

All Things Working Together

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[0 : 00] Old Testament to the Book of Ruth, Chapter 1, and at verse 22, reading into Chapter 2, down to verse 11. Book of Ruth, Chapter 1, verse 22, down to verse 11 of Chapter 2.

And after we've read this passage, I'll ask Torkel Campbell to lead us in prayer. So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabites, her daughter-in-law with her, which returned out of the country of Moab, and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz.

And Ruth the Moabite said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field and glean years of corn after him, in whose sight I shall find grace.

And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And her hop was to light on a part of the field, belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

[1 : 39] And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee.

Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab.

And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves. So she came and hath continued even from the morning until now that she tarried a little in the house.

Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence.

But abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them. Have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee, and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn?

[3 : 00] Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been assured me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband.

How thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not, heretofore.

Amen, and may God bless to us that reading from his truth. mente spread out of truth that obscene, through him, perhaps the incorruptible, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit, at all times, and the pureabis and Crazy Spirit.

For thou art superior things, for that which comes from thyself. And praise be to thee that we withdraw to such prayers, for that the people that weary thirsting my tongue came after thyself.

[4 : 25] To give thee you now that they are left the things of this world in hand, and that they continually seek the child of thyself. For thou art the ones who made them into what they are today, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And thou art what thou art bestowed on our fallen people, and thou art seeking them from what they wear, to what they know to believe unto what they are.

May this be to thee that we were not sent in the darkness of the dead, but just a fallen letter. That we believe that we are not enlightened people. That we see things known we never saw them before.

May this be to thee that thou art the one who give us the saints, the saints of souls. May this be to thee that we cannot push thee at any time in the day of night.

May this be to thee that thou art the one who have been sent in the day of the dead, and that thou art the one who have been sent in the day of the dead. May this be to thee that thou art the one who have been sent in the day of the dead, and that thou art the one who have been sent in the day of the dead.

[5 : 34] May this be to thee that thou art piercing him in the day of the dead. May it be to thee that thou art past thour el liv mailedise. So indeed, Thou art our been sent in ten, ane- God bless you.

God bless you.

God bless you.

God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.

God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.

[7 : 47] God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. We were under thy wrath on my church, for there was nothing in us that would make thee accepted.

And so, Lord, faith and ministry that we were never accepted by thee. That praise be to me for the spirit we would hope that we would pay, that thou was the one who came and gave us all that could be done for us and given to us.

And your Lord would ask thy blessing on this meeting, that thy word would be found anything into our hearts. And believe, O Lord, that thy word was made pleasure to us, and that thy word was blessed to us, and that there are bold scriptures which are pleasure to us.

And grant, O Lord, that that would continue, for we are still found in time, and we do not know how long we are to found time. And we are long in for a journey from which we will not be turned.

And please be to thee, that of this prayer, and believe, that there are others, and that I hope they see the others, and those who look after us. Please be to thee for a given hope, that from the time comes the early conscience, that we will be followed by thyself, for we believe that thou was made us into our peace, that our peace, that our peace, that we will follow thee in time, and that we will eventually follow thee in that prepared place, that thou hast prepared for thy own people, that we, O Lord, might be numbered among such, that we might define our own goals as a mission of the heavenly hosts.

[9 : 28] We cannot do, O Lord, that there are many, many, many voices, of the earth and see through all the ferns, and see that there will be silence.

How can we be silenced, O Lord? And there must give us a new time, for which we follow thee in the prayers and magnify, and the one who will be in. And he has been to O Lord, for all I can't hate old people, and praise thee to thee, O Lord, that there was the one who conquered all, and that there was the one who betrayed my own people, which was on your own cause, and no longer be found in the things of this world.

We will all who does for those blessings and take heed of it. For to all this always, we ask God to praise thee, and for his sake, amen. Let us sing to God's praise again from Psalm 37, and at verse 23.

Psalm 37, verse 23. A good man's footsteps by the Lord are ordered aright, and in the way wherein he walks he greatly doth delight.

Although he fall, yet shall he not be cast down utterly, because the Lord with his own hand upholds him mightily. I have been young, and now I am old, yet have I never seen the just man left, nor that a seed for bread have beggars been.

