

Guest Preacher Rev. R J Campbell

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Preacher: Rev. RJ Campbell

[0 : 0 0] Seeking the Lord's help and blessing, let us turn back to the portion of scripture that we read in the Old Testament, in the book of Ruth, chapter 2, and we shall read from the beginning.

Now, Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. 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 favour.

And she said to her, Go, my daughter. 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.

Now, I am sure that all, or at least some of you, is familiar with the little book of Ruth, and probably heard many sermons or read many books about Ruth.

It is a book that begins in a town called Bethlehem, and takes us on a journey to Moab, and then returns to Bethlehem.

[1 : 2 0] It is a little book, but it tells a great story, which makes complete sense when we discover how it fits in with a speaker story of the whole Bible, which is the redemptive plan of God.

Bethlehem was not a big town or city, yet Micah prophesied concerning you, But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from old, from ancient days.

A prophecy that was not lost by the people, for we find in the New Testament, when the wise men inquired, where is he that is born king of the Jews?

That the chief priests and scribes pointed to that exact prophecy of Micah. So that the most significant and the most famous birth of all took place in the little town of Bethlehem.

That was the birth of Jesus Christ. However, the book of Ruth also brings before us a certain birth which is recorded in the last chapter, which was another famous birth that took place in Bethlehem.

[2 : 5 8] The birth of Obed, the grandfather of King David, and the one through whom Jesus was to come according to his humanity.

The background to our text this evening begins at a time when Bethlehem was visited by a famine.

And the family of Elimelech and Naomi, along with their two sons, instead of waiting upon the Lord, they decided to leave Bethlehem and to go to Moab.

Now, Moab was not very far away from Bethlehem. In fact, we are told that you could see Moab from Bethlehem. So that to get to Moab, you had only to travel around 20 to 30 miles.

But Moab was a dangerous place, both physically and spiritually, for an Israelite. The Moabites were idolaters.

- [4 : 08] They had no time for the religious life of the Israelites. So to mix in with them was not going to help with the faith of Elimelech and his family.
- And also, Moab was very hostile towards Israel. But here we see that this family did not wait upon the Lord, but went their own way.
- They went to Moab, of all places. And when this happens, we should not expect any blessing. In the case of this family, things got only worse, as it is recorded for us in the first chapter.
- Elimelech died, and his two sons, who had married in Moab, also died. So at the end of chapter 1, we have three widows.
- One, Orpha, who decided to stay in Moab. But we also have Ruth, who decided to come back to Bethlehem along with her mother-in-law.
- [5 : 22] So that as we come to chapter 2 of this little book, Naomi and Ruth have returned to Bethlehem. And has at least found a place to dwell in.
- And the author of the book brings to our attention that their return was at the beginning of the barley harvest. And the time of harvesting is going to play a very important part as the story progresses.
- At the beginning of this journey, ten years ago, they left Bethlehem for Moab. There was a famine beginning. But now as Naomi and Ruth returns from the land of Moab, because Naomi had heard that the Lord had visited his people in Bethlehem by giving them bread.
- And so they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. She was a woman who went out full there with her whole family and full of their own plans.
- But now she comes back. And in her own eyes, she comes back empty. She asks them to call her name Buddha. But this is not only the beginning of a material harvest, but it is the beginning of a spiritual one, a spiritual harvest.
- [7 : 00] The beginning of the barley harvest was in late April. Barley is the first grain that ripens in the spring. It's a time of great joy and of great spiritual significance.
- References made to that time in the book of Psalms as a time of great joy. It was also the time of one of the feasts that belonged to Israel.
- As you know, there were seven feasts. And here is the first of the feasts. The time of first fruits, which foreshadowed the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
- It was a shadow or a figure of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. What happened in the feast of first fruits?
- Well, the feast of first fruits was a time to celebrate new life after the long death of winter. The feast of first fruits was a pledge that more was to come.
- [8 : 11] It was the first fruits. There is more to come. The feast of first fruits would be waved before the Lord. And as we said, it signified two things.
- First, it was an acknowledgement that God alone brought the grain out of the earth. And secondly, it was a pledge of much more to come.
- So that Jesus Christ, regarding his resurrection, is called the first fruits from the dead. And that just tells us there is more to come.
- The resurrection of his people. There is more to come. And in the experience of both Naomi and Ruth, it certainly was a pledge of more spiritual blessings that they were to experience.
- Having found a place to dwell in, now they had to get food. And here is described for us how Ruth went out to work in order to get food for herself and for Naomi, for both of them.

