Ruth 2:1-17 “Ruth Meets Her Redeemer”

I. Boaz of Bethlehem II. Ruth of Moab III. The Redeemer of Israel

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, most of us have questions about the future. For example, those in HS or college may be thinking about future marriage or future jobs. How do I know what I should study or if I should date? What if I pick the wrong one? But as we saw this morning, God’s providence is at work in all things! Nothing happens by chance- His good will must come to be! Tonight, as we return to Ruth we find a clear example of the providential care of God in guiding for His people. The past few weeks we have been seeing how both Ruth and Naomi are in a hopeless situation. They have no food, no family, no husband, and no one to provide for their needs. It is understandable why Naomi would be bitter- her family had been reduced to rubble. In her sorrow she is pushing everyone away- she is in bitter distress. But the LORD is not done with her yet- there will be joy in Naimi’s house once more! With no children there is no hope of passing on the inheritance, and because of Elimelech’s sin, there is no inheritance to pass on. With no land and no children, how will the promises of the Covenant be passed on? How can God bless a dried up tree like this? We saw 3 men met with 3 deaths. At the end of last week, we saw a glimmer of hope. Ruth and Naomi are brought to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest which was also around Passover. The barley harvest usually takes place in April, and it would be a time of great joy in the land because God had lifted the famine- a time to celebrate deliverance from bondage- and there was food in the Promised Land again. This week we are going to consider how the LORD provides shelter for His weary people. Remember that Ruth has given up her home and family- she is at the mercy of these foreign people to her. She does not know the land or the people, but she has a trust in God for her provision. Will Naimi’s God be the God of Ruth? Will the God of the widows and fatherless provide for these widows?

**I. Boaz of Bethlehem**

As we work throughout passage today, we are going to look at each individual and how they contribute to further our narrative. First, we consider how the LORD provides for Ruth by introducing her to a man who is also a redeemer. As I said before- the focus is shifting away from Naomi for the time being. And who should be coming into the picture? A man name Boaz is introduced in v. 1. He is a godly man- a kinsman of Naomi as v. 20 echoes. Now this man- named Boaz- was a single, older gentleman. He was part of the remnant in Israel who still followed the way of the LORD. He did not do what was right in his own eyes- but rather he followed the way of the LORD. So right away we learn a few things about this man. What kind of character does he have? He was an upright man- treating his workers justly and showing compassion to the needy. And added to that- he was of the tribe of Judah. He was in the royal line- a kinsman of Elimelech from Bethlehem as v. 3-4 make clear. The name of Boaz means “strength” and that is the kind of man Boaz is. Verse 1 says that this Boaz is a man of standing. Literally he is a great man. This greatness means that he was a wealthy man, faithful and obedient to God’s Word. He was a man of good reputation, great with strength and noble of character. In fact, this same word is used to describe King David- a mighty man of valor. This man was generous and obedient to God’s Word, and did not gather all the grain, but left some for the poor. And when he comes into the field to check up on his workers, he says in verse 4, “the Lord be with you.” Here is a Godly and generous employer- even the people who work for him bless him in the name of the LORD. This man is a rare find in these days, but here is a faithful Israelite. And remember that this same Boaz was the son of Rahab as we find in Matthew. So he was the son of a gentile prostitute from Jericho whose father’s name was Salmon. But he is also a relative of Naomi- meaning that he is a kinsman. Now why is this family tie so important- that it would be emphasized at the beginning and end of our passage? Well, basically, the point here is that he is a blood relative. And according to Lev. 25, a kinsman or close relative had the right to reclaim the land of his family member for the sake of the poor. And in Dt. 25, a brother has a responsibility to raise a child up for the sake of his dead brother in order to continue his family name. Now Ruth does not know this at the time, but Boaz is a relative of her dead husband and thus meets the requirements to fill the role of the redeemer! Boaz is in a unique position to address the needs of both Ruth and Naomi. So we have a redeemer coming out of Bethlehem- one who will provide and protect the outcasts! And this man notices a young lady. The redeemer will eventually get a bride!

**II. Ruth of Moab**

Now that we have been introduced to Boaz, our chapter reveals more about the character of Ruth. Last week we saw that she was committed to the people of God and the God of Israel. She will not be deterred. Also, remember last week, how when Naomi enters town, the people of Bethlehem are set on fire because Naomi has returned. But remember, two women walk into town. What about Ruth? People may recognize Naomi- but will Ruth find a home? Will she be welcomed? Last week we noticed that as soon as Ruth made it clear that she would not turn back, Naomi says nothing more to her in v. 18. Ruth has not been warmly invited to come into the family of God; but all of this will soon change. Taking one step back- we have also seen a striking lack of men last week. The men of Naomi’s family have all died. Who will now protect and provide for these women? Things are drastically turning around for this Moabite. In verse 2, after Ruth makes a request to go out and glean for their wellbeing. But soon Naimi will start thinking of Ruth’s good. But we also see that Naomi is relatively passive in this chapter. She does not do a whole lot- it is Ruth who is working hard! So what is being noticed about Ruth? Well, various aspects of her character are made evident. She is wrestling for the blessing if you will. It will be Ruth who takes the initiative. She asks for permission and enters the field to work! She followed Naomi and accompanied her mother-in-law to the land of Israel as verse 11 says. She was faithful to Naomi and this faithfulness is seen by others. She is a hard worker- working hard all day long which is pointed out in v. 7. She cares for her mother-in-law by saving up extra to take home to Naimi. Instead of taking her time, and only worrying about herself, she is working in the heat of the sun so that she also might have food to spare and bring home to her mother in law. So Ruth is gaining a reputation- no longer as an outsider only- but as one who is faithful, kind and polite, and a diligent worker. She is a Proverbs 31 kind of girl. Hard working- she is not idle. Committed to serving her mother-in-law, she cares well for her family. Faithful, committed to the God of the Covenant. Humble- considering the needs of others before her own. God is providing Ruth the opportunity to gain a good name and reputation among the people. If a lady wants to be noticed by a godly man- these are the traits that she should model. A gentle, kind and quiet spirit is a very precious thing in God’s sight! Faithful to God and caring towards others.

