sheaves. The very thing Ruth had desired.
- If you are engaging with faithfulness and courage, facing challenges head on regardless of trials or hardships, taking risks for love, you will not be betrayed. As you have a posture of sincere faith in God, a new door will open. When Ruth asked Boaz why he was so kind to her,

*2:11 "Boaz answered her, 'All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before.'"*

- And from that Ruth gains an even greater astonishing grace. In verses 15 and 16 Boaz gives an unbelievable order, "Let her glean even among the sheaves...And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean".
- In other words, she is allowed to glean even from the place where the harvested wheat is gathered into sheaves. And even more, he orders them to deliberately pull out some of the wheat just for her. And (vs 14) she is welcomed at the meal table exactly as if she was one of Boaz's own people. By faith, a poor outsider is welcomed in, counted among God's people.
- When we look at it like this, we can see what will lead to the solutions of our problems in life, in our society. Faith and humility like we see in Ruth, faithfully doing what she can, courageously facing trials, taking risks. And generosity like we see in Boaz, generous faithfulness, lavish kindness, an attitude full of grace and compassion, a love that builds relationships and community.
- Through Ruth and Boaz meeting one another, don't we see poverty and enmity, insults and barriers, discrimination and strife, changed to plenty and kindness, acceptance and unity, cooperation and encouragement? How about the boldness to face trials? The attitude of taking risks to engage? How about the lavish generosity of Boaz? Have we lost the language and attitude that is rich in kindness and compassion? Let's serve for the sake of community that works together in unity.

### 3. The Compassion of the Lord

- Lastly, let's look at how hearts and attitudes like Ruth and Boaz's can become ours as well. The text of Ruth constantly hints at a third character: the Lord God.
- In verses 3 and 4 we see that the field Ruth went to glean in "happened to" belong to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech. So no one knew this, no one planned it. And in verse 4, "And behold" translates to "right at that time". Ruth went to glean in the field right at the time when Boaz was going to the field. No one could have planned and arranged that perfect timing.
- Just as Boaz said in verse 4 "The Lord be with you", "The Lord bless you", the Lord God, while unseen, is reigning and guiding all things. The whole system of gleaning was God's rule in the first place, given to have compassion on the poor. Leviticus 19:9-10
  - <sup>9</sup> "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. <sup>10</sup> And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God."*
- In other words, the ultimately compassionate God is with us behind the scenes. Your attitude of faithfulness, bravery to face challenges, risk taking faith to do what is right and good, are all possible because the compassionate God is with you. Overcoming worry and showing lavish generosity, love that welcomes outsiders into community, are born of faith that relies on our merciful God.
- When Ruth returns home to Naomi, when Naomi hears of her meeting Boaz, the treatment she received, she is moved and says,
  - <sup>2:20</sup> And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" Naomi also said to her, "The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers."*
- Before the Lord God whose "kindness has not forsaken", who is not frugal in giving grace, let's reflect back on our own attitudes. Isn't it easy for us to think that our success is thanks to our own hard work and talents? We look down on those who things aren't going as well for, thinking they lack hard work or talent. Or if things aren't going well for us, we blame our own short-comings and fall into self-loathing.
  - ✧ In Harvard Professor Michael Sandel's lecture TV show "Justice with Michael Sandel" he says, if you make a bunch of money on an investment, it is not simply thanks to your talent and hard work. Because the place to invest being there, the stock market system, and the booming economy at the time that allowed for your gain, are all out of your control. So it's only natural and right that you should donate of your gain for the common good of society and pay taxes.
- Boaz speaks of the Lord's authority and dominion, compassion and grace, in verse 12:
  - "The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to*

*take refuge!"*

- You yourself are also protected under those same wings of the Lord who Ruth entrusted all of her life to. Boaz blesses Ruth by sharing just a bit of his abundant fortune. That is a faithful attitude based in God's compassion. But our Redeemer Jesus, gave all of himself to us, gave his very life to protect and bless us under the wings of the Lord.
- The more you know the warmth of the wings of the Lord, the more you can live life with faithfulness, taking risks. The more you experience the deep grace of the wings of the Lord, the more you can face trials with courage and humility, not relying on your own strength.