[11 : 04] He is ever merciful, lends a seed, and lends his seed is blessed. Therefore, depart from evil, and do good and well for evermore.

These verses, a good man's footsteps by the Lord are ordered aright. A good man's footsteps by the Lord are ordered aright, and in the way wherein he was, he quickly doth delight.

Although he fall, yet shall he not be cast down utterly, because the Lord with his own hand upholds him mightily.

I have been young, and now I am old, yet have I never seen, and now I am old, yet have I never seen, and now I am old, yet have I never seen, for bread have beggars been.

He said, He said, He said, O merciful and blessed, His seed is blessed afar.

[13 : 12] Depart from evil and new day, and dwell forevermore.

Let us now turn to the passage that we read, the book of Ruth, and we may read again the last verse of chapter 1.

That's book of Ruth chapter 1 at verse 22. So Naomi returned and wrote the Moabites, her daughter-in-law with her, which returned out of the country of Moab, and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

And they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest. Just over two weeks ago, when I was last with you, I spoke of the three R's that are set before us in the first chapter.

The returnee, Arpa, the reborn, Ruth, and the restored, Naomi. And now the writer tells us of the arrival of Naomi and Ruth in Bethlehem.

[14 : 44] And the picture that is set before us is that the whole place is buzzing with the news. All the city was moved about them, literally stirred because of them.

And I suppose you could say the place was excited because of their arrival. I get the impression that the trial Naomi had passed through could be seen in her visual appearance.

I base that on the question that is addressed by the women of the town. Is this Naomi? It is as if the trials that she has passed through have altered her appearance so that there is some uncertainty about her identity.

You have probably seen something similar, where people have passed through a time of severe illness or great trial.

And you could see the effect in their visual appearance. Naomi is very keenly aware of her changed providence.

[16 : 11] I went away full. And the Lord has brought me back empty. Isn't it strange how God empties in order to be filled?

When we are being emptied, perhaps we tend to think that God is far from us. But I believe that the reverse is true.

When we unlock our sorrows and burdens before the Lord, He is ever so near, despite our being aware of His presence or His being in the company.

Remember in the New Testament, that the first appearance of the risen Lord was to the sorrowing Mary, blinded by her sorrow at the grave.

There was also an appearance to Peter, who under conviction and contrition, and there was an appearance to the two on the road to Emmaus.

[17 : 30] And to all of these, he appeared as the great emptier of grief-flooded hearts, and the great reliever of the anxiety of sin-laden souls.

And so that brings me to my two main thoughts this evening. First of all, the main character who is set before us in the book.

And secondly, the minute ordering of divine providence. Who is the main character of this little book?

I believe it's important to ask ourselves the question, and to discover for ourselves who is the main character. The book of Ruth is named in that way, and perhaps we might conclude that Ruth is the main character in the story.

And yes, she is important to the story. But in my view, she is not the main character. What about Naomi?

[18 : 43] She is spoken about frequently in the book. But I do not believe that she is the main character either. What about Boaz?

There is much told about him, and what he says is reported. But I do not believe that he is the main character either.

In my view, there is another character who eclipses them all. And what is most peculiar, you will not find recorded in the book one word that he spoke.

Who can it be? Who else but God himself? And yet there is no record of his speaking.

He remains in the background. But he directs all that takes place. If I can illustrate it this way, and every illustration falls far short.

[19 : 48] Perhaps there is someone here who was given opportunity to drive a car long before you were the legal age.

I am not so sure it happens so frequently today. Perhaps you sat in the lap of the driver, and your hands were on the steering wheel.

And you were very young, to all intents and purposes. You appeared to be driving the vehicle. And perhaps you even convinced yourself that you were so filled with pride.

But the person in whose lap you sat was really controlling the vehicle. Well, the author of the book of Ruth wants us to see God in the ordinary details, upholding and governing all his creatures and all their actions.

To trace the workmanship of God in the mundane and even apparently random details of the story.

[21 : 06] Because it is precisely in these very same details that we will see his fingerprints in our own lives.

And a major lesson, I believe, of the book of Ruth is that God is not just the main character of the storyline before us.

He is the main character of everyone's life who is united to faith in Christ Jesus.

And if that is true of you this evening, your life, no less than the book of Ruth, is all about him. For of him and through him and to him are all things to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

God then is the primary character in the book of Ruth. And in this section that we read tonight, we are taught very pertinent truths about the ways of God and his works.

[22 : 24] So that brings me to my second main character. The main character is God. The minute ordering of divine providence. The author draws our attention to the unfolding providence of God.

It is a thread that runs through the whole of this little book. Naomi and Ruth are set before us in their penury.

They are truly needy. Naomi are returning exile. Ruth are non-Jew. And you may remember how the Bible reminds us of a promise that is made to the spiritually needy.

For he will deliver the needy when he cries. The poor also. And him who has no helper. The needy, the poor, and those without help.

That is what the King of Kings will do. And he honors his promises in full. An example in the New Testament, you remember blind Bartimaeus.

[23 : 40] sitting by the roadside. And how the Lord intervened in his life. There he was, a helpless beggar.

A poor person. Crying to God. To the son of David to have mercy on him. And you remember how the Lord responded in the life of that man and gave him vision.

And in this section of the book we see how God's providence is so marvelously worked out in the lives of these two destitute women.

They would not be aware of the promise that I quoted from the book of Psalms, as it was not yet in writing. But as those who could say that the God of Israel is their God, they would have some knowledge of his power to provide.

But maybe not how he would provide. And Ruth displays evidence of the grace of faith. As she faces tribulation in her life.

[24 : 59] She has fled to the God of Israel for refuge. She is converted. She is a new convert. Naomi, on the other hand, has been given a very bitter path.

Call me Mara because bitter experiences have been the hallmark of her life of late. She has yet to discover how the Lord can bring sweetness out of bitterness.

And the very name by which she wishes to be called is perhaps an indication of that. How the Lord brings sweetness out of bitterness.

It's not easy. It's not an easy lesson to learn. It's not a lesson that any of us would want to pass through. But the Lord is able, out of the bitterest experiences, to bring sweetness into lives.

And so the first chapter concludes with a tiny sliver of light in their hour of darkness. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

[26 : 18] At the beginning of barley harvest. That, I believe, is a very significant piece of information.

They arrive, in other words, at a time of reaping. That's what you associate with harvest time. True in the literal sense.

But I believe that it is also true. A true reflection of the spiritual state of the people at this time.

Certainly, the Lord had been ploughing in the lives of these two women. By that I mean, the Lord had been preparing them for a time of reaping.

And so, when they arrive in Bethlehem, in the time of the barley harvest, that will be between the middle and the end of April. They arrive in the emptiness of their poverty.

[27 : 21] And in the poverty of their emptiness. You know, we use a phrase, scraping the bottom of the barrel. But have you ever felt as if your barrel has been held upside down and shaken?

There is absolutely nothing left in it. And to do any further scraping would be fruitless. There is nothing there.

Maybe you have been there. Or perhaps you feel that you are still there this evening. It is not a comfortable place.

And that is the impression I get from the story at the beginning of chapter 2. From Naomi's state of fullness, she has been reduced to a state of emptiness.

And her daughter-in-law is a reminder, if nothing else, of how as a family they had strayed from the Lord.

[28 : 26] The daughter-in-law is a reminder of something else to Naomi too. Of the power of divine grace. And the fact that we are told it is the beginning of the barley harvest implies that the place is prospering once more.

There is an abundance of food. The place is a hive of activity. The famine is in the past. The people are again enjoying the favor of the Lord after the bleak days of famine.

When they as a people are turned away from the living God. Because famine, as we noted earlier, is often a mark of rebuke. A mark of divine displeasure.

And I also wonder whether we are meant to understand more than just a turning around of matters in their providence as a people.

Was there also a spiritual quickening among these people? Why do I ask? Well, look at verse 4 of chapter 2.

[29 : 42] Behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless you. Note how the workforce of Boaz and Boaz greet one another.

You could argue that this forum of greeting arose from their cultural background and the teaching they received. However, I tend to think that there was more to it than that.

The normal greeting would be shalom. Literally, peace to you. But here that is not the way they greet one another. They use words from the Aaronic blessing, which was taught to Aaron by the Lord himself.

Here are a hard-working people engaged in harvesting the barley crop. And they use the word of God to greet one another. In the normal course of events, I don't think that is what you would expect from the workforce.

And so, when the writer tells us that it was the beginning of the barley harvest, it seems to me that the writer is telling us that these people who had known the trial of thumb, who had experience of emptiness, were now enjoying a time of fullness in the spiritual realm.

[31 : 20] There is a new beginning, as it were, in the life of the people. That is the first pale gleam of light in the dark providence of these two women.

And the implication is that the future for Naomi and Ruth might not be as bleak or as dark as Naomi was imagining.

You know, we are prone to right hard things against ourselves. We are prone to conclude with Jacob of old, all these things are against me.

And you know, when we stop believing in God's goodness and give ourselves over to doubt and worry, we easily sink into despairing inactivity.

And that can lead to a downward spiral in which our inactivity makes our situation worse and deepens our despair, which in turn makes us feel less inclined than ever to step out into what we believe is a hostile world.

- [32 : 34] How can we break that cycle? How can we break that cycle? Is it not? By grasping hold of God's covenant commitment to do us good.

Look to the cross and see the height and depth of the love of God in Christ. And if we grasp that, how can we doubt His purpose to give us everything that is necessary for life and godliness?

Remember what the prophet Isaiah writes. Who among you fears the Lord? Who obeys the voice of a servant?

Who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely upon us God. And you note in that context, the prophet is addressing those who know God.

How do we know that he's addressing those who know God? Because he is asking the question, who are those who fear the Lord? And in order to fear the Lord, you need to know the Lord.

- [33 : 50] You need to know who He is. Because this is not the fear, a servile fear. It's not a slavish fear. It's the fear where there is filial reverence and respect.

Where there is a bowing down before God and acknowledging Him as Lord in their life. And you note the advice that is given in that particular context.

It is to trust in God. When you have no inducement from your intellect. When you have no inducement or encouragement from the past. When you have to trust in God just because He is God.

Can you say that you have experienced that? Trusting in God just because He is God.

And the writer draws her attention to another glimmer of light. Not just that the barley harvest is a glimmer of light. An indication of the blessing and the favour of God upon the community.

- [34 : 59] But we are told by the writer that Naomi had a kinsman. That there was a relative of Naomi's husband. A man of great wealth of the family of Elimelech.

His name was Boaz. Now Naomi, you remember, couldn't see any way in which a husband might be provided for wealth.

But the writer who knows the end of the story gives a clue to us the readership about what is to transpire. Naomi had concluded that further marriage through her involvement was a non-starter.

You remember how she sought to discourage her daughters-in-law from accompanying her on the journey. Turn back, my daughters. Why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that made me become your husbands?

And here now, in the opening verse of this second chapter, the writer tells us there is a close relative who could easily carry on the family line and preserve the family's allotment in the land.

- [36 : 08] A relative of Naomi's husband. His name was Boaz. Why would the writer place this statement at the beginning of the chapter?

Right in the very place where it is guaranteed to lodge in your mind, to grab your attention, if he didn't see it as our source of hope.

And it is, I believe, one way of letting us, the readership, know what was hidden from the women regarding the purpose of the Lord.

Naomi has already quoted as saying, I went away full and the Lord brought me back empty. And I referred on the Sunday evening, two weeks ago, to the contrast that the writer depicts for us there.

I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back. And tonight for you in Christ, you can truly follow that. You did this, but the Lord did something else.

[37 : 08] How gracious is your God. You went astray, but the Lord, the Lord restored. How wonderful is the patience and the grace of the Lord.

How indebted we all are. If in Christ this evening to his amazing grace. Because all we like sheep went astray. So in these two verses, verse 22 and verse 1, we the readership are given an inkling as to how Naomi's emptiness is to be filled.

And she is to be filled in a way in which her cup will overflow. And tonight as you reflect on your relationship to the Lord, can you say that you too have known the experience of an overflowing cup?

Did you say, or are you saying, with David, my cup overflows? Or is it your experience this evening that you are lamenting your emptiness and your leanness?

Have you not learned that only God who emptied can fill again? God in his wondrous loving kindness, in his infinite mercy, in his wonderful mysterious providence has put these things in place for the women.

[38 : 42] And although the writer gives us these clues, it's almost as if he presses the pause button.

Just for a little. He leaves us in suspense as to how the abundance of the barley harvest and this relative of Naomi are to be employed and working together for good under the hand of God in the lives of Naomi and Ruth.

It's as if the writer is telling us indirectly, the Lord is at work. Just wait and see. And so he reports the conversation between Naomi and Ruth.

And note how he introduces this. Ruth seeks her mother-in-law's permission to go to glean in the fields. Let me now go to the fields and glean years of corn and so on.

In other words, please let me go to the fields and glean the grain after him in whose sight I may find favour. Now, you have to ask yourself, is this desire born of necessity and poverty alone?

[40 : 00] Are you aware of what is written in the book of the law? The book in Deuteronomy.

You remember when you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt. Therefore, I command you to do this thing. That is what God commanded the people of Israel to do. There was no welfare system.

Listen, this was how God ordered a welfare system so that those who were impoverished, those who were in penury, might be provided for.

God had rescued and redeemed Israel from their own bondage, where no one made provision for them in their poverty and misery.

[41 : 09] And the Lord had mercy on them and delivered them and showered grace and provided for them and gave them bread. And so he says to them, having received my mercy, now you also show mercy and make provision for the poor, the needy, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow.

And yet, although the law had this provision, there was another part of the law that was not quite so encouraging.

I've previously drawn attention to the way of which she is often spoken of in the book. She is the young Moabite woman. As if the writer wants us to notice the barriers that could be a deterrent to her becoming a member of the covenantal community.

The law prohibited a Moabite from entering the assembly of the Lord to the tenth generation. Deuteronomy chapter 23, no Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord even to the tenth generation.

None of them may enter the assembly of the Lord forever. And yet, isn't it strange? The same law that prohibited also opened a door of grace for her.

[42 : 33] For the law of grace states, 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 out. You shall leave them for the poor and the sojourner.

And you remember, Ruth belonged to three categories that are mentioned. She was a stranger, she was fatherless and a widow.

So the law that prohibited her from gleanings also stated that there is provision for her. And that God is stretching out his hand to bring the exiles to share in the provision of his covenant.

How wonderful is the grace of God. And if you feel this evening that you too are, as it were, on the outside, here is encouragement for you to be on the inside.

That you needn't stay on the outside. Because the Lord welcomes strangers into the midst of his people. And he encourages them to come.

[43 : 47] And this is surely an example of mercy triumphing over judgment. Paul teaches in the letter to the Romans what the law weakened by the flesh could not do.

In other words, those who were justly condemned by the law, myself and yourself, could not share in the blessings of salvation. How was the matter to be resolved?

And the answer of the Bible by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh. And for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.

And there's one more thing I think that is worthy of note. They arrived in Bethlehem not at the time of planting, but at the time of harvest.

It's only possible to glean at harvest time. The work of cultivation was passed. On the basis of a finished work, if you like.

[44 : 51] Ruth was able to come into the inheritance of the people of God. The gospel offers eternal life to us, the sinner, on the basis of the finished work of Christ.

His finished work opens the door to sinners so that there is enough provision and to spare for all who come to glean in the field of the gospel.

Naomi then grants with her desire. And we are told she went out to glean. And she came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

In other words, she came to the field belonging to Boaz who was related to Elimelech. Did you get that? It's almost as if the writer, as if he wants us to see how wonderful and how minutely ordered the providence of God is.

As if he wants us to see how that is taking place here. She happened to come to this part.

[46 : 21] The very person who could act as a kinsman redeemer. And the Hebrew literally is here. The chance that chanced upon her was that she came to glean in Boaz's field.

The happenstance that happened to her. As if the writer is saying to you and me, reflect now on this. Think of the steps that took place in order for this latest piece of information to be reported.

Naomi and Ruth had to return to Bