

Intro: From the courage and humility of Ruth's honorable toil to the God-glorifying greeting of this mighty man of valor for the workers that he loves we see the hand of the LORD bringing it all together for the salvation of these widows and the joy of the Kinsman. Oh, the joy of the great Kinsman is to redeem His beloved, to bring her into His house and bless her with His bountiful care and His delighted love. Here we see the romance begin in the barley fields, giving us a wonderful picture of the redemptive romance of Jesus and His bride, the church of the redeemed.

In these three short verses we have the drama unfold in a new way as all the major players speak great lines that reveal their characters a little more as the layer of ignorance is peeled away by heart-revealing words of courage and humility, of resolution and compassion, and of God-centered glory and joy. And yet, the Main Character is oddly silent, still standing to the side in the shadows off the stage. And yet, though He is silent, He is not absent. In fact, in the silence of His words His glorious sovereign power is seen more clearly. In what appears to be an accident we see the romance in the fields of Bethlehem take flight by the working of the LORD.

1. The Loving One Speaks Courageously

- a. Naomi doesn't seem concerned about food
- b. Ruth has hope and is doing what is necessary for survival
 - i. not only for herself, but also for Naomi
 - ii. Love Works Courageously
- c. Ruth is showing great courage to go out on her own
 - i. The narrator points out, again, that she is a Moabitess
 - ii. Indicates, along with other passages, racial tension here
 1. A woman gleaning alone was dangerous
 2. A foreign woman gleaning alone was more dangerous
 3. A Moabite woman (assuming recent contention between Moab and Judah) gleaning alone was incredibly dangerous!!
 - a. See 2:8-10,15,20-23
- d. When something needs to be done, integrity finds a way to get it done
 - i. It was not normal in this culture for the younger woman to make plans and address them to the older woman first. This was bold!
 - ii. Note that Ruth didn't demand that Naomi help or get off her self-pity wagon and start gathering food
 - iii. She just made up her mind to go and do what needed to be done

2. The Loving One Speaks Humbly

- a. She speaks respectfully to Naomi
 - i. Even though Ruth has been ignored and mistreated by Naomi, she still respects and serves her mother in law
 1. Her love is truly selfless love
 - ii. Though there is respect and possibly permission being asked, she has set her minds to go to the fields
 1. The language indicates purposed direction: she has made up her mind to go
 2. And yet, she speaks with permissive respect
 - iii. She serves for Naomi's sake, not her own sake
 1. Hopeful, Faith-filled, Trusting in YHWH
 2. This is an example (narrative) of self-forgetfulness

- b. gleaning
 - i. pick up what the servants of the field's owner missed at harvest
 - 1. unproductive subsistence work
 - 2. much like trying to survive today solely by collecting cans
 - ii. the outer band of grain was left uncut for the poor and the traveler
 - 1. This shows just how unproductive gleaning actually was
 - 2. Imagine Ruth trying to glean for TWO people by following after the reapers
- c. after (indicating humility, going last)
 - i. Ruth did not presume on her "rights" but placed herself in the last place
 - 1. She knew what the Law gave to her, but she did not presume it
 - 2. She sacrificed her ego for the sake of Naomi
 - a. She stepped to the back of the bus
 - b. She was doing the gleaning for two
 - c. Bore the reproach of poverty, outsider, femininity in a patriarchal society, and of widowhood
 - ii. Not knowing who would go before her, she placed herself behind
- d. a man in whose eyes I find favor
 - i. she saw all of her gleaning, though protected by the Word of God, would be due to the grace of another
 - 1. Finding favor in a landowner's eyes meant easier gleaning
 - 2. Wisdom plans ahead and does not merely grab what's immediate or easy
 - ii. she did not presume, but humbly requested
 - 1. This is unusual, and shows a great amount of humility and boldness
 - 2. Though courageous, she also acknowledges her complete dependence upon the goodwill of the landowner
 - a. Simply because the Lord has instituted the rights of the poor in the land, doesn't mean that His people will obey (hence Judges)
 - b. She is looking for a man who obeys the Lord and will show kindness to the poor and the weak

3. The Wounded One Speaks Simply, yet Compassionately:

- a. Go
 - i. simple, yet not going herself
 - ii. Also, interestingly, there is no warning of danger or direction of where to go glean
 - 1. Naomi seems to have become either preoccupied with her suffering or apathetic
 - 2. Either way, she seems rather unconcerned about anything
- b. my daughter
 - i. softening toward Ruth
 - ii. Ruth is family to her
- c. The story then moves abruptly toward Ruth and Boaz's relationship in the sweet-smelling fields of ~~romance~~ grain 😊

4. The Faithful One Speaks with God-centeredness

- a. Shows that Boaz truly is a follower of YHWH
 - i. Even his business life is permeated with His reliance and trust in the Lord
 - ii. Boaz loves YHWH
- b. Opens up to the readers the hope that Boaz would redeem Naomi's land
- c. Boaz also visits his land

- i. Good businessman
 - 1. Boaz cares about his responsibilities
 - 2. He works to be the most effective
- ii. Cares about his workers, they are not merely workers
 - 1. Blesses them
 - 2. Desires the LORD to be near to them
 - 3. Note that he seems more concerned about the people than the land (\$\$)
 - a. He is on good terms with his foreman
 - b. His workers listen to him
- iii. He has influenced his workers to greater faith in the LORD
 - 1. His greeting elicits their response
 - 2. 'may the LORD bless you!'