[9 : 22] So she went to the location where the harvest was taking place. And then she happened to choose the area that belonged to Boaz.

We are told 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.

This also happened to be a day when Boaz decided to visit his field. Now all this may seem so simple to us.

We may say, well, it was something that just happened. And from our perspective, it may look like that.

Like this was just something that simply happened. Ruth went out on this certain day, and she went to a field that belonged to Boaz. And Boaz had decided on this certain day to come and to visit his field.

[10 : 32] And yet, when we look at these things more closely, we can see the hand of God in all that is taking place.

As we have already noted, the timing of coming to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest, that was no accident.

It was not something that happened by chance. This was indeed providential. I know that we have to be very careful, as providence can be considered from different viewpoints, depending on the incident that is taking place.

Providence is not our guide. The Word of God is our guide. So I would rather look at this as the sovereignty of God, working out his own plan and purposes, unknown to either Ruth or Naomi.

And that is the way it is for me and you. We must bow down to the sovereignty of God. Maybe, as a generation, that we have lost sight of the sovereignty of God.

[12 : 02] That he is the one who is in control. We see the world in which we live today in chaos. We see nations in chaos.

We see our own nation in chaos. We see war. We see so much confusion. Well, for the believer, he should not be alarmed at that.

As a Christian body, we should not be alarmed at that. Because we know of a sovereign God. We know that the Lord is sovereign.

And that he is working out his own plan. That he is working out his redemptive plan. So here in this case, we must look upon it as the sovereignty of God, working out his own plan and purposes, unknown to Ruth and Naomi.

God has a plan and Ruth is included in that plan. His intention was that Ruth would become into the family tree of Jesus Christ, according to his humanity.

[13 : 18] He is already moving with his plan in bringing Ruth away from Moab and into the fellowship of Israel. It is true that very often his ways are mysterious to us.

What is unpredictable to us is already predicted by a sovereign covenant-keeping God.

Was Elimelech and his family right to leave Bethlehem and to go to Moab? A question that is often asked. In my opinion, they were wrong.

They did not wait upon the Lord. But I can see here the sovereignty of God in working out his plan. And how out of our disobedience at times, the Lord works out his own plan.

He can turn things round to work out his own purposes. And here he is doing that. He is bringing Ruth back from...

[14 : 31] He's bringing Ruth, rather, he's bringing Ruth from Moab. He's bringing Naomi back to Bethlehem. But he's bringing Ruth from Moab. Because she is included in his plan.

In order for Ruth to come to the special place that he had for her, she had to meet an Israelite family. She had to become a widow.

She had to move with her mother-in-law to Bethlehem. And there she had to meet Boaz. Ruth, of course, did not see the significance of each step as it occurred.

She never had any idea that he was to be included in the family tree of Jesus Christ according to his humanity. The same for Naomi.

As she herself confesses, she went out full and came back again empty. This, indeed, was a dark period of providence for Naomi.

[15 : 39] She had lost her husband and she had lost her two sons. And now she was returning back to Bethlehem with her daughter-in-law from Moab. She had no idea that God was moving in her life to bring to Israel one from whom Christ would come according to his humanity.

All she was aware of was the dark threads that were woven into her life and into her experience.

She wasn't aware of the Lord's hand. She could not trace his design nor interpret his purposes. Nevertheless, we find that she trusted in the word and in the covenant-keeping God.

So it is with me and you. We have little or no knowledge of what God is doing in and through our lives. We cannot see the end from the beginning.

All we know is that God is sovereign. That God is in full control. And that God knows what he is doing.

[16 : 53] Truly the words of Isaiah were very applicable to the situation here set before us. For Isaiah says, Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the voice of his servant?

Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God. The writer of this little book knows what God is doing because he can look backwards from the vantage point of the conclusion of the story.

He can trace the footprints of God running through the narrative. Often that is the way that we can trace the footprints of God in our own lives and experience by arriving at a point and looking back.

we can see the hand of God in our lives and in our experience. Our responsibility is not to probe the secret will of God.

Our responsibility is to be obedient, to obey his revealed will. And Ruth and Naomi must have been aware of the teaching of God's word.

[18 : 11] This is where I say that not providence but God's word is to be our guide. And Ruth and Naomi must have been aware of the teaching of God's word on the provision that God had made in his law regarding the harvesting and the poor.

If we go to Deuteronomy chapter 24 verse 19 to 22 and Leviticus 19 verse 9 and 10 there we find the laws regulating the harvest and there we see the door of grace being opened for a stranger like Ruth.

In that law there is provision made for the stranger, for the fatherless and for the widow. And on all three counts it fitted the situation that Ruth finds now in her own experience in Bethlehem.

