

What is it like to live under the wings of this God?

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[0 : 0 0] Well, I am glad that you are here this morning. I'm glad that you've come, every one of you. I'm glad that you and me have this opportunity to hear from God's Word.

This is no ordinary book that we open up. These are no ordinary stories. This is no ordinary message. And so, I'm really glad, whoever you are, wherever you've come from, whatever your morning's been like, I'm really glad that we get this opportunity to hear God's Word.

And I pray that as we open up God's Word, as we hear it, and as we learn from it, I pray that God's Spirit would be your teacher, me and you. I pray that God's Spirit would teach us what He wants to teach us through His Word, that He would show us who He is through His Word, and that we would see the greatness and the kindness of Jesus through His Word.

Today, we're in Ruth chapter 2. If you have a Bible, please open it there. If not, there are these Bibles in the pews if you want to grab one. Similar to last week, instead of reading the whole chapter at the beginning. Sorry, Stephen, I thought it would be good to read a section at a time and speak on that. We're going to be looking at three movements in chapter 2, three movements in the narrative. Firstly, finding rations, and then finding regard, and then finding refuge.

Before reading the first section, I'd like to ask a question just to explore the tone of this chapter. I want you to think of what it's like, what it had been like living with your dad growing up.

[2 : 0 9] And if that doesn't apply to you, then perhaps another guardian or someone, and even another angle to this question is, think about what it has been like living with a spouse, living with someone. If it applies to you, what has it been like living with your dad growing up?

Or what has it been like living with a spouse? What has it been like living with someone else? Now, this is a challenging question. As I was thinking about this, I could only guess some of the answers that my own wife and my kids might think, even if they're too kind to say them.

What must it be like living with me? I can think of what it was like living with my dad growing up. It's easy, when I think about myself, it's easy enough to be nice and presentable when we're out in public. But there's a few, a few people, just a very small few people that see us at our worst.

Usually, that is those people who are living with us. And so, I often think about what my kids will remember of living with me, what they will think about their dad as they were grown up, what will be their memory. I often think about all my idiosyncrasies, all my imperfections, all the things that I fail to do, or all the things that I do the wrong way.

What is our shared experience? Have you ever lived with an angry person? Or perhaps a depressed person? Have you ever lived with a grumpy person?

[4 : 0 1] Have you ever lived with a messy person? Or an anxious person? What's our shared experience? And the point of this question, the point really is not to shine a light on people's failures.

Rather, the point of this question is to shine a light on the incredible nature of God. You see, one of the points of this book, the book of Ruth, I believe, is to reveal what it is like to live under the wings of this God.

What is it like to live under the wings of Yahweh, this God, compared to all other gods? I think the answer to that question would be that God is unbelievably, extravagantly, immeasurably kind, overflowing with loving kindness.

Do we know that? And so this chapter explores what it might be like to live under the wings of this God. And we'll see this as Ruth moves from finding rations to finding regard to finding refuge.

And so let me read the first seven verses, and we'll see Ruth finding rations. Ruth chapter 2, verses 1 to 7. Now, Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

[5 : 29] 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. She said to her, Go, my daughter.

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.

And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and he said to the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered, The Lord bless you.

And Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, Whose young woman is this? The servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, She's the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

She said, Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers. So she came, and she's continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest.

[6 : 34] This is Ruth finding rations. The reader is introduced to Boaz straight away, so you and I are introduced to Boaz straight away, but this is just to set up what will happen.

This is a signal that he is both a relative of Elimelech and also a worthy man. And that's a really important detail for the reader to see, because it shows something of God's intention for people like Naomi and Ruth, before they're even aware.

It shows something of God's provision while they're going through a difficult time. Now, on the ground, although they are back in Bethlehem, they're still widows. They are still vulnerable and somewhat destitute.

But as the last line of chapter 1 said, it was the beginning of barley harvest. And there happened to be a law. So as we look at our finding rations, we look at God's kind provision.

And there happened to be a law that God had given Israel to provide food for the poor. And that law can be found in Leviticus 19 and 23, as well as Deuteronomy.

[7 : 44] And so it says, when you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap your field right up to its edge, and do not pick up what the harvesters drop.

Leave it for the poor and the foreigner living amongst you. I am Yahweh your God. Isn't that a kind provision of God for the poor and even for the foreigners who are among them?

And God's kind provision in His land, among His people, the poor and even the foreigners were provided for at harvest time. It was commanded by God that such people should have a means to eat.

Now, you still need to go out and get it. Movement matters in our lives. Neither laziness nor entitlement will cut it. You can't expect God to drop grain right into your hands.

