

God's People Reflect God's Character, Pt 2

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[0 : 00] work our way through it and draw conclusions that your spirit would be at work in our hearts learning who you are and worshipping you as a result.

I pray that you would bless our time together now in your name. Amen. Children, you are dismissed to your class. We are in the middle of a short mini-series on the book of Ruth in three parts. Last week we looked at Ruth chapter 1. This week we are looking at Ruth chapter 2. And next week we will conclude with a look at Ruth 3 and 4 together.

Listen to the beginning of this article from a magazine called Psychology Today. I ran across this a couple of years ago. This is an article from Psychology Today.

It says this, In 2007, a construction worker named Wesley Autry was standing on a subway platform in New York when a young man nearby had an epileptic seizure and rolled onto the track.

[1 : 13] Hearing the approach of a train, Wesley Autry impulsively jumped down to try to save the young man only to realize that the train was approaching too fast. Instead, he jumped on top of the young man's body and pushed him down into a drainage ditch between the tracks.

The train operator saw them but it was too late to stop. Five cars of the train passed over their bodies but miraculously both of them were uninjured.

Asked later by the New York Times why he had done it, Autry said, I just saw someone who needed help. I did what I felt was right. So then the author of this article goes on and says, The question of why human beings are sometimes prepared to risk their own lives to save others has puzzled philosophers and scientists for centuries.

From an evolutionary point of view, altruism doesn't seem to make sense. According to the modern neo-Darwinian view, human beings are basically selfish. After all, we are only really carriers of thousands of genes whose only aim is to survive and replicate themselves.

We shouldn't be interested in sacrificing ourselves for others or even in helping others at all. We all want there to be good in the world.

[2 : 29] We want other people to be good and we want to be good and we want people to treat each other well, especially in the hard times because sometimes it's in the hard times when our true character really comes out.

But the author of this article asks a good question here. Why should we be any better than our genes? Other than this, basic instinct and impulse to get for ourselves and to sort of shore up our own lives and our own circumstances, why should we be any better than that?

Why should we be any better than our own self-interest? And that's really the issue in the book of Ruth. That's the question that we're looking to the book of Ruth to answer.

Today we're going to look at Ruth chapter 2. So I invite you to turn there in your Bibles with me. We're going to read it and we're going to talk about a couple of key issues and then we're going to draw some conclusions about the meaning of the whole.

As we turn to Ruth chapter 2, let's review where we are in the story. It's the period of the book of Judges. It's a very dark time in Israel's history. God's people have forgotten what God did to redeem them in the promised land and what God had done to redeem them from slavery to take them into the promised land and they are worshipping other gods and abusing and mistreating each other.

[3 : 52] We have these little vignettes through the book of Judges. These little stories which sort of encapsulate the period which illustrate what Israel was like at that time. We have a man who kills his own daughter.

We have a wife who is burned alive. We have the leader of Israel who visits prostitutes and engages in all these petty little squabbles and fights and kind of dilly-dallies with the enemy instead of fighting them.

We have a man who makes homemade idols in order to worship them and he hires a Levite to be his own personal priest but then another tribe of Israel steals the gods and worships them themselves.

We have a man and a woman who are traveling through the southern part of Israel and it's time to spend the night but they don't want to stay in Canaanite territory because maybe that would be too dangerous so they decide to go just a little further to Israelite territory will it be safer and during the night men surround the house and they try and drag the man out and rape him and in order to protect himself he shoves his concubine outside where she is ferociously raped and killed and as a result the man cuts her into 12 pieces and starts a civil war.

I mean these are the little vignettes that describe Israel at that time in the book of Judges. It is a very dark time filled with faithlessness and immorality taking advantage of anyone who was vulnerable or who could be exploited.

[5 : 22] It was especially a dangerous time for women and the book of Judges says everyone did what was right in their own eyes. They just do whatever is best for themselves. It's survival of the fittest.

In fact, they're doing exactly what the author of that article in Psychology Today assumed they probably should do. whatever is best for them and it's just a disaster.

And so during this time there's a famine and a woman named Naomi and her husband and her two sons travel to Moab. Moab is an enemy territory. It's known for idolatry and sexual immorality and they have a history of scandal with Israel and so as a result the book of Deuteronomy says that no Moabite will ever enter the assembly of the Lord.

Naomi's husband dies. The sons marry Moabite women even though they probably shouldn't. Neither couple has any children for ten years. Then the sons die and what all of that means is that we now have not one but three desperate poor widows with no one to take care of them. Naomi decides to go back to Israel because there's food there. But once they set off and they're on the way then she begins to have second thoughts and she realizes that her daughters-in-law won't have any hope in Israel.

[6 : 44] There's no hope for them there. There's only a life there of hard poverty and probably death. And of course the only way in that time that a young widow could possibly have any kind of a future is if she would remarry but no one in Israel is going to marry these Moabite girls.

And so at her own expense she urges them to go back to their other families in Moab. And Orpah sees that her mother-in-law is right and so she does return and Ruth knows that Naomi's right as well.

Ruth knows that there is no future for her in Israel. But she is sacrificing herself and she follows Naomi back and sacrifices her future for her.

And when they get back to Bethlehem Naomi is angry. She blames God for her struggles and her situation and she tells the women of the town don't call me pleasant.

I have a new name now. My name is bitter. Call me that. For the Lord has made me bitter. That's what people say when they don't have any hope.

[7 : 49] And now our story continues in Ruth chapter 2. Let's read that together. Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech. Sorry.

Let's look at Ruth chapter Oh that is Ruth chapter 2. Sorry. A worthy man of the clan of Elimelech whose name was Boaz. 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.

And 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. Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers Whose young woman is this?

And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered She is 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.

[8 : 51] So she came and she has continued from the early morning until now except for a short rest. 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.

Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping and go after them. Have I not charged the young man not to touch you? And when you are thirsty go to the vessels and drink what the young man 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. The Lord repay you for what you have done and a full reward be given 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 even though I am not one of your servants.

And at mealtime Boaz said to her Come here and eat some of the bread and dip your morsel in the wine so she sat beside the reapers and he passed to her roasted grain and she ate until she was satisfied and she had some left over and when she rose to glean Boaz instructed his young men saying Let her glean even among the sheaves and do not reproach her and also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean and do not rebuke her.

[10:19] So she gleaned in the field until evening then she beat out what she had gleaned and it was about an ephah of barley and she took it up and went into the city. 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 and where have you worked?

Blessed be the man who took notice of you. So 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 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 women 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 harvest and she lived with her mother-in-law. This is a great story and it's also history but it's more than history it's theological history it's written to tell us something about God and God's relationship with his people.

It begins in verse 1 by saying that Naomi had a relative of her husband's a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech whose name was Boaz. He's a worthy man.

[11:49] The NIV says that he's a man of standing. The King James Version says he's a mighty man of wealth. He's a relative of Naomi. And it's difficult to know which sense the author means by saying that he's a worthy man.

Sometimes that word is used to refer to men in battle great military heroes. Sometimes it's used to refer to physical wealth. Sometimes it's used to refer to someone of great character.

I think we'll find out a little later which one the author primarily means here when we get to chapter 3. But he's a man of standing in the community. He has influence. He's a man about town.

He's wealthy. He has land and many servants. And we are going to find out very soon that he is good. What's interesting is that in this verse the narrator is telling us about Boaz.

Ruth doesn't know about it. This is a word from the narrator to us the reader. Naomi apparently hasn't told Ruth about this. But what this allows us to do as readers is that as we get into the story we are able to watch the events unfold and we get to see Ruth's reaction to discovering Boaz and finding out what he will do for her.

[13:07] Naomi and Ruth need someone to help them and we are going to watch all of these pieces fall into place. Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi in verse 2 let me go to the field and glean.

Now in the ancient world there weren't any government programs like food stamps or Medicaid but one way that God provided for the poor was through something called gleaning.

It says in Leviticus 19 when you reap the harvest of your land you shall not reap your field right up to its edge neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest.

In other words don't go back through a second time and do a better job. You shall not strip your vineyard bare neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard you shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner I am the Lord your God.

So when farmers would harvest their field they would intentionally leave the edges there so that when the poor came through looking for some kind of food they could find it.

[14:11] Deuteronomy 24 19 says when you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf don't go back and get it. It shall be for the sojourner the fatherless and the widow that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

It's a mentality. It's a mentality that the Mosaic Law is teaching. Don't be so efficient and so careful that there is nothing left for the poor person who wanders through the field looking for food.

Make sure that there's something that they have to eat. Now Ruth is hoping that since it's harvest time she can go out and glean. She can go out into the field and find some leftover grains some scraps maybe that people have left behind.

Notice in verse 2 that the narrator calls her the Moabite. We know this. We've read chapter 1 but he keeps bringing this up because it's significant that she's not an Israelite she's a Moabite and all of the associations that come along with that.

This does not sound like a good plan. She, a Moabite, is going to go to the field where all the other Israelite workers are.

[15:23] She's alone and she's going to try and get free food from them in the time of the judges. Notice she says in whose sight I find favor.

See, I think that she suspects that there could be trouble. So she's hoping that she'll find someone there who will look well on her, who will give her favor and not mistreat her because she recognizes that she's in a vulnerable and risky situation here.

So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. Now when we think of fields, we think of Wisconsin which have these huge farms, sometimes as large as the eye can see.

In 2012, the average Wisconsin farm was 195 acres. But in ancient Israel, the fields were very small. There was no fertilizer or modern equipment.

The land did not produce well. The harvests were small. It was just subsistence farming. People were basically trying to get enough food to get by. And often, there was just one big field and then parts of the field were separated by these boundary stones.

[16:31] So kind of as you went from one part of the field to the next, you didn't really have a clear sense that you were moving from one person's property to another one. And as she's working through the field, she's looking for leftovers and she comes to the part of the field belonging to Boaz.

But she didn't just come to that part. It says in verse 3, she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz. I think that's significant that he says that.

It sounds like it was a coincidence. But then why say it? In Proverbs 16.33, it says, the lot, you know, like dice, the lot is cast into the lap but its every decision is from the Lord.

In other words, God directs things that even those that look like chance. By saying that she just so happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, I think the author means exactly the opposite.

It's sort of tongue-in-cheek. It's a way of saying it was not just chance, that God is at work here and he was directing Ruth to just that part of the field. So Boaz comes from town in verse 4 and he says to his workers, the Lord be with you and they answer, the Lord bless you.

[17:47] I mean, look at his interaction with them. We haven't been told anything about Boaz's character, just the fact that he's rich and that he's related to Naomi. But now by his actions, we are getting to know him here.

And we notice some things right off the bat. He has a good relationship with his workers. And he is a follower of the Lord and just look at how he and his employees are blessing each other, talking about the Lord as they meet each other for the first time that day.

blessing is one of the themes of this book. It's this subtle reminder that even as people are kind to each other, they are reflecting God's kindness and as they are blessing each other, God is blessing them.

It's a small village and everyone is out there working at the harvest time and Boaz looks out and he sees this woman he doesn't know. It's a small town of Bethlehem. So he says to his foreman, whose is that young woman?

He doesn't say, who is that young woman? He says, whose is that young woman? In other words, what is her relationship to someone else that I know? Who does she belong to? Now one reason he

might be asking that is because she's a foreigner, but it's also maybe because she's all alone out there.

[19:04] She's not working with anybody else. She doesn't apparently belong to anyone. But it also anticipates that she does belong to Naomi, who is his relative. Look what the servant says in verse 6.

He says, she is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. See how he says that twice? Moab? It's like he's saying, she's from Moab.

You can just imagine the thoughts going through his head. Like, what is Boaz going to say about this? Right? We've got this Moabite. She's really sketchy. She had asked for permission to glean and worked all morning.

And the end of verse 7 is a little bit difficult to understand. No one really knows what it means, but I think what it means is that she had been working hard in the field all morning, and just now, just before Boaz arrived, she had taken a brief rest.

Now look at how Boaz responds to Ruth once he realizes that she's in need. He does nine things for her. He doesn't toss her a little bit of money and send her on her way.

