

Aug 30, 2020 | Mickey Klink

A Worthy Man

[This is an imperfect transcript from a pre-recorded sermon. Our volunteers work hard, but we appreciate your grace.]

[Ruth 2:1-13](#) 2 Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. 2 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." 3 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. 4 And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you!" And they answered, "The Lord bless you." 5 Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" 6 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. 7 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." 8 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. 9 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." 10 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?" 11 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. 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!" 13 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."

Greetings, Hope Church! Thanks for joining us this Sunday morning. We are continuing in our series in the book of Ruth. We're calling it **Behold, the Redeemer** because, as we'll get a glimpse of today, we see this man come in and redemptively engage with this family, the one we've been talking about, this mother and her daughter-in-law, Naomi and Ruth. We see how, ultimately, that not only points to Christ as a type, as a one who comes and redeems us, aliens and foreigners and those with nothing, fully in need, but it points to Christ as well, just as in the genealogy that Matthew says, with Ruth being the great grandmother of King David himself, who was in the line of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So let me just pray for us as we're going to jump into the text today. It was already read for you so after we pray we'll look at three different things that the text communicates to us this morning.

Father, thank you that you are able to minister to your people, even through this technology. Father, this is part of your common grace and we just acknowledge, even though we're much more familiar with it several months now in the process, we thank you for your common grace gift. We thank you for the staff that are able to facilitate that for our people. We thank you for our brothers and sisters and pray specifically for those who maybe are feeling lonely or isolated, as they continue to be on guard during this pandemic. We ask for you to care for them, and, Father, help all of us find ways to minister to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, as the people of God. So Father speak your truth to us through your word, may your Spirit be working in us, fostering habits, postures, understandings, that we better understand and worship you. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Powerful story, the book of Ruth! I mean, if any of you have had exposure to the book, if you have, you have seen and know that this is such a beautiful story. It almost can be dangerous if you do

know the story, because you can just quickly run through some of the main themes and miss some of the details. I mean, in fact, even as we talked about it last week, if you were with us, we talked about how if you only had chapter one you would think this story is about Naomi. But it's in chapter two and moving forward that now the spotlight moves from Naomi to her daughter-in-law, Ruth, the Moabite. And now we see how God is working in and around the person of Ruth. But I say that because the first thing I want to show you - there's three things in this text that I just want to spend some time on this morning talking about - the first thing I want to show you is a particular detail.

Look in verse one - it's introducing a new scene, a transition happens and the word "now" lets us know that - "now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz." My first comment today is to watch Boaz, and I say that because the narrator specifically focuses our attention on him. We should ask the question: why does the narrator tell us Boaz is a worthy man? Why does it want us to look there? What does it want us to see? We would have actually found this out almost immediately anyway. We would have seen that he is a man of great character and compassion, one who is seeking to follow the Lord and obey his commands. So what is the text doing when it directs us there?

It wants us to look at him and see something that might reflect God's character, something that might show God's will, maybe even something that might depict the work of his son, Jesus Christ. Remember how Jesus Christ is the second Adam, who, as we're thinking about the whole biblical story, fulfills and is shadowed through all these Old Testament characters, so that we see that Jesus Christ is the one man who lived a perfect life, offering a perfect sacrifice in full obedience to God. And we can begin to see glimpses of him in the work of these shadows in the Old Testament, even someone like Boaz. I say, "watch Boaz," because this: I think we need to learn, and in the middle of a sermon, in going through the book expository like this, we need to learn how to follow where the Bible points us. Where does the Bible take us? What does it want us to look at? What does it want us to see?

This book is not a story from which we are simply to draw morals for human behavior. It wants us to see something we should know because of the full story that, ultimately, the Bible is about: God, the covenant-keeping, covenant-promising God, who fulfills in his person and in his work all that we would ever want or desire. So, ultimately, this book is going to tell us about God! It's going to make God known. It's going to reveal the son, Jesus Christ, and the gospel, the work of Jesus, and the entering of his kingdom and his power, and the collection and gathering of his people, the church.

So when the Bible points to something, when it winks at you, when it kind of nudges you to look in a certain direction, we want to take notice! Watch Boaz, watch the way he responds to God. The way he listens to him. Watch the way he trusts. Watch the way he serves. Watch the way he sacrifices. To be honest with you, even in our text here, these 13 verses, watch the way he speaks of God, including God in all his conversations, in all his plans, in all his interactions. You see a God-centered man. He is a worthy man, one that is of character and of dignity, and it reflects who God is.