**III. The Redeemer of Israel**

But as I said before, the book of Ruth is not ultimately about Ruth. It is the LORD who is really at work. God is also providing food for those who would otherwise starve. God had established laws for the widows and the orphans so that they also might be cared for. As Lev. 19 says, when you are gleaning in the land, leave the edges for the poor- because all things belong to the LORD and you yourselves were once strangers in a foreign land. Now gleaning, children, is similar to what we would call combining today. Back then, they had to collect the grain by hand and then carry that grain into a threshing floor to separate the seed and the stalks. The Israelites were commanded to leave the edges of the field un-harvested- today it would be like leaving the end rows- so that those who were unable to eat might be able to have food. The Laws of God provided for those who were poor and widowed- because God has a special care and concern for those who would otherwise be overlooked. We can see the providential working of God- Ruth just so happens to come to the field of Boaz in v. 3- one of the few godly men who was both single and a redeemer! There is a little bit of divine humor here- it just so happened that of all the fields, Ruth ends up in this one! If the heart of the king is like water in the hands of the LORD- he can move and direct his child so that she ends up exactly where she should be! If He can provide food for the birds of the air- can He not use this field to provide for Ruth’s need? So God is not only providing food, He also provides a man who is faithful to God’s Word to be a more lasting solution to the problem of food, land, and children. But God has to bring these two together- so who should just so happen to take a walk in v. 4. Boaz just so happened to come from Bethlehem and he just so happened to enter this field and just happened to see this young woman from Moab! As Prov. 16 says- many are the plans of the mind of man; but the purposes of the LORD will stand! From the fields of Moab and death, we come to the fields of Boaz where there is life and provision! The Redeemer of Israel makes sure that Ruth and Boaz are in the right place at the right time! So Boaz takes notice of this foreigner- and he provides a temporary place of comfort and rest for Ruth. But do not miss what Boaz says in v. 12- Boaz sees that Ruth has taken refuge under the God of Israel’s wing! It is the LORD who has provided refuge- shelter and shade are from His hand! Or as Psalm 57 puts it, be merciful to me, O God. In you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings will I take refuge. And Boaz is happy to be the instrument of the LORD’S refuge. But we also notice that the arrangement is a temporary rest and provision! The harvest will end- and there is the matter of a child that has to be dealt with! God is at work in the heart of Boaz- and He is making a way for His blessing to fall upon this entire family! God is at work- behind the scenes- and He is going to bless Ruth, Naomi and Boaz in ways that seemed impossible! You see, Ruth not only finds favor in the eyes of Boaz, she has found favor in the eyes of our Redeeming God! His plan is unfolding in ways that they could not imagine- and they will be protected and provided for in a way that seemed impossible! This applies to your life as well. God is not only working in your heart and life- He is busy at work in the hearts and lives of others! He brings people into our lives who will be a blessing to us- working through heartache and present pain but bringing us to a place of peace and rest! Weeping may last for a night- but joy comes in the morning! He is working all things for the good of those who love Him! Truly her cup overflows! Boaz gives to Ruth the same food that his employees ate, and the same drink that his servants drank as verse 14 points out. In Moab she was hungry, but here with Boaz- she eats her fill and even has some left over! He tells Ruth to stay close by and follow the other women because Boaz is providing a place for her- and at the end of the day Ruth is able to collect about an ephah of grain- 3/5 of a bushel which is about 30 to 50 pounds of barley- which would be plenty of food for the rest of the week for these two women. To visualize this- she took home a bad of grain the size of a large dog food bag. These blessings were the direct answer to the request made in verse 2- Ruth finds favor in the eyes of God and Boaz who both take pity on the widowed and poor.

In response to this great kindness and generosity, Ruth is filled with humility, gratitude, and obedience. There is a grace and gratitude theme evident here. When Ruth receives a kind word from Boaz, she humbles herself to the ground as a sign of respect and adoration in verse 10. Why would you notice me? The rest and protection that Naomi had once told her would be found in the land of Moab is rightly located in the land of Israel- found in the land of Boaz. It is here that Ruth finds her true and lasing rest! Ruth states in v. 13, I have found favor and I am comforted. Ruth acknowledges that she does not deserve this kindness-yet it is graciously given! All those who look to the LORD find this compassion and favor! As Psalm 91 says, He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. The LORD has taken notice of this poor widow, and He has filled her need. But unknown to Ruth and Boaz, God is going to continue to meet their needs together as God uses Boaz to fill the deeper needs of Ruth. But content in our story today, Ruth finds undeserved grace from the hand of God. God delights to give shelter to those who look to Him! Why would God consider me and my need? Why would He give me shelter and shade? I am a foreigner- why would He look at my needs? Those without a home and without family are given a lasting place of peace and comfort- through the work of Jesus Christ. From death we are given life because of the precious gift of God’s Son! We find shelter under the wing of the Almighty through His blood alone!