[20:11] He does nine substantial things for her, each one kinder than the one before. First, in verse 8, he calls her, my daughter. He's a rich, Israelite man, and she's a poor Moabite woman, but he makes her feel comfortable and accepted.

He could say to her, what are you doing here? But he doesn't. He calls her, my daughter. It's kind. It's a family term. It's a term of acceptance.

Second, at the end of verse 8, he asks her to stay in his field. It's not just that he's going to tolerate her. It's not just that he's going to overlook her presence even though he wishes that she weren't there.

He wants her there. He wants to make her feel comfortable. There may not be that much food to go around. There may not be that much grain on the edges of the field or that's left over in the field. What about all the Israelite poor people? Shouldn't the Israelites have first dibs on this food? It's Israelite territory after all. Is it right that some of it would go to a Moabite girl?

[21:13] Yes. The third thing he does is also in verse 8. He tells her to stay close to his young women. Not only will this keep her safe, but it also gives her a sense of identity.

Instead of working in the field all alone, she's with someone. She's not a lonely foreign girl in a sea of strangers. She belongs to that group with those harvesters.

She's with Boaz's female workers. See, he's going above and beyond here. All he has to do in order to obey the Mosaic law is just leave her alone.

That's all he has to do. All he has to do is allow her to just stick on the edges of the field and be one of those poor people that comes to see what she can find. But he is taking a particular interest in her welfare.

Fourth, verse 9, he specifically instructs the young men not to touch her. You can imagine in some work environments what women have to put up with as far as men hassling them.

[22:18] This word touch in Hebrew often has a sexual connotation to it. So we don't know here if Boaz is concerned about guys pushing her around or if he's concerned about something more serious than that.

Remember, we're in the time of the judges here. It's a particularly dangerous time for women. The Levite and his concubine who were raped and murdered, that took place seven miles from this spot. Seven miles. And it was this town that they were leaving from when they tried to get back to their home. Here is Ruth, a foreign girl, right, with no one to protect her.

She's a prime target, but Boaz explicitly calls his guys over and says, you leave her alone. Fifth, in verse 9, he says that if she's thirsty, she can drink water from what the male servants have drawn. That's a little bit unusual because in ancient Israel, it was the foreigners who were supposed to do the manual labor and draw water for the Israelites. Not only that, but in that culture, it was the women who were supposed to draw the water for the men.

[23:30] Now Boaz is starting to get a little carried away because he's saying that his men are going to draw water for her. He has so far just shown basic human decency, but now he's giving her his stuff.

And she can't believe her ears. It's shocking generosity, and she doesn't know what to make of it. And so she says in verse 10, I'm a foreigner. Why are you treating me like this?

She expected to be treated like an outsider. Here's this close-knit community of Bethlehem. This isn't the way they treat Moabites and outsiders.

And Boaz answers that he has heard how good she has been to Naomi. It's interesting. Even though Naomi was so bitter, she evidently had told people how her daughter-in-law had forsaken her life in Moab and come back with her to take care of her.

So in verse 12, Boaz blesses her and he says something very significant. He says, May a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

[24 : 42] See, whatever Ruth thought she would find when she came to Israel, and we know she thought she was coming to starvation and death, she has actually come, Boaz says, to find refuge under the wings of God.

She has given up the gods of Moab and committed herself to the Lord, the God of Israel, and whether she knew it or not, she was coming to Israel to find refuge under the wings of God.

And what do the wings of God look like? They look like Boaz. Do you see the link?

This is Boaz saying this. He has just done all of these things for her, and he's not done yet. And he is saying, when I do these things for you, when I show this kindness for you, when I welcome you and protect you and give you water that my young men have drawn, this is the wings of the Lord, the God of Israel.

He says, I am doing these things on behalf of God, and when you come under my protection, you come under God's protection. My goodness toward you is done on behalf of God.

[25 : 55] That is incredibly significant. And she cannot believe Boaz's kindness. Look what she says in verse 13. She says, you have comforted me and you have spoken kindly to your servant even though I am not one of your servants.