A stranger fatherless and a widow. And the law of harvesting in Israel made provision for such people.

So that in God's providence her future was connected to her obedience to the revealed will of God because the Lord had revealed through his word this provision of harvesting for the stranger, for the fatherless and the widow.

[19 : 40] Now we can apply this to ourselves for God's providence has brought you and me tonight to the gospel of Jesus Christ and in the gospel we have the revealed will of God.

This is not a meeting tonight by accident. It is not something that has just happened.

It's not something that has come around by chance. Maybe you never intended to be here but you find yourself under the word of God.

or maybe you have come out as a custom or maybe you have come out as a habit to come under the word of God.

But it is not a chance. It is not by accident because God in his sovereignty has brought me and you together tonight.

[20 : 53] he has brought us together and he has brought us together under the gospel of Jesus Christ and in this gospel we have the revealed will of God and our future or rather I say our eternal destiny whether it be heaven or hell depends upon how we respond to the revealed will of God.

What is the revealed will of God? Well we can summarize it like this believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

We can say trust in the Lord commit your way to the Lord follow the Lord God it all comes to the same point it all comes to the same thing believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved that is the revealed will of God in the gospel how do we respond to that well our future or our eternal destiny is connected to our obedience to his revealed will what we find in the story here before us is that Ruth was obedient and the Lord was working out to bring to pass his secret will she was obedient to the revealed will of God and that's how it pleased God to work in all our lives this is the way we have to govern our lives the life of faith is to trust in the

Lord Almighty even when providence may seem to be so dark yet we are to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ he knows what he is doing and if we have faith then we know that all things will work out together for good even when providence seems to be so dark for us we know that he is a sovereign Lord that he is in control that nothing happens by accident or by chance it's all under his sovereign hand and me and you tonight meeting here is under the sovereign hand of God Ruth went out that day not knowing what was going to happen to her but she went out reliant totally upon being shown grace or favour we read 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 favour or as the authorised version has it in whose sight I shall find grace well what is favour or what is grace well grace can be defined in this way a person who bestows benefits upon the undeserving the grace of God is his good pleasure that inclines him to bestow benefits upon the undeserving we don't deserve it but God in his mercy and in his grace bestows benefits upon us and the story of Ruth is one of the most beautiful illustrations of grace in verse one to three of this chapter Ruth sets out to glean in the fields in order to provide food for herself and her mother-in-law

[25 : 00] Naomi when she left that morning she was hoping to find grace and when you came here tonight what were you hoping to find what were you hoping to find we were taught in the college never to preach the gospel without expectation expectation and what is that expectation it is that God would bless his word what was your own motive in coming here tonight well when Ruth left that morning she was hoping to find grace and what a beautiful motive that would be if we came here tonight hoping to find grace hoping to find favour her and verses 4 to 16 tell us that she found grace in a man named Boaz Boaz extended grace to this stranger from Moab and when he did

Ruth received more than she could ever have imagined in the same way God has extended his grace to us and because of his grace we received countless blessings even in this life before we came to Christ before we met Christ we were strangers just like Ruth the writer wants to keep before our minds that if she was from Moab as you read this chapter and if you go on in the other chapters he always brings this before us she was from Moab Ruth the Moabite he keeps that before us reminding us that she was a stranger to Israel a stranger to the faith of Israel she came from the country that was full of idolatry the writer wants to keep that before our minds and what is true of me and you as we are by nature without

Christ is that we are dead in our trespasses and in our sins that there was nothing we could do to deserve all that God has done for us that is the Christian point the every Christian here tonight will confess that there was nothing that they could do to deserve all that God has done for them at the beginning of the chapter we are introduced to this man named Boaz well he was a relative of Emelich and he was a very wealthy man and Boaz on this day decided to visit the field here again we can look back and see the hand of God in bringing together Boaz and Ruth the sovereign Lord bringing Ruth and Boaz together and how good it would be tonight if under the sovereign hand of God you and Jesus

Christ through his word came to meet each other here we have an example of the Lord responding in a manner that is far above what we can ask or what we can even imagine and what happened when Boaz and Ruth met and what happens when the sinner and Jesus meets they met in the field of Boaz and we can say that that is a figure for us of the field of Jesus Christ and what is the field of Jesus Christ it is his word his word is his field and how good it is if through the providence of God through the sovereignty of God that he has brought you into this field tonight in order to meet