God has already given us means to get up and get out. Why should God do for us the impossible if we do not at least show that we are willing to do the possible?

[8 : 54] And so get up and go out. So Ruth gets up and she goes out to the fields to find some rations. And thankfully, God's kind provision allows her the right, even as a foreigner, allows her the right to find some rations.

Now, imagine living in a world. When you hear that law of God's provision, when you reap the harvest of your field, your land, don't reap your field right up to the edge.

Imagine living in a world where those who have resources keep all of it to themselves. Now, I'm pretty sure we don't need to imagine hard because we know what it's like to live in a world where people keep their resources all to themselves.

They reap right up to the very edge, every single penny. Why should anyone else get my hard-earned cash? Why should we give anything to the poor? The way to stay rich is to count every penny.

Do you know what it's like to live in that world? I'm sure you do. We are used to looking at the margins. There's consultations and help out there to look at the margins and tally up the losses over a long period of time.

[10 : 15] It may just be a little bit this year, but if you add it up over years, it's a lot. What? Those losses. Imagine someone going up to Boaz and saying, see this law about leaving a bit for the poor?

I mean, that might be the edge of your field this year, but if you tally it up over ten years, that's a whole field. You're losing a whole field, a whole harvest. So reap right up to every edge, every corner, it's yours after all.

Why should your grain go to someone else? But what do we have that has not been given? Seriously, in this life, what do we have that's not been given?

There's only a harvest in the first place because God graciously gives them a harvest. Now, there are other gods and other nations, but it is Yahweh who calls Himself, in Psalm 68, the father of the fatherless and the protector of widows.

What a God who's concerned about the little guy. But this is just the first layer of God's provision. Something that we didn't explore as much in chapter 1 is that Ruth herself is a kind provision of God for Naomi because God also made a provision for redemption where there was death in an Israelite family.

[11 : 39] But here's the thing. Because Naomi already had children, Naomi herself wasn't in a position to be redeemed as a widow.

Her time had passed. Another generation had come from her. And so usually a widow is redeemed because she's not yet had children to pass on the inheritance to.

But Naomi has. Naomi had two sons. So redemption requirements were now for her son's wives and not her. Even although she's a widow, redemption requirements are now for her sons.

But they've died. So imagine for a moment if Ruth decided to stay in Moab. If Ruth had decided, along with Orpah, to stay in Moab, then Naomi would be up the creek without a paddle.

Despite the provision of redemption law, Naomi would be up the creek without a paddle because she is a widow who's already had sons. And so God's provision is that Ruth came back with her and made redemption possible.

[12 : 47] And because Ruth went with her, Naomi is not left destitute. And that's the next layer of God's kind provision. God means more than just rations for Ruth.

God wants more than just rations for Ruth. She goes into the fields of Bethlehem to find rations. And although God's kind provision allowed her that right, God means more for her than merely rations.

And that's the signal in verse 1. Boaz was a relative and a worthy man. This means that because he's a relative, there's a possibility of redemption. And because he's a worthy man, there's a probability of redemption because he's going to take God's law seriously and he's going to do what's right.

God in his kind provision intends more for Ruth than mere rations. And so as readers, we are supposed to see that God intends more for us than merely rations.

Isn't that a good thing? We might enjoy the provisions that God has given us in life. This is called common grace. Everyone receives this common grace and life.

[14 : 00] We have life and breath and everything that we have comes from God and his kind, common grace. But he means more for us. Like Boaz in verse 1, God has already provided a person in whom he intends to give us more than just rations.

And we might be looking for our daily bread, but God has given us life and this life is in his Son. Remember from last week, God's provision is his person.

And so in this chapter, we begin to see that God isn't just providing bread for Ruth, he's providing Boaz. And with Boaz, Ruth will have more than she could possibly imagine.

Tell me that's not a picture of Christ. God's not just wanting to give us bread, he's wanting to give him himself to us. He's wanting to give us his Son, Jesus, and with Jesus, we have everything.

Jesus plus nothing equals everything. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. It's not by bread we live, but by the Word of God.

[15 : 09] And who is the Word? We see in John's Gospel that the Word became flesh and was called Jesus. And we might go out looking for bread, but all the while God is providing a person, His own Son, Jesus, that when we have Him, we have more than we could possibly imagine.

And so, even if you have got to that point, even if you have Christ, even then you might be trusting Christ, and yet your life might feel like you're just getting by on rations. You ever feel that way?