Now in Hebrew, there are a number of different words for servant. And the word that she uses here when she says, I am not even one of your servants and you are being so nice to me. The word that she uses for servant is the lowest word.

It is the bottom rung. It is the lowest position of society. This kind of servant is so low in social status that they were not even able to become a wife.

They could be a concubine like a mistress. They were the ones who, you know, like with Abraham and Hagar, if your wife couldn't conceive, you could go into your servant and have a child through her.

They were the ones who did the manual labor grinding grain and washing people's feet, all the dirty jobs that nobody else wanted. She says, look, I am not even there.

[27 : 00] I am not even like one of your lowest servants. And yet, you are being so good to me. It's incredible that Boaz would treat her this way. But Boaz is not done yet.

He's already done five things for her. Look at number six in verse 14. He invites her to the noon meal. Now, the meal wasn't just a time to eat. It communicated something socially about who belonged.

And Boaz is there eating with his workers and he says to Ruth, come over here. She may have been keeping her distance because she didn't really belong with them. She's just, you know, she's just one of the other poor people. But he says, come here, come.

Come join our meal. And he passes her food and it says that there's a dipping sauce. And that means that he's not just kind of giving her the leftover scraps, but she is fully invited into this meal. And that means she probably didn't have her own lunch. What was she going to eat that day? But she not only had plenty to satisfy her, but she had some left over.

[28 : 04] Seventh, at the end of verse 15, he says that she can glean even among the sheaves. Now, the way that the gleaning normally worked is that the harvesters would go through the field and as they picked up, they would cut the grain, the stalks of grain and they would tie it into bundles and some of them would accidentally be dropped and then you could go through after and you could see what you could find.

But what they're doing is, Boaz is telling her that she's allowed to glean even among the grain that was already harvested. That's not gleaning.

He's saying, don't make her go through the field looking for scraps. Just let her go over to the piles that you've already cut and she can just kind of get the grain from there. Eighth, he protects her dignity.

Look at the end of verse 15, and do not reproach her. Not only were the young men not allowed to forbid her for doing this, but they were not allowed to humiliate or tease her.

No snide comments. No remarks about her ethnicity. The workers are supposed to accept her and treat her with kindness.

[29 : 17] And finally, ninth, here is where Boaz just really goes overboard. He tells his workers, you know what, just pull out the grain and leave it lying on the ground for her to pick up.

I mean, now they're purposefully dropping bundles on the ground and saying, you know, over there. So, it's no surprise that at the end of the day, when she beat out what she had gleaned in verse 17, it was about an ephah of barley.

Now, an ephah is one-tenth of a homer, and a homer is how much a donkey can carry. So, scholars guess that an ephah is something about 30 to 50 pounds of grain.

So, she didn't go home that night with a little bag, you know, oh, look, I got enough for a couple of days. She is hoisting a massive bag of grain on her back and going back to Bethlehem to her mother-in-law, probably about two weeks worth of work.

It was so much grain that she got. When she gets home, she does two things. First, she shows Naomi what she had gleaned, and, it says at the end of verse 18, she gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied.

[30 : 32] This is the same wording that we saw at the lunch in verse 14. This isn't the grain that she gleaned in the field. This is the lunch that Boaz had given her.

And I think that means that Naomi had not eaten anything all day. But now, Ruth is providing for her out of what Boaz had given to her. and Naomi doesn't have to be hungry.

Ruth comes home, not just with a gigantic bag of groceries, but with dinner. And her mother-in-law said to her, where did you glean today? Blessed be the man who took notice of you.

See, Naomi knows something is up here. You don't go to glean and bring home that much food.

And Ruth tells her that it was Boaz who had helped her and in 2.20, Naomi now says something very significant.

She says, May he be blessed by the Lord whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead. Kindness. May Boaz be blessed by the Lord whose kindness has not forsaken us or our dead husbands.

[31 : 40] Naomi interprets Boaz's kindness to Ruth as the way that the Lord has shown his kindness. When she hears what Boaz has done for Ruth, she gives the credit to the Lord.