I say all that because, even though we're in the middle of a sermon series, and we're jumping into God's word, and we're wanting to learn what God has for us, some of what we learn from studying God's word is about the word itself. These comments, "Boaz is a worthy man," help us understand the story we're reading, but they also help us know how to read the Bible itself. To get used to its character, the way it's bent, it's style, it's personality. The way God shows himself, the way he teaches us - so watch Boaz and, in doing so, learn how to follow where the Bible points.

The second thing I want to share with you this morning is this - reject coincidences! I love the scene in verse two. Verse one was introducing Boaz to you, then look at verse two with me:

“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.”” Naomi says that. “So she set out [Ruth did] and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, [and note this middle of verse three] and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz.” I can only imagine when the narrator wrote those words he was smiling. “She happened to come” - just so happened that the field in which she entered was a field that belonged to this guy named Boaz, who we just heard about as a worthy man, who we just heard is actually related to Elimelech, that is a relative of Naomi and who we're about to find out is literally a God-fearing, God honoring, man of God. The Bible doesn't have a doctrine of coincidences. There's no such doctrine.

We use that language all the time. That's our common speech. We say things like “coincidence.” We say things like “luck.” We say things like, “fortunate chances.” And we speak that language all the time. You will not find such language in the Bible! In moments of chaos and happenstance, it is the sovereign Creator and Sustainer whose hand is upon every moment, of every part of his creation. That is so important for us to understand.

Even if you're listening to me say this and you're in high school or junior high or you're in maybe an elementary school, you can understand this. You need to know from God's word that God is so big, that there isn't anything that he isn't working in, caring over, fathering, shepherding. God is that big! That's how big God is! And you and I must learn to make the bigness of God, this sovereign reign of God, even if we can't understand when he's doing something, or exactly how he's doing something, or even why he's doing something - that we understand that he is sovereignly directing all things.

Jesus spoke this way with a probably a metaphor that hits it on the head more directly. Jesus said in one of the gospels, not even a sparrow falls to the ground without God's knowledge, and his interest, and his authority. Think of just going way back, hiking up in the boundary waters in northern Minnesota, and hiking well beyond, when the roads have stopped and you've portaged several lakes and imagine all by yourself walking two, three hours, hiking and seeing a little sparrow up in a tree that no other human on the earth would even know is there, maybe no other human have even known it existed. Jesus is teaching us that God not only knows about that sparrow, but has interest in that sparrow, and is even sovereignly reigning over all of its life.

What Jesus is saying is, if that's true for a small little bird in the middle of nowhere, how much more is that true of you and me - that we are literally made in his image, we are this pinnacle of creation made to to have a priestly rule over God's earth, under his sovereign kingship! That is how God made humans. The significance of every person! If that is true, and sparrows are those under his rule and his interest and his knowledge, how much more you? So to speak of coincidences is just not true. That's why the narrator in verse 3 is smiling when he writes, “She just happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz.”

I know this is mysterious for our minds to understand. I know it's hard to understand. Well, how did that happen? How did God navigate that in such a way? That is beyond our pay grade. Yet we are to know this truth and to trust it. It's to be the way that we function: rather than thinking of the doctrine of coincidence, the Bible would teach us about the doctrine of providence.

We've used that word before in this series. Kids, if you hear the word providence and you're thinking, that sounds like a big Bible word, it's a good, important word - providence. Literally inside the word providence is the word provide, that God is literally providing. The very fact that our hearts are beating right now is because of his sovereign reign. The very fact that there is air, and our lungs are

breathing in oxygen, is part of his provision. That he is providing, that the rain falls on the ground! And as much as he designed the world, and a meteorologist or scientist could explain the natural phenomena, we as Christians know that it is part of God's common grace. Grace is another word for gift. It's God's common gift, as he provides for his people and for his creation.

And we learn to trust in that - the God who created all things also guides them and sustains all things, with the exact same power by which he created them, and with the exact same personal attention. Think of that, just an analogy, think of the creativity of God making the snowflake, or the creativity of God designing the human eye. The same personal attention that God used to create the world, he also uses to provide for and sustain it. That is so important for us to understand.

