

Ruth 2 (*Matthew 7:7-12*)

Opening Prayer: *Psalm 36:5-9*

Have you ever wondered why the “Book of Ruth” isn’t called “The Book of Boaz”? Today, we meet Boaz, and he is described as “a man of standing.” He is certainly introduced as a hero in chapter 2, and anyone who has read “The Book of Ruth” knows that he wonderfully fulfills his role as the guardian-redeemer (sorry if I spoiled it for anyone). So, why isn’t this book named after him? Perhaps, it is because this book demonstrates the wisdom of God at work in the lives of ordinary people during difficult times.

While God is rarely mentioned in Ruth, He is providentially in the background, and He will fulfill His sovereign plan of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles (even Moabite widows) through His promised King. The means by which the Lord will fulfill this plan, however, will not be the way the world would attempt to carry out such a plan. No. God’s wisdom and strength look like foolishness and weakness to the world.

Remember, Naomi’s husband, Elimelek, foolishly moved his family to Moab during a time of famine in the Promised Land, but he and sons died apart from God and His People. Their deaths left Naomi and two daughters-in-law alone without any children. Without children, especially boys, women were in an extremely vulnerable position - needing to seek provisions for food. This is why God’s law allowed such people to glean from the fields, which means pick up left over grain after the harvesters, so the poor could find food to eat.

If we recall, Ruth and Naomi have returned from the land of Moab to the Land of Promise; to Naomi’s God and her people. Naomi is bitter and empty, but we now find her in Bethlehem, “the house of bread”. One of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, has loyally remained with Naomi. Yet, Naomi says she is empty? Last time, we learned about Ruth’s amazing kindness, her loyal love toward her mother-in-law Naomi, *and yet* Naomi states the Lord has brought her back empty. There’s a hint of Naomi discounting Ruth; perhaps even being embarrassed by Ruth, her Moabite daughter-in-law that clung to her, her God and her People. Perhaps Ruth serves as a painful reminder of her time in Moab. Here, at the beginning of the book, Naomi is so caught up in her bitterness that she fails to see God’s gift to her in Ruth. Even at

the end of the book, Naomi is so filled with joy that she also seems to forget Ruth; the one the Lord used to bring about this fullness and rest for Naomi.

As we will see today, it is Ruth who will take the initiative to go out seeking fullness for her empty mother-in-law, and Ruth finds hope for this in the ‘barely fields of Boaz’. That certainly appears to be weak and foolish to the Jews during this time of the Judges; almost as weak and foolish as a Crucified Messiah to the Jews of the first century. I think this could be a reason why this particular book of the Bible is named after Ruth; after a weak Moabite widow whom the Lord God used to fulfill His purposes. In seeking fullness for Naomi, Ruth finds abundance through the kindness (loyal love) of Boaz, and this opens the door to the greater hope of redemption. Today, we have a story of **Seeking Fullness and Finding Kindness**.

1. A New Setting (Verses 1-3) **Coincidence or Providence**
 - a. God’s loyal love, His kindness, is being worked out providentially.
2. The Right Time and Place (Verses 4-16) **Protection and Provision**
 - a. (Verses 8-9) Boaz to Ruth
 - b. (Verse 11) Ruth to Naomi
 - c. (Verse 12) Prayer for the LORD’s (Who is there, in background.)
 - i. Remember in verse 4, the first thing out of the lips of Boaz is “The Lord be with you.”
 - ii. And, as the Lord uses Ruth to fill Naomi, so will the Lord use Boaz to fulfill his own request here in verse 12 - that Ruth be rewarded for coming under the God of Israel’s wings for refuge. Boaz, himself, will be the wings of the Lord that give refuge for Ruth and Naomi.
3. A New Hope (Verses 17-23) **Kindness and Kinsman**
 - a. (Verses 17-18, 23) Physical Fullness = This is an abundance of grain being provided here to fill Naomi.
 - i. Foretaste/grain → Future/family line
 - b. (Verse 20) A Greater Hope?
 - i. Remember, it helps our understanding that kindness, in this verse, is that loyal love we have discussed. This is a key to understanding “The Book of Ruth”; because, it is the kind of love and loyalty we have in covenanted relationships such as in marriage and in God’s relationship toward His People according to His Promises.

c. Kinsman = “Close Relative”

- i. Levirate Marriage (Ref. *Deut 25:5-10*; **READ *Ruth 1:11-13***)
 1. This practice of Levirate marriage is in the background here. A surviving brother would marry his widowed and childless sister-in-law. The first son born in this marriage would be considered the son and heir of the deceased husband. Therefore, this would provide both:
 - 1) a family line for the brother through his widow, and
 - 2) immediate support for the widow herself; delivering her from poverty. If there was no brother to marry the widow, then this obligation would fall on the nearest male relative, and this is a factor in the next aspect of the Law we’ll briefly consider.
- ii. The “Guardian Redeemer” (Ref. *Leviticus 25:25-55*)
 1. Boaz was a close enough relative to take on this role of the kinsman, or guardian, redeemer. Redemption can mean purchasing back, or rescuing, a person or a family’s property. In this instance, however, the closest guardian redeemer would also need to take on the responsibility of marrying Ruth, so that the property being redeemed would be passed on to her son as an heir to Naomi. However, as we’ll learn in the next chapter, there is a closer relative than Boaz who is able to fill these roles.
 2. “This is a crystallizing moment in the story” as we are introduced to the kind kinsman who can redeem.

Naomi, who saw her condition as empty, was indeed vulnerable to poverty and starvation; however, in Ruth’s kindness toward Naomi, Boaz extends kindness to Ruth. This act of kindness from Boaz toward Ruth causes Naomi to see the reality of God’s providential kindness amid her circumstances. As a result, Naomi no longer believes God dealt bitterly with her or turned against her (***Ruth 1:13, 20-21***). Naomi now sees, through the actions of her embarrassing childless Moabite daughter-in-law, that God has not removed His kindness (His “loyal love”) from her (***Ruth 2:20***). God used Ruth’s weak and foolish loyal love to open up a new and greater hope for Naomi that would fill her spiritually.

It is very easy for us to think God is against us in our suffering or that He just isn't there in the day-to-day drudgery of our lives; however, such difficulty and drudgery may just be the means by which God is bringing about something far greater beyond our imaginations, and we may never even know what it is. Do you trust, however, that God is sovereign and good? Do you believe that the sending of His Son Jesus Christ demonstrates His loyal loving sovereignty and goodness toward you?

The non-Christian, apart from being converted by God's grace, will never be full and never know true kindness; because, they do not seek refuge in God Who, alone, can fill our true needs. While there may be passing experiences of fullness and kindness, these are fleeting. Ultimately, the unbeliever will be left empty and bitter.

Christians, on the other hand, find fullness in Christ who is our kindness for us, and, by the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we are kind to others especially those who are empty and bitter seeking fullness for themselves. We can point them to the refuge we have in Jesus, and we can even use such opportunities to point them to a greater hope; redemption by the blood of Christ Who supremely demonstrates God's kindness toward people afflicted with bitter emptiness.

AMEN.