Now there's a little crack in the hard shell of Naomi's bitterness. Maybe the Lord has not abandoned them after all.

In verse 21, Ruth says, Well, besides, Boaz said to me, You keep close by my young men until they have finished all the harvest. Boaz. But that's not what Boaz said back in verse 8.

He had told her to stay with the young women. But see, now Ruth says, Well, he told me to stay with his young men. I wonder. Maybe she has young men on the mind.

Maybe she longs for a young man because she knows that in the end that's the only real hope she has for a future. But Naomi gently corrects her in verse 22 and says, Yeah, you stay with his young women.

[32 : 48] Then you'll be safe. In other words, I think she's saying, Ruth, don't get your hopes up. You stay with his young women. So, verse 23, She kept close to the young women until the end of the barley and wheat harvest and she lived with her mother-in-law.

So, let's make a few overall observations and we'll kind of put this together and talk about the main point. First of all, the word kindness, *chesed* in Hebrew, is a very important word in the Old Testament.

It's the word that we talked about last week. It's sometimes translated in our Bibles as faithful or loyal, good, merciful. It describes God's actions toward his people because he is connected to them in relationship.

God acts for the benefit of his people not because they deserve it and not because it's going to benefit him in any way but because it is in his nature to do so. And throughout the Old Testament, because God shows his kindness to his people, he expects his people to show the same kindness toward each other.

In 2 Samuel 9, David says, is there not still someone of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God to him? In Micah 6, 8, this is what the Lord requires of you to do justice and to love

kindness and to walk humbly with God.

[34 : 11] In Hosea chapter 4, God is angry with Israel because there is no faithfulness or kindness or knowledge of God in the land. This key word, this key word kindness occurs exactly three times in the book of Ruth.

We saw it last week in chapter 1 and 1, 8, when Naomi tells her daughter-in-law, may the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. Naomi is linking God's character with good character.

Ruth has sacrificed her future for Naomi. That's something that God would do because God is sacrificial and kindness comes from Ruth ultimately because God is kind.

And the second time we see this word kindness is here in this chapter in 2.20 when Naomi says, may Boaz be blessed by the Lord whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead.

What does Naomi mean when she says that God has shown his kindness to them? Well, first of all, one of the things that's obviously going in this story is God's providence.

[35 : 20] In 1.6, Naomi hears that God has sent food to his people. In 1.22, Naomi and Ruth happen to arrive just at the beginning of the barley harvest. Well, that's very fortunate.

If they had arrived any earlier, they would have starved. And if they had arrived any later, they would have missed their chance to glean. In 2.3, Ruth just so happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz.

She didn't even realize that she was coming to the one person who would be willing to help her. She's gleaning and kind of working through the field and all of a sudden here's this guy being nice to her. And it isn't until she gets home later that evening that she finds out that he is from her father-in-law's family.

Boaz was just the right man for Ruth to meet. If he had been kind but not a kinsman, he could not have helped her long term as we'll see. But if he had been a kinsman but not kind, then what good would that have done?

The second way that God has shown his kindness to Ruth is not just through his prevailing providence but through Boaz. When Boaz accepted Ruth and protected her and gave her food, Naomi interprets that as the kindness of God.

[36 : 43] And through Boaz, God was kind to Ruth and kind to Naomi and to their dead husbands too. God has not forsaken them after all. The Lord has been working behind the scenes in his providence in invisible ways but he has been also working in very visible and physical ways through Boaz.

And Boaz recognizes that as well. He does this intentionally. He takes it seriously because in 2.12 he says to Ruth, may you be rewarded by God under whose wings you have come to take refuge. God does not have physical wings that Ruth could come to hide under. But he has Boaz. Those are his boots on the ground to care for Ruth on his behalf.

So here I think is the main point of Ruth 2. And we're just taking snippets of the book as we work toward the conclusion in chapter 3 and 4 but here I think is the contribution of this chapter.

God's people provide for the needy because God cares for the needy. His values are reflected in the actions of Boaz and like a mirror Boaz's actions tell us something about God.