What does that look like? I think we see a glimpse of that even in verse 4. When you see the language of Boaz, right, remember he's a worthy man, we are to watch Boaz, the language of Boaz, where he speaks things like "the Lord be with you." And then they responded back, "the Lord bless you." Notice how the category of God (even if some might argue that's just some kind of a cultural greeting of sorts), in many ways covenant people of God (and that's what Boaz is) speak with the full knowledge and awareness that that is ultimately what the Lord will do. Like, we just include God in the equation. We don't speak as if it's a closed universe, or as if God is some deistic being out there who creates all things, but is not intimately involved. We speak of God being involved.

Maybe another example, this comes from a letter in the New Testament, the letter of James, in chapter 4, literally teaches us not to even be prideful about planning for tomorrow, or what we will do the day after next. But this is what James 4 teaches us to say: "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." Isn't that interesting language? "If the Lord wills." Because of his sovereign reign, because of his providing with great interest, we are seeking, "If the Lord wills, we will do this or do that." That doesn't mean we're frozen and afraid to act. But we simply know there are no coincidences. That God is sovereignly participating, and intermingling his purposes and his provisions, in the midst of our active lives. And so we speak that way, we think that way, we pray that way, and we trust that way. Lord, I trust - for this particular test, or this particular expense, or this particular relationship - I trust you in those things! Because I know that the same power and personal attention you put into creating this body or this world, you are also putting into providing for it, guiding it and directing it.

So the first two things we've looked at - watch Boaz and learn how to follow where the Bible points you. The second - reject coincidences, for the Bible rejects any such thing as a doctrine of coincidence. Last thing - think about the poor and the foreigner.

This text is a remarkable display of concern for God's people to care about those who are outsiders. Now we've talked a little bit about how difficult it must have been for Ruth, who is a Moabite, to enter into a covenant community. I mean, this area in and around where Ruth and Naomi had moved was literally all believers, or at least believers as part of the covenant, in the Old Covenant. They had, literally, laws and practices designed to follow the word of God, and one of the things the Word of God said is to say that the Moabite was to be excluded from worship, that they were a bad influence, they rejected God. So you can imagine that there would be not just religious but kind of political reasons that there would be animosity toward, there'd be at least a cold shoulder to, someone like Ruth. Yet the text assumes, and you'll see this in the context, the text assumes that there is a place for the foreigner.

Look with me at the language there in the beginning part of our text. Ruth is saying to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, after him in whose sight I shall find favor." Meaning, she knows that she's going to need someone to be generous to her, that she's going to

glean. And then she goes and “so she set out” and, look at verse three “and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers.” Meaning, when the harvesters ran through - picture, even though this is before tractors, but picture a tractor going through and harvesting the grain or the corn in the field. Whatever fell out of the wagon, whatever was not picked up by the machine, whatever a worker may have missed, was to be left untouched, in the providence of God, so that somebody who was poor or somebody who was a foreigner could come and get that food. In the same way, the outsides of the fields were to be left untouched. Just leave the last couple rows, leave them there for whoever walking by on the way may be hungry and in need.

The context for this is actually Leviticus, chapter 19. I'm going to read a couple of those verses and I want you to hear them, but no need to turn there if you just want to listen to me. Leviticus 19, verses 9 and 10, listen to what the Lord says to his people: “When you reap the harvest [there's that reaping word you see in verse 3 of Ruth 2] of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest [meaning the stuff that fell out or was missed]. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, either shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard [there's the gleanings again]. You shall leave them for the poor and the sojourner.” Sojourner → traveler, sojourner → foreigner, sojourner → immigrant. That's Ruth. She's a foreigner. In fact, she's an immigrant. And there she is, in God's people, and literally God established this as a law, a command that he wants his people to obey. Now I didn't read something at the very end of verse 10 in Leviticus 19. After, “You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner” God ends with something like his signature, he ends with “I am the Lord your God.” It's like he signs it, like the president signing a new bill into law, he signs it with his signature. God literally signs that as a law for us to follow.

That's why Ruth knows, based upon the providential care for the poor and the immigrant, she knows that if she finds a field that there should be an edge that's left untouched. There should be parts that could be gleaned that weren't in the wagon, that she can take. And she just simply needs the good favor of the workers or the owner of a field to honor God's law and do just that. And she just happens to come to the field of Boaz.