Jesus Christ and what happened with Ruth and Boaz their meeting began a relationship and that is what happens when the sinner and Jesus meets in his field through his word they begin a relationship when we encounter God's grace and surrender to him we enter into a relationship that will last throughout eternity for by God's grace we experience the love that comes with our relationship with him when we encounter God's grace we will receive his direction his protection his affection and we shall find satisfaction that is exactly what Ruth happened to Ruth when she met up with

[30 : 24] Boaz and when that relationship began she received his direction you see that in the chapter as you go on and you read what Boaz was saying to her received his protection received his affection and found satisfaction and that's what the sinner finds who comes to Jesus Christ he will receive his direction his protection his affection and will find satisfaction it was so surprising to Ruth that this man should show her favour verse 10 why have I found favour in your eyes that you should take notice of me since I am a foreigner she is so touched by this man's dealings with her is that not the way God dealt with me and you and showing us his grace while we were yet sinners Paul writing to

Rome says God shows us love for us and that why we were yet sinners Christ died for us Christ died for us Boaz words to Ruth now listen my daughter do not go to glean in another field or leave this one but keep close to my young woman he calls her my daughter which probably surprised her because she was aware as we noted that she was a stranger or that she was a foreigner but Boaz informed her in verse 11 and 12 that he knows all about the choice she has made to live with Naomi and become one of her people if you go back to chapter 1 when she left Moab and followed Naomi remember what she said thy

God shall be my God thy people shall be my people you know when we look at that we find that the order actually in chapter 1 is thy people shall be my people and thy God shall be my God sometimes people ask why is it in that order would it not be more logic to say thy God shall be my God and thy people my people well you know she is talking here from her experience and experience is that she wanted to put herself among the people of Israel and it was easier for her to say well your people will be my people and you know in Christian experience that can be how we interpret our experience sometimes it's easier for us to say well

God's people are my people the Lord's people are the ones I want to be with they are the ones I want fellowship with is the Lord's people might be easier at time to say that than to say well God is my God it's just the way that we experience things and for now Ruth that was the way she experienced it she wanted to put her lot in with the people of God and she came into Bethlehem and she came to this field that belonged to Boaz now listen my daughter do not go to glean in another field or leave this one but keep close to my young woman Boaz gladly accepted that now Ruth belonged to

Israel and he made it known to her my daughter he says a short while ago she belonged to Moab she was an enemy now she was in the family of Israel you know one of the most necessary and the most important activities of Christians is to remind one another about the family that we belong to and to remind one another about the family that we belong to by showing the grace of God to one another it's a great question is it not are we showing loving kindness and favour to one another Boaz words to Ruth now listen my daughter do not go to glean in another field or leave this one but keep close to my young woman 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 there we can see not only

[35 : 39] Boaz direction but his protection he says you stay close to my to the young woman for I have charged the young men not to touch you Ruth was a young widow she was vulnerable and so but here we see how Boaz protects her and we read that when she rose to glean Boaz had instructed his young men saying let her glean even among the sheaves and do not reproach her and also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean and do not rebuke her in trying to bring all this together we can see how in Boaz we can see how the love is real and love came together love and love is not contradictory at all the

Bible says that the law is our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ the law leads us hopeless and helpless in order that we will come and take hold of Jesus Christ we can see in his words his love and providing protection for Ruth keep close to my young woman 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 or Ruth the Moabite said besides he said to me he shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest you see how vulnerable she was you can see how she is twisting things and she is carried away by the world and the lust of her flesh our sinful nature can carry us away we are still in a sinful body and that can sometimes carry us away and that's what happened what

Boaz said to her was stay close to my young woman but when she came to relate the story to Naomi you notice what she said that Boaz had said you shall stay close to my young men but we can see here how there are so many dangers that we are so unaware of due to our sinful nature from which we need to be protected the manner of this protection was given but stay close to my young woman she was not to be in isolation because that could leave her very vulnerable but stay close but stay close by my young woman be in fellowship with them and look on the field my field and we are to also look on the field of the word of

God he told her that her eyes were to be on the field and that she go after the reapers that we can so often be let astray without look away from where we ought to focus let our eyes be focused upon the word of God and also let us go after the reapers and who are the reapers well may I suggest those who have studied the word of God before us and has left us bundles of purpose to glean the legacy that our forefathers have left for us let us glean in their legacy are we truly gleaning what do we make of what the reapers have left behind we can also see how provision was made for her to be fed when she was hungry and to meet with her thirst now this is important to notice here although she was a cleaner and not a reaper nevertheless her needs was going to be met from the same fountain as the reapers verse 9 and 14 when you are thirsty go to the vessels and drink with the young men have thrown come here and eat some bread and dip your marshal in the wine she sat beside the reapers and he passed to her roasted grain you see there are times when she might have envied the reapers but at the end she was just like them drinking and eating from the same fountain there are times when we can envy those who are reapers in the word of