[38 : 10] It's trickle down kindness. This isn't survival of the fittest. The only explanation for Boaz to act against his own self-interest to care for someone beside himself to act this way toward Ruth is that his values have been shaped by God.

God cares for the needy and he wants us to care for them as well. And we see this throughout the Old Testament. In the book of Exodus it says you shall not pervert the justice due the poor.

And it says in the seventh day leave your land fallow so that the poor can eat from it. In the book of Leviticus it says you should not take advantage of the poor and turn them into slaves.

In the book of Deuteronomy it says if any of your brothers become poor you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother. And it says you shall open wide your hand to your brother to the needy and to the poor in your land.

And it says you shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy. Why? Because you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt therefore I command you to do this.

[39 : 30] What about in the New Testament? In James chapter 1 27 it says worship that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this to visit orphans and widows in their affliction.

And in chapter 2 James says if a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food and one of you says to them go in peace be warmed and filled without giving them the things needed for the body what good is that?

God cares for the vulnerable he cares for those who have no resources without friends without the ability to fend for themselves and because Boaz follows God Boaz cares about those things too. we are faced with a constant temptation to come up with excuses for ourselves from caring for those in need.

I mean you know that's what the that's what the liberal mainline church over there does. you know they have the wrong priorities but we're interested in the gospel. Or you know what the politicians are there to take care of that kind of thing or you know what those people they would make better choices.

[40 : 44] But you know Boaz he could have done this he had clear biblical guidelines on how he should have helped Ruth he had clear guidelines from scripture he should have let her glean at the edge of the field and if he had done that he could have gone home that night with a clear conscience.

He could have said to his friends you know what there was a poor widow there today and I let her glean in my field and they said well done Boaz you did exactly what the Bible said you should do. But he went way beyond that he spoke kindly to her he gave her food and water he protected her he included her he accepted her and he made her work in the field incredibly successful.

we have the opportunity here in this body to be a community of kindness toward each other where we accept and care for each other especially those among us who are vulnerable and then that kindness that we show just sort of it just sort of spills out of here into the community around us it just can't help it there's too much it spills out of our church into the community around and we act like Boaz and more importantly than that we act like God we get to know each other and our neighbors do you remember when Boaz looked around the field and he said who's that he didn't recognize Ruth so he asked about her this is an example to us to have sensitive antenna up to look for people who are struggling and might need our help to figure out what they need to treat them with dignity to do what we can to protect them to include them in our group although that may cost us something to give them some place to belong and to share what we have with them we don't do these things because we feel guilty because of some sort of political reason we do them because we are the people of

God and we have been shaped by his values God's people provide for the needy because God cares for the needy we are getting to know God in the book of Ruth he shows kindness to his people so his people show kindness to each other God cares for the needy and the vulnerable he cares especially for the needy and the vulnerable if God is caring for Ruth and Naomi then maybe things aren't so bleak for them after all but he's not done yet and next week when we look at chapter three and four that we'll see that he is also a redeeming God does it matter in chapter one if God is sacrificial that he sacrifices himself to take care of other people does it matter in chapter two if God looks and finds needy people who have no other recourse and no way to provide for themselves and he says I will provide for you it does matter it does matter if God is that way that's the kind of God we serve so as we look at

Ruth three and four next week we'll conclude with God as a redeeming God let's pray father we're grateful that you have revealed yourself to us we could have been left to look at the natural world around us and guess what you were like we thank you that you revealed yourself to us as a good kind God who loves us we pray for the needy and the vulnerable in our church today who you love and care for we pray that you would give them hope we pray that you would provide for their needs we pray that you would comfort them in their affliction we pray that you would give them their daily bread and we pray that you would do that through us it is not easy for us to act like

[44 : 54] Boaz what is easy Lord is for us to do the bare minimum and to make excuses and so we pray that by the power of your spirit we would be more than our basest instincts that we would be shaped as your people that we would be so informed by your values and what you care about that we act in radically different ways than the people around us in this world we want to be like you and we want to love what you love and hate what you hate and we pray that you would give us the strength to act beyond our own selfish impulses and to be a people who reflect your good and gracious character we worship you this morning and we pray for your help in Jesus name amen