And your weakness in this life, you feel like even though you have Christ, you're just getting by on rations? Maybe that's how you feel.

If you feel like you're just getting by on rations even though you're trusting Christ, know that God has always made a provision for much more than you presently experience. Like Ruth in the field, God intends much more than your present experience.

It's only a matter of time. God's provision to those who find the bread of life for those who find Christ is not just rations. God's provision for those who trust in Christ is not just daily bread.

[16 : 29] God's provision for you is redemption. It's just yet to happen. God's provision in Christ is much more than daily bread. It is the salvation of your souls and the redemption of your bodies.

It is eternal life in a glorious eternal kingdom. You have no idea yet how glorious a provision God has made for me and you in Christ.

It's only a matter of time. God has meant for us much more than our present experience. Now, for Ruth, verse 7, she came, she's continued from early morning until now except for a short rest.

She's out there finding rations. The story could just end here. These two widows came back to Bethlehem. They lived the rest of their destitute lives picking up the leftovers of the harvest.

Probably wouldn't last long. Maybe that is how you feel your story is going right now. But know this, with Jesus, it will never end here. It will never end here.

[17 : 35] Boaz is a worthy man signaling how likely redemption will be. Yet, when it comes to our problem of sin and death and judgment, how likely is it that we can be redeemed?

What's the likelihood that we can be redeemed from such great a crisis? There's only one worthy man who's able to redeem us and that is Jesus, the sinless Messiah and the Son of God.

Only he is worthy, says Revelation 5. He's worthy, but how likely is it that he is to redeem us? Is he going to redeem us?

Well, given that he already proved his great loving kindness towards us and that while we were still sinners, he died for us, and given that he rose again on the third day, I'd say that redemption is certain for those who trust in Christ.

Now, we see the character of Boaz throughout this. We see how kind Boaz is. He's kind to his workers, verse 4. He's kind to his foremen.

[18 : 38] He's kind to the vulnerable asking about this young woman. He knows that she's vulnerable. He's kind to widows, knowing that she's a widow. And he's kind to his family, knowing that she comes with Naomi.

And this leads us to the second movement that Ruth goes from finding rations to finding regard. So let me read from verse 8 to 13. And so 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, lest your eyes be on the field that they are reaping. 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. 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?

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.

[19 : 52] The Lord repay you for what you have done and a full reward be given to you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge. 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.

Boaz regards Ruth. He takes notice of her. See that? Why is it that you should take notice of me, she says.

He takes notice. He could have disregarded the poor. Boaz easily could have disregarded the poor. Many people do. He could have disregarded the widow.

He could have disregarded the foreigner, the Moabite. I mean, certainly he could have disregarded the Moabite.

You're not one of us. You don't belong here. Why should you get anything from us? You see, Moabites at that time and judges, Moabites were particularly not regarded.

[21 : 02] Deuteronomy 23 even states that Moabites were not to be part of the congregation of Israel, because of how they treated Israel when they came out from Egypt. Don't regard Moabites.

Now, this part of the law in Deuteronomy is more nuanced, so Boaz isn't doing something that he shouldn't do here. But Ruth does not find herself disregarded as she so easily could have been.

Instead, she finds regard. She finds a worthy man taking notice of her, a foreign widow with nothing to offer. she's got nothing to offer.

She's not even one of them. Yet she finds regard because she finds Boaz, a man who is willing to take notice of such people. And Boaz, if you don't know, is no stranger to strangers of Israel.

If you don't know, in Matthew 1, verse 5, Boaz's mom is Rahab. Rahab was a foreigner. Rahab was a stranger to Israel.

[22 : 10] Yet when the spies came into Jericho, Rahab threw her lot in with Yahweh. She threw her lot in with the people of God and with their God. And so Boaz, through his mom, knows that God shows great kindness to foreigners.

And also, there is the fact that God said in Genesis 12, verse 3, I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you.

That's what David was praying about. While previously Moab didn't show kindness to Israel and they actually tried to curse Israel, here is a Moabite woman who's not like her nation.

And while the nation didn't show kindness or compassion to Israel, Ruth showed kindness and compassion to Naomi, an Israelite.

And while Moab as a nation historically tried to curse Israel, Ruth, on the other hand, blessed every Israelite she encountered. I will bless those who bless you.

[23 : 16] She's blessing Israel. She's thrown her lot in with the people of God. She's trusting in the God of Israel. Are there any limits to God's loving kindness?

The fact that both Rahab and Ruth are listed as instrumental in the lineage of the Messiah should show that God's loving kindness was always extended to anyone who would trust in Him.