How should we think about this command? How should we think about this in regard to the poor and the immigrant, the foreigner? How should we think about that? When I use the word immigrant, immediately, what comes to mind? If you have seen any news, or listened to any kind of coffee shop conversations over the last few years, you will know that that is such a heated topic in our day. So I want to enter this into this with a slightly different angle; I kind of want to flank you with this.

For a moment, I want to separate the policy of immigration from the posture toward an immigrant. I want to separate those two, because what we normally do is we jump right to policy, and yet there must be room for differences. There must be an allowance that a nation state (a country like the United States or Canada or Mexico or Great Britain or name the country), there must be an allowance for a nation to self-determine how they will guard its borders, who, with whom they will relate or who they will allow in, who they will exclude. What does the policy look like? What are the practices for immigration? Those are things that are hotly debated. What I want to ask is: is there a place for differences in opinion regarding policy, and yet a unified biblical approach to posture? To be to be frank, I skimmed 30 or so passages in the Bible, Old and New Testament, that talk about immigrants in preparation for what I'm sharing with you today, and I found in numerous cases there wasn't as much talk on policy at all, except for the few like this one in Leviticus 19, talking about a theocratic nation (that is, a covenant people of God). There wasn't as much around policy regarding something that the U.S., for example, can take on. Meaning, that's a jagged line issue: there can, and arguably should be, differences of opinion on jagged line versus straight line issues. There should be differences of opinion on what an immigration policy should look like, but I will tell you this: it sure seems to me that there should be a uniform understanding, a uniform posture, regarding how

we think about the immigrant. How we are called to put them in our mind. How we're called to leave an edge, or leave the extra, the stuff that fell out of the wagon (in an agricultural world), for the poor and the immigrant.

Now what that looks like today . . . these are good questions! And maybe in your small group, you'll talk about those. Maybe after this sermon is done, if you're sitting at home with your family, or maybe when you're driving home (this same sermon being given on Sunday with the brothers and sisters gathered outside), there's something to talk about. What's that look like for us? How are we leaving the gleanings of our resources for the poor and the immigrant? How are we leaving the edges or the corners of our fields, whatever that looks like for us in our modern economy? How are we doing that now as Christians? Now we could totally disagree about policy, immigration policies. We could totally disagree, but I'm not sure we can disagree about posture, because God, in the context of Leviticus 19 (by the way, not only does he give his signature after he makes his claim, but he literally, in the beginning, talks about his holiness, 19:2 - "You shall be holy for, I the Lord your God am holy" and then he begins to describe how holiness should be reflected in how we honor our parents, how we avoid idols, and by verses 9 and 10, how we care for the immigrant.

Brothers and sisters, maybe that's a way to come from a different angle to this hotly debated issue; Democrat or Republican, open borders or "let's build a wall." Whatever your policy bent is, I would ask that you would check your posture. And I ask that not on some policy bent or special legal authority - I ask you that biblically! That your posture toward the poor and your posture toward the immigrant would reflect the posture of God, and, at least in this text, would reflect the posture of Boaz, who is a worthy man that Scripture honors with such words, and would be a way that reflects how God would view us as we obey his word.

Let me pray:

Father, thank you for your goodness to us. Thank you for your compassion. Thank you that your word teaches us how to read it. Help us to see these details, Father. Thank you that your word reminds us that you are entirely in control. May the members and participants of Hope Evangelical Free Church have a robust doctrine of providence, trusting you even when they don't exactly know how, or when, or why, and, Father, may we reflect Old and New Testament, stemming from your holiness and your command as the Lord our God, think and prepare to care for the poor and the immigrant. And, Father, may it not be about policy, eventually maybe, may our first thought not be policy, may our first thought be posture. Soften our hearts. Remind us that we were once aliens and strangers, that we were once outsiders. Father, break our hearts of our pride and our self-focus and our selfishness and our hoarding. Help us to leave gleaning and edges in our resources for those in need, especially Father, as this text points out, the outsider. Father, bless our congregation, we pray. We entrust them to you based upon your doctrine of providence. May they have a week that honors you as they live out the truths from this text. I pray in Jesus' name, amen.