

Ruth 2

1. Introduction.

- A. Today is part of four-week period, thru chapters of Ruth as a narrative, as a story-teller would be telling this to his listeners. Then go back and look at various themes highlighted.
- B. Cover Chapter 2 in a little different style, the style of a story-teller. Richness of culture and tradition seen in Israel's agrarian culture. Sit back, picture what the story-teller is describing.
- C. Bret introduced **backdrop** of death and despair for Naomi in Moab. Fled famine in Bethlehem to Moab. Crisis of famine to the crisis of husband's death. Good news sons got married. Tragedy continues when both her sons died. As Bret described: she has no food, no husband/children, and no real place to call home.
- D. Death takes something out of you at times, especially when it involves people who are close. Death a lot closer than in our culture. You would remember family members who have died. During the time of the Judges, various rulers of the Philistines, or from Moab, or the Ammonites attacked Israel, and killed the people and enslaved them. You would remember a brother who got killed. (Pick someone else) You would think about the famine that killed your aunt and uncle. Life can be cruel and painful.
- E. It's a hard life and Naomi has been struggling through it, while struggling with her faith in her God. How could he do this? "The Almighty has made my life very bitter." And even though Naomi encouraged Orpah to stay in Moab, it still hurts inside. You're going back to where you came from, and people will ask questions. They will want to nose around and find out about your business. (Show weariness, walking back to Bethlehem.) And Naomi was going back poor, empty. What will people think? What do you think of when you see poor people? Maybe if they just got a job. Maybe if they just worked harder and weren't so lazy. If you were Naomi, how do you tell people that it's not your fault? You have no food, no husband, no children.
- F. But in the midst of this doom and despair, and wondering where God is at, two rays of hope: God is providing food for his people (which means Naomi still considers herself as one of his people) and second: one daughter-in-laws, Ruth, is going back with her.

2. **Read** – verse 1.
 - A. Did you get excited by that verse? If you are like me, you like clues to tell where a story is going. Some hear this like Sherlock Holmes mystery. Others are going to view this a romance. Clues:
 - (1). Naomi is not by herself anymore. She has family. She may not be aware of it yet, but the story listeners have ears perked. **Culture**: family is important in Israel. God has given land to families. That land is an inheritance and part of his covenant. (Sit with someone who has teenager.) You will be passing on that land to ...
 - (2). Who is this Boaz? Boaz's name – quickness, strength. Boaz is a mighty, wealthy man. Two words **gibor cha-iel** implies man of character, word used by the story-teller, **gibor**, used for heroes and champions, mighty man of valor, prominent, **cha-iel** for strength or wealth.
 - (3). Now if you like romance, Prince Charming just got mentioned. Cinderella/Ruth has given up her life in another country. How will they meet? The suspense builds.

3. **Read** verses 2-3 shift back to Ruth and Naomi.
 - A. The story-teller continues to show the character of Ruth.
 - (1). Ruth doesn't expect Naomi to go get food, Ruth goes. But she submits to Naomi's direction.
 - (2). **Culture**: God's provision in the land for the poor – **theme** for later. Lev. 19:9-10 says to leave the gleanings for the poor and sojourner, the aliens/foreigners.
 - B. God's providence and our choices – story-teller says by chance, accident, he is smiling because this story is not about chance.
 - a. One commentary said "luck".
 - b. Primary **theme** of providence. How are my choices involved in God's direction and purpose? Do you and I live like things just happen or do we see God's hand in all (Ex. boat in storm.)? Christian books - make it happen. We control.
 - c. It was Ruth's choice to go out and glean. It was God's provision to put her in Boaz's field.
 - C. Story-teller gives the **backdrop**, fields are away from the city – from protection. Ruth is moving from protection of the city and Naomi. See men cutting barley, servant girls are binding it into sheaves.
 - D. Connection with Boaz again – **repetition** - relation to Elimelech.

4. **Read** verses 4-7.
 - A. Boaz repeated again, emphasizes the providence of God with Boaz coming on the scene and the meeting between Boaz and Ruth.
 - B. We already know a little of the character of Ruth, now we start to see a little of Boaz – real person, not just a fable. (Pinch someone)

- (1). One who is godly, greetings reflect one who blesses in the LORD. Like this to happen from your boss at work? Boaz is aware of God's goodness in what he owns.
- (2). One who receives blessing back – unusual for the hired hands/servants to bless the owner.
- (3). He is aware of who is in his field, notices Ruth right away.
- C. More of the character of Ruth, not sitting in the shelter all day. Heard of Ruth's character, now they are noticing it in action.
 - (1). **Picture**: Not like farms in our culture – drive the tractor back to the house to get lunch, take a break.
 - (2). **Picture**: Distance from the city. No 7-11s around the corner. My walking, 5 miles around Edgewater, Willie saw me.
 - (3). **Picture**: Little shelters, seen in Okinawa, mamasans sitting in something to protect from the heat, to rest.
- D. Story-teller again does **repetition** to contrast – Boaz, workers and Ruth are in the fields, **saday**, whereas Ruth has come from the **saday** of Moab, land or fields. Nothing in Moab, find in Bethlehem.

5. **Read** verses 8-13.

- A. First conversation between Boaz and Ruth. Prince Charming meets Cinderella. Cinderella not wearing ballroom gown and fancy slippers, but is working the fields all morning, no makeup, hot, dusty, sweaty.
- B. Character of Boaz again.
 - (1). Addresses Ruth as daughter, not Moab pagan. Could be an indicator of age tied in with other indicators.
 - (2). Offers protection, from own men who might take advantage.
 - (3). He offers water. **Culture**: how to get water – from town.
- C. Character of Ruth again.
 - (1). Humility - submits to Naomi, bows down to Boaz . Our culture - remove Ruth from the Bible, she is an oppressed groveling woman. She should have stood up for herself.
 - (2). The report that is going out about Ruth – from Naomi.
 - (3). Ruth's perspective of herself – levels of people in that field:
 - a. Boaz – the owner.
 - b. Foreman – servant workers men – could have hired.
 - c. Servant girls – binding barley into sheaves.
 - d. Ruth the Moabitess - poor foreigner, lowest in food chain.
- D. Back to Boaz again – his blessing.
 - (1). Those who seek refuge under God's wings receive refuge under him. **Picture**: God as an eagle putting its wings around its young. Boaz sees his life as means for good, for God's work. God's providence is for giving to others. He's well-to-do, yet he gives back to those around him.

- (2). Boaz doesn't just bless only in word, be blessed, be filled; but he follows through in his own actions of blessing Ruth.
 - E. **Repetition** of the story-teller – finding favor/grace. Three times used, verse 2, 10, 13, repetition of the favor of God. Ruth had rights of the poor to glean. Boaz had rights of owner not to give so much. Don't need to demand rights when we trust in God's favor.
6. **Read** verses 14-16.
- A. Boaz blesses again.
 - (1). The relationship is to Ruth as family and to one who had gone to find refuge in God.
 - (2). He blesses in bread, roasted grain, the wine vinegar. Book started with famine crisis, well on its way to getting resolved.
 - a. The supply of our basic needs by God. Hierarchy.
 - (3). Boaz blesses again by encouraging his men to give extra stalks. Ruth still has to do the work, but her labor will be even more fruitful. The Leviticus law provides for the gleaning by poor, but Boaz goes beyond the letter of the law.
7. **Read** verses 17-20.
- A. Ruth shows character again.
 - (1). Her diligence to thresh the barley, makes it easier to carry back to town. **Picture** of city with hills surrounding the town, the town offers security against raiders, wild animals, not like our houses scattered around the countryside.
 - (2). Her provision for Naomi, including the lunch meal.
 - (3). Compare to Proverbs 31 – which Jim read.
 - a. Verse 10 - A wife of noble character who can find? We keep seeing Ruth's character. The Hebrew word, **cha-iel** is the same one used to describe Boaz in verse 1 that we read. It will be used later in Ruth.
 - b. Verse 15 – she gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family – Ruth cares for Naomi.
 - c. Verse 17 – she sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. Ruth is not just sitting in the shelter, she works all day, she finishes the job before going back to town in the evening.
 - d. Verse 27 – she watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Ruth concerned about her and Naomi's, goes into foreign land to get food. Did not hide because poor.
 - e. Verse 31 - Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate. Heard from the foreman and from Boaz what they have heard of Ruth, and what they are seeing in person.

- f. We will come back to Proverbs 31 in the future, not covered all comparisons. We will return to this in chapter 4. Don't feel condemned by this.
 - B. The kinsman-redeemer – **goel** – will cover in more depth later.
 - (1). Protect interests of needy members of the extended family.
 - (2). Provide an heir for brother who died – Deut. 25:5-10.
 - (3). Redeem land that poor relative sold outside the family – Lev. 25:25-28. Difference in land in city and country, Jubilee.
 - (4). Redeem relative sold into slavery – Lev. 25:47-49.
 - (5). Avenge killing of relative – Num. 35:19-21 – cities of refuge.
 - C. Hope is given.
 - (1). The provision of food. Naomi saw that God had come to the aid of his people. Naomi was included in that provision.
 - (2). Hope of the kinsman-redeemer – they are not alone.
 - (3). Hope in God – he has not stopped showing kindness to the living and the dead:
 - a. Kindness – **hesed** – Bret talked about last week. There is a loyalty, a faithfulness that God gives to his children. Is covenant. God has not forgotten us.
 - b. The living – Naomi and Ruth.
 - c. The dead – her husband and sons. Story-teller is perking the interest of what is to come.
 - (4). Verses on front of the bulletin – **Read** Psalm 33:18-22 God delivers from death, keeping alive through famine. Our hope is in the LORD, he is our help and shield.
8. **Read** verses 21-23.
- A. Ruth shows an extension of Boaz's offer – till all grain is harvested.
 - B. The story-teller **reiterates** the protection in Boaz/s fields.
 - C. Ruth finishes her work in both the barley and wheat harvests (about 7 weeks, Deut. 16:9-12), culminating with Pentecost.
 - D. Chapter 1 begins with a crisis for food and ends with the hope of the barley harvest. Chapter 2 starts with the solution to food crisis and offers the hope of the kinsmen-redeemer. What is going to happen next? Stay tuned for chapter 3 next week.
9. Application.
- (1). Real story, real people. Real culture, real character.
 - (2). Active hesed, kindness, kindness of God, kindness to others based on God's goodness to us.
10. Benediction – our future and hope. Israel in captivity in Babylon for 70 years, **Jeremiah 29:11** For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.