God while we ourselves struggle perhaps with gleaning and yet at the end we drink and eat from the same fountain which belongs to our Boaz to the Lord Jesus Christ gleaning was hard work especially in the heat of the day was a work that generated thirst and hunger and there is no doubt that if we are diligent and consistent in our gleaning in the word of God it will also generally spill your thirst and spiritual hunger and it must have been rather refreshing for us to go aside for a while and drink and eat and share together where does Christian fellowship enter into your life and into my life can we identify ourselves with spiritual thirst and with spiritual hunger that is the most amazing thing is it not we come to the word of

[44 : 11] God because we are thirsty and hungry and yet when we glean in the word of God it only brings more thirst and more hunger because we want more we want to know more we want to learn more from the word of God and we know that her gleaning did not go unrewarded we know that she gleaned and when she came there was enough there for herself and for Naomi and we read that she was satisfied that she was satisfied rose felt that she was not like the other reapers or perhaps the other cleaners who may have been in the field and are there not times when we ourselves may feel that we are not like the other cleaners and reapers in the field of our master but it is obvious from the account that

Boaz was kind and a thoughtful man for we find Boaz reassuring her in spite of her own feelings in addition to saying that the Lord is a reward Boaz also mentioned that God is a refuge and Boaz uses a tender image when likening him to a mother bird looking after her young the imagery tells us that God provides total safety for those who trust in him it also tells us that the Lord provides personal comfort for those who trust in him a young bird could be safe as long as it was with its mother but it's a different thing to be under the mother's wings that gave warmth as well as security the young bird would sense the power of its mother in a different way when it was covered by her wings so God is the true refuge for me and you

God through Jesus Christ is a true refuge for me and for you well here then we have the story of Ruth who in God's providence through his sovereignty met with Boaz because she went to glean in the field of Boaz and they met together and began a relationship that ended up in marriage she was protected as she was directed she received instruction she was fed she was satisfied it's a picture of what is true of the believer and for you tonight as you came here into the field of the Lord Jesus Christ which is his word have you met how you met

Jesus like Ruth met Boaz has there a relationship began tonight that will end up in a marriage to Jesus Christ where are you tonight in your standing with God remember and I end with this that your relationship to God will determine where your eternal destiny is whether it be hell or whether it be heaven it all comes down to this our relationship with God and his revealed will tells us that if we commit ourselves to Jesus Christ that our eternal destiny is assured that it will be heaven that it will be with the

Lord Jesus Christ remember the pathway for Ruth was not easy we have here in chapter two the beginning of our relationship and as we go on we find it wasn't easy and when you commit yourself to Jesus I'm not going to promise you an easy life it's not going to be easy but it is going to be a life that will bring satisfaction a life that will bring a reward as Paul says for me to live is Christ and to die is gain may the Lord bless our thoughts let us pray eternal and ever blessed Lord we give thanks that by thine own sovereign providence that thou has brought us together tonight that thou has brought us to glean in thy word and we pray oh

[49 : 30] Lord that we would have been blessed gleaning in the word of God tonight and we pray oh Lord that each and every one of us would have met with thee and that we would be encouraged and strengthened in our faith to go forward even in the midst of all the difficulties that life presents to us that our commitment to thee would be sure that our trust upon thee would be sure we ask oh Lord that thou bless thy word to us and our reflection upon it and all that we ask for the forgiveness of our sins is in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Amen we shall conclude by singing to the Lord's praise from Psalm 37 at verse 3 set thou thy trust upon the Lord and be thou doing good and so thou in the land shall dwell and verily have food delight thyself in

God he'll give thine heart's desire to thee thy way to God committed trust it bring to pass shall he and liken to the light he shall thy righteousness display and he thy judgment shall bring forth like noontide of the day rest in the Lord and patiently wait for him do not fret for him who prospering in his way success in sin doth get we shall sing these verses to the Lord's praise Psalm 37 verse 3 to 7 set thou thy trust upon the Lord and be thou doing good set thou thy trust upon the Lord and be the day good and so the wind the land shall dwell and readily hovered delight thyself in

God he give thine heart desire to me thy way to God God let him rest ending to past the year and like unto the light he shall thy righteousness display and hear thy judgment joy for life and died of the day rest in the

Lord on patient he wait for him do not rest for him he will spring this way success in sin the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more Amen Amen