

Introduction: Cynics say, 'IT happens'. Overwhelmed people say, 'Everything is happening – all at once'. And, many people have shared a good experience with a good friend by saying, 'You'll never believe what just happened to me!' *** All too often, the majority of people never stop to think, or they may not even know, The One who is behind everything that happens. In fact, The God who created, loves, and keeps everyone and everything, is ultimately behind all that happens. The clearest statement about this was made by Solomon when he said, 'time and chance happen to them all' (Ecclesiastes 9:11, RSV throughout). *** Abraham's servant learned this truth from his master: the father of all who believe (Romans 4:11) when he was given the difficult assignment of finding a wife for Isaac. He stopped to pray and began; God of my master Abraham, grant me success today, I pray thee, and show steadfast love to my master, Abraham (Genesis 24:12). The phrase: 'grant me success', could be translated: 'cause to happen'. Not only did Abraham's servant know that God is sovereignly behind all that happens, he also knew of God's strong and faithful love to all who are His people through obedient faith (Romans 1:5; James 2:20-24). *** All these observations play a big part in our understanding and applying our chapter in the book of Ruth today to our role as members together in the Church of Jesus. The language in the beginning of the chapter says Ruth 'happened upon' the field of Boaz to glean grain. And, by the end of the chapter Naomi dares to hope, and has returning faith in God's steadfast love, because Boaz is a kinsman-redeemer of her late husband, Elimelech. *** Now, let's look at this chapter in Ruth and our portion from Jesus' 'Sermon on the Plain', so we will praise and worship the God who can and will give hope as He provides for His people, even when they are in the midst of a great disaster.

I. God sovereignly directs Ruth to glean in the field of Boaz, a relative of Naomi's husband, who inquires about her; he addresses her with grace, commends her for her loyalty to Naomi, and blesses her. (Ruth 2:1-13)

A. In God's providence, Ruth gleans in the field of a relative of Naomi's late husband, who later asks his foreman about her. (Verses 1-7)

1. Naomi had a relative, a mighty man of her husband's family, named Boaz; Ruth said to Naomi: I will go to the field and I will glean the grain after him in whose sight I will gain favor; and [Naomi] said: go my daughter; Then she went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened by chance on part of Boaz's field. (Verses 1-3)

Boaz: His name has three syllables and means 'in him (is) strength'. He is a relative of Elimelech.

Glean: Ruth must have learned about the provision in the Torah for needy people to glean what is left over after the first pass of the reapers (Leviticus 9:10; Deuteronomy 24:19).

Sovereign grace: She is expecting some landowner to show her (a foreigner) grace, so she can provide food for Naomi. She does not know Someone (Yahweh-God) provided for her to happen on the field of Naomi's kinsman-redeemer!

Yahweh provides harvest 'leftovers' for loyal foreigners

2. Behold! Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers: Yahweh be with y'all; they said: Yahweh bless thee; then Boaz said to his servant over his reapers: To whom is this young woman? (Verses 4-5)

Relation to workers: Boaz treats his workers with consideration and respect, and they appreciate him.

Good question: He has never seen Ruth before, so he asks his foreman a good question.

3. The servant answered: the Moabite young woman who came back with Naomi; she said: Please, and I will gather after the reapers of the sheaves; then she came, and she has stood from early morning until now; this one staying in the house a while. (Verses 6-7)

Four-fold answer: Simply put: she came from Moab with Naomi, begged to glean, has worked from dawn, and is taking a short rest at noon.

B. Then, Boaz addresses Ruth with grace, commends her for her faithfulness to Naomi and blesses her. (Verses 8-13)

1. Boaz said to Ruth: if not thou have heard, my daughter, not thou will glean in another field, keep close to my young women: thou walk after them, have I not commanded the young men not to touch thee; when thou are thirsty; go to the (water) vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn. (Verses 8-9)

Gracious address: He graciously addresses her as a daughter, and so he warns her about other fields.

Three provisions: He says she will walk with his other young woman gleaners; and he has told his young men they must not harass her; and she may have water whenever she thirsts.

2. Then she fell on her face and bowed to the ground and said: why have I found favor (grace) in thy sight, to acknowledge me – a foreigner. (Verse 10)

Grace: She is amazed a mighty man as Boaz would graciously acknowledge a foreign woman, using a stronger word than sojourner.

3. Boaz answered: it has been fully told to me all thou did for thy mother-in-law since thy husband died: thou left father and mother and thy native land, and thou came to a people thou did not know; Yahweh will repay thy work; and it will be reward from Yahweh, God of Israel, whom thou came to take refuge under His wings. (Verses 11-12)

Deeds: He knows all Ruth did: she left all she knew; and, she came to a place she did not know, overcoming any fear, all for Naomi's sake.

Reward: He says she will be rewarded by Yahweh (using a word derived from peace – shalom).

Refuge under His wings: She is a foreigner; but, she has been loyal to her mother-in-law; and, she has faith to seek refuge under Yahweh's wings, and He is now feeding her and Naomi.

Yahweh provides harvest 'leftovers' for loyal foreigners

Application: We know that we now have even more in Jesus; and, we worship God because He is always in control of whatever is happening in our lives that is unsettling to us because it is out of our control; but, when we trust Him, He will work everything for us to His good and glory (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:11-14).