5. The Sovereign One Works His Glorious Providence Silently

- a. Ruth “happened” to come to the part of the field owned by Boaz (the Redeemer mentioned in verse 1)
 - i. Sarcastic use of “happened”?
 - 1. “encountered without intention”
 - 2. Note how the narrator describes Boaz again: from the clan of Elimelech
 - 3. This redundant tag from verse 1 is a reminder that Ruth and Naomi could be redeemed by this man: YHWH is working
 - 4. Other uses in Scripture of the word “happened”
 - a. 1 Samuel 6:9 – Philistines wonder if it was chance/coincidence or if YHWH had struck them
 - b. 1 Sam 20:26 – Saul thought that David had an “accident” and became unclean so he could not make their appointment
 - c. Ecc 2:14-15; 3:19 – death “happens” to come to all people
 - 5. The root of “happens” almost always has YHWH lurking in the scene
 - a. Gen 24:12; 48:28-29
 - b. Num 11:23; 23
 - ii. From the *perspective of the players in the story* there was no clear indication of God’s will for Ruth to find Boaz
 - 1. The true Hero of the story leaves nothing to chance
 - a. Pr 16:9,33; 20:24; 21:1
 - b. Ezra 6:22
 - c. Jer 10:23
 - d. Gen 50:20
 - e. 1 Cor 4:19 – “I will come to you soon [make plans], if the Lord wills [mindset of humility in God’s providential sovereignty]...”
 - i. **Acts 2:22-24**; 18:21
 - ii. Rom 1:10; 15:32
 - iii. Heb 6:3
 - iv. **James 4:13-16**
 - v. 1 Pet 3:17
 - iii. Ruth didn’t see anything particular about Boaz’s field that would show her it was “God’s will” for her to glean there
 - 1. All she did was choose wisely after a foreman that was gracious

2. Note that she shared her story and asked permission from the foreman first (see 2:6-7)
 3. “always planned by God, but unpredictable by man” -Marvin Olasky
- b. Boaz “happened” to come to the fields that day and saw Ruth
- i. Boaz’s arrival is indicated by an interjective “Behold!”
 1. Literally compounded with Boaz: “Behold-Boaz!” and stands out from the text’s flow strongly
 2. Surprise! What a coincidence!
 3. The narrator is sarcastically using this “chance happening”
 - ii. Next part of the chapter
 - iii. Fields were outside of town
- c. The LORD is the true Protector of Widows and the Helpless
- i. Ps 146:9
 - ii. Ps 68:5
 - iii. Ex 22:22

Conclusion:

The Lord doesn’t always reveal His will to us in ways that are obvious and directed. However, that does not mean that His will is not being done. Over and over again throughout history God has shown His benevolent and sovereign power in leading His people to honor and glorify Him through the apparent means of unintended consequences. There is great hope for us in this! God’s desires and His perfect will cannot be ruined by our mistakes. We don’t need a sign from the sky or a feeling in the heart to accomplish His plan. We simply choose wisely according to what we do know, like Ruth choosing the field of a gracious man because she knew the LORD had provided for the poor through His institution of gleaning. What she did know she acted upon, but God had greater plans of which she did not know, and they were for her good, her glorious good. She acted with courage, doing what was right even when her mother would not. She acted humbly, too, knowing that even though she was right it did not mean that she was better, nor that what good may come of it was outside of the grace of others. She didn’t presume upon her rights, but respectfully and demurely requested help while she worked with great fervor and courage.

Boaz shows us that all of our lives are lived within the grace of the LORD. Every dollar, every greeting, every chance encounter runs within the sphere of God’s kindness and blessing. His words are infused with the LORD. He speaks of Him from the beginning to the end. The LORD is so precious to Him that all those around him are affected by His vocal faith. He truly is God-dependent and God-centered in his life, blessing those around him with great faith by bringing God glory.

Oh, that we would happen to come to the fields of Christ, the God-Man! We long to be in His fields, where He is calling out greatness and glory. To be drawn to Him through every circumstance, finding ourselves at His feet where His beauty salves our sorrow and His gracious words calm all of our fears. Bring us there, O God, to the fields of Christ. For there is more blessing there in the gleanings of His glory than in the entire harvest of all other fields combined. Bring us by the Spirit to where Jesus reveals Himself to us and fills up our souls to your glory and our joy.