Anyone, from any nation. And Ruth trusting in God meant that she found more than just rations. She found regard. Before Boaz took notice of her, God took notice of her.

When she turned her heart towards God, He directed her steps towards the field of Boaz. God brought her to a place where she would be regarded, and as it turns out, highly regarded.

Think about how ordinary her movement was to go out to a field in the hopes of being regarded, being noticed, finding favor with anyone. She went out to work for rations with only a little rest, small, ordinary movement, but in the right direction.

[24 : 24] Her movement is always small and ordinary, but it's always in the right direction. Movement is always one way or the other. We're either moving toward God or we're moving away from God.

Are we moving towards God, even with small steps in ordinary ways? Never think that God does not notice you. God notices you. God notices every little, small movement, and you'll be surprised at how God uses that and His kind providence to work out something greater than you could have imagined.

And so we see God's kind providence. As Paul says in Romans chapter 8, He is working all things together for good for those who love Him.

And so Ruth just happens to be in the right field at the right time, trusting in the right God. The field of Boaz at a time when he happens to come to visit.

He doesn't need to be there. He has workers and he has a manager, but he turns up and he sees Ruth. And God's kind providence, not only did God direct Ruth to that very field, He also directed Boaz to notice her.

[25 : 37] And so never think that Jesus doesn't notice you. Just as Boaz said that all that he heard Ruth did for Naomi was told to him, the incredible thing about Jesus is that he has already heard about everything we did.

Here is someone who knows everything that we have done, and unlike Ruth, it's not a good report. Jesus notices us, and He knows everything that we've done, and yet He shows us this incredible kindness because of who He is.

Like a destitute foreigner, we come to Christ, nothing to offer and no right to belong, yet by His nature He is overflowing with kindness. And so when you come to take refuge under the wings of Yahweh, the God of Israel, what can you expect to find but extravagant, overflowing kindness?

And how does a person come under the wings of this God? except by receiving His Son, whom He sent. Unlike the days of Ruth, God has revealed more fully Himself through His Son.

God's incredible loving kindness is now seen more fully in flesh, hung upon a tree in the person of Jesus. God showed His love for us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[27 : 01] And so as it says in Psalm chapter 2, a Messianic Psalm, it says, Kiss the Son. Kiss the Son lest you perish in the way. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him.

And so last week we explored what you expect when you turn away from God and go to Moab. What do you expect when you look for life away from God in a place of other gods?

When we went to Moab expecting life all you experience is death. But in chapter 2, what we see is what happens when you take refuge under the wings of Yahweh.

What do you expect when you leave your people and your gods? What do you expect when you turn away from the world and you come to Jesus? What do you expect when you come to the one who is overflowing with abounding love and kindness?

What do you expect when you come to the one who is the source of all life and breath and everything? Back in chapter 1, we saw in the fields of Moab that God meant for Naomi to hear of his favor in Bethlehem.

[28 : 10] He meant for her to hear the good news of his grace. This chapter, God means for Ruth to experience the favor of his overflowing loving kindness.

The providence of God means for you today to hear about him, to know him, and to experience his amazing grace. A song I think we're going to sing later.

God means for us to experience his overflowing loving kindness in Christ. God's kind providence means for you to know that Christ has noticed you.

Christ has noticed you and he knows everything about you and he died for you. You're not disregarded by him.

You so easily could be and we so we should be. But we are not disregarded by Jesus. We are actually highly regarded by him.

[29 : 12] His providence has led you to him. What will you do with that? What will you do? Will you regard Christ? And so finally we see Ruth moving from finding regard to finding refuge.

Let me read from verse 14 to the end. And at mealtime Boaz said to her, come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine.

So she sat beside the reapers and he passed to her the roasted grain and she ate until she was satisfied. She had some left over.

When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men saying, let her glean even among the sheaves and don't reproach her. And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean.

Do not rebuke her. So she gleaned in the field until evening and then she beat out what she had gleaned. It was about an ephah of barley. She took it up and went into the city.

[30 : 18] Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied. And her mother-in-law said to her, where did you glean today?

Where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you. She told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, the man's name with whom I work today is Boaz.

And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, may he be blessed by the Lord whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead. Naomi also said to her, the man is a close relative of ours.

He is one of our redeemers. And Ruth the Moabite said, besides, he said to me, you shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.

And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, it is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young men, lest in another field you be assaulted. So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests, and she lived with her mother-in-law.

[31 : 29] Amen. Amen. Well, where before she only had a little rest in verse 7, now she's invited to the staff lunch. She's invited into the canteen with the staff.

Now she's sharing the bread and wine. She's eaten until she's satisfied. Do you see how this points both back to the manna in the Exodus account, and it also points forward to the Lord's Supper?

How it's all connected to rest. Boaz here is a picture of Christ offering rest and sharing his bread and wine with the least likely of people. You see, Christ is the one who gives us his body and his blood that we, the least likely, might find rest in him.

And where she was vulnerable before, now she's protected. Without Christ, we have no safety in this world from the horrors, the horrors of sin and Satan and death and judgment.

How can we escape such things? We've got no protection outside of Christ, but when we come under his wings and find refuge, we are now his. Just like he said in John 10, my sheep listen to my voice.

[32 : 45] I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. We, what have we got to fear?

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. where before she was looking for rations, now she struggles to take home what he gives her.

She's allowed now to glean even among the sheaves, not just the stuff that's fallen to the ground. And more than that, Boaz tells his workers to leave some of the bundles for her.

It's almost comical as if they're accidentally dropping bundles here, left, right, and center. This never happens. She's allowed to glean wherever she wants, wherever from any part of the harvest.

Verse 17, she works long and hard and comes away with an ephah. An ephah is the equivalent of ten omers. An omer in Exodus 16 was as much as you could gather, as much manna as you could gather in one day to satisfy one person.

[33 : 55] She gathers ten of those enough, enough barley for two people to eat as much as they could for five days.

So hard to carry. And on top of that, she's got the leftovers from the staff lunch. She gets home late and Naomi says three statements to show how surprised she is.

Where did you glean to get that? Who did you work with? Blessed be the man who's taken notice of you. And it just so happens that it's a relative and one of the redeemers.

None other than Boaz. Naomi says, he's a close relative. He's one of our redeemers. It's an unbelievable turn of events. What are the chances of this except by the providence of God?

Astounding kindness is just what God does. And so, verse 20, Naomi says, Yahweh, the Lord, whose chesed, whose steadfast loving kindness, has not forsaken the living or the dead.

[35 : 07] Finally, after her doubts in chapter 1, remember her doubts? Her doubts that God would ever show her loving kindness again? She finds now that God has not forsaken her, the living, or even her dead.

God has not forsaken because she's about to be redeemed. God is not the type who forsakes. God is not a God who forsakes. He doesn't forsake the living.

He doesn't even forsake the dead. So much so that He sent His only Son to die for us, that by His death we might be forgiven and redeemed. And by His resurrection we might rise to new life with Him.

He made Himself our close relative by taking on a human nature like ours. And He is not one of. He is the only Redeemer because He's the only sinless Messiah and Son of God.

Do you see in God's kind provision that He means for you to have more than just rations? Do you see that in God's kind providence that He means for you to see the regard that Christ has for you?

[36 : 16] And do you see in God's kind protection that nothing can prevent those who are in Christ from being redeemed? You are going to be redeemed if you are in Christ.

It's only a matter of time. And so like I asked at the beginning, what is it like to live with so-and-so? What is it like to live with Christ? Do you know His unbelievable, extravagant, overflowing kindness?

Do you see that no matter who you are or where you've come from, if you move toward Him, you will never be disregarded? And if you do know that, do we as His people show the same kind of kindness to strangers as He does?

Do people feel the great kindness of Christ through those who call themselves Christians? You see, a person steps into a church, they should feel the kindness of God. Do we know that kindness for ourselves and do we show that kindness for others?

We have every reason to have confidence in the provision of God. And we have every reason to trust in the providence of God. And we have every reason to rest in the protection of God.

[37 : 26] And we have every reason to expect nothing but the overflowing kindness of God. It is just who He is. If we belong to Him, we have every reason to know that.

And just like I said to the children earlier, there was people who saw God walking in the street, the apostles, the witnesses to Jesus, God in flesh, and they saw nothing but someone full of grace and truth, full of kindness, overflowing with love.

It is who He is. It is just who Jesus is. And if we belong to Him, we have every reason to show kindness to each other and to the strangers. For Christ has shown outrageous kindness to us, and He will redeem us.

What a God and what a Redeemer we have. Let me pray. Oh, Lord, what a Redeemer You are, and we thank You so much that even although we were strangers and foreigners, even although we are destitute, even although we have nothing to offer You and we have no right to belong, You have not disregarded us.

You have given provision for us. You have made a way for us to be redeemed. And You will do this because You are overflowing with loving kindness.

[38 : 53] Please help us to know and experience this and to show it to others as well. For this is who You are. We thank You in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.