4. She said: I will find grace in thy sight, my lord, because thou have comforted me and spoken to the heart of thy maid-servant; and I am not being as one of thy maid-servants. (Verses 13)

Grace to me: She expresses confidence that he will continue to give her grace even though he is her lord, because she has been comforted in her heart by his words, even though he has just met her.

II. Boaz commands his workers to leave behind extra grain for Ruth; she returns with forty quarts of grain; Naomi praises God for directing Ruth to a kinsman-redeemer; Jesus commands generosity because God promises to give to such people. (Ruth 2:14-23; Luke 6:36-38)

A. After providing lunch for Ruth, Boaz commands his workers to leave extra for her; she returns to her mother-in-law with forty quarts of barley; then, Naomi praises God for directing Ruth to the field of a kinsman-redeemer. (Ruth 2:14-23)

1. Boaz said to her at mealtime: thou must draw near and eat bread, and dip thy morsel in vinegar; then she sat beside the reapers and he passed her roasted grain; she ate, was satisfied and had some left over. (Verse 14)

Food: Boaz gave her enough simple food. She ate with the workers, and she had leftovers for Naomi.

2. When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his young men: even among the sheaves, she will glean, y'all will not reproach her; also pull out from the bundles, leave it for her and do not rebuke her. (Verses 15-16)

Gleaning: Boaz commands his workers to allow Ruth to continue to glean.

Extra mile: Moreover, they must pull out some good, already harvested grain, for her. And, do not rebuke her: Boaz may be thinking of Naomi, the widow of his relative.

3. She gleaned in the field until evening, then she beat out what she gleaned: about an ephah of barley; she took it and came into the city, then showed her mother-in-law what she gleaned, then she brought out and gave her what was left over. (Verses 17-18)

Huge haul: An ephah is forty dry quarts, a gleaning large enough to make bread for weeks!

Brought to Naomi: She also brought to Naomi the leftovers from her lunch.

Yahweh provides harvest 'leftovers' for loyal foreigners

4. Her mother-in-law said to her: where did thou glean today? where did thou work? Being blessed he who noticed thee; she told her mother-in-law his name is Boaz; Naomi said to her daughter-in-law; blessed be he by Yahweh, who has not forsaken (His) steadfast love to the living and the dead; the man is our kinsman-redeemer. (Verses 19-20)

Question: Naomi asks Ruth where she worked and what man noticed her? Ruth answers: Boaz.

Hope and praise: Naomi declares blessing on Boaz from Yahweh; and is encouraged to know Yahweh has not forsaken His steadfast love to them, because Boaz is a kinsman-redeemer.

Application: Jesus is now the Kinsman-Redeemer of all who are living by His obedient faith. We must now praise God for His sovereign, strong, life-changing love in Jesus, which makes it possible for us to accept whatever disasters happen to us with grace, peace and the hope of a positive outcome: forgiveness and hope for new life IN Jesus.

5. Ruth said: he also said to me: thou will keep close by my servants until they have finished all my harvest. (Verse 21)

Whole harvest: There were two harvests: the first was barley (a lesser grain), and the second wheat.

6. Naomi said to Ruth: (it is) good, my daughter, that thou go out with his young women; and not they will fall on thee, the men in another field. (Verse 22)

Best field and owner: Naomi warns Ruth that she would be in peril in another man's field.

7. So she stayed close to Boaz's young women until the end of the barley and wheat harvests, then she dwelt with her mother-in-law. (Verse 23)

Both harvests: From late spring until early fall, Ruth gleaned the 'leftovers' from Boaz's fields because he had regard for Ruth's loyalty to her mother-in-law, who did not regard Ruth as a foreigner.

Homiletical Idea: Yahweh provides harvest 'leftovers' for loyal foreigners. (#4)

B. Jesus commands God-like mercy, forgiveness and generosity because God has promised to give back to such people. (Luke 6:36-38)

1. [Jesus said]: Y'all must be merciful just as our Father is merciful. (Verse 36)

Mercy: Jesus' disciples are commanded to be merciful just as their Father in heaven is merciful.

2. Y'all must not judge, and y'all are not judged; and y'all must not condemn, and y'all are not condemned; y'all must forgive, and y'all will be forgiven. (Verse 37)

Judgment and forgiveness: The commands not to judge or condemn, but rather, to always forgive are linked to the promise that whoever is obeying these commands will be forgiven.

3. Y'all must give, and it will be given to y'all: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, being overflowing, they will give into the lap of y'all; because the same measure with which y'all measure, it will be measured in return to y'all. (Verse 38)

Giving: It is impossible to out-give God! Generous givers of mercy and forgiveness will be given even more in return!

Application: We must all be merciful, generous givers and of all we have and all we are, because of the joy of this truth: no one can out-give God!

God gives back to merciful givers

Conclusion: God sovereignly directs Ruth to glean in the field of Boaz, a relative of Naomi's husband who inquires about her. Boaz addresses Ruth with grace, commands her for her sacrificial love for Naomi, and blesses her. After Boaz feeds Ruth, he commands his workers to leave extra grain for her. When she returns to Naomi with forty quarts of grain, Naomi praises God for directing Ruth to a kinsman-redeemer. Jesus, The Kinsman-Redeemer, commands God-like mercy, forgiveness and generosity because God has promised to give back to people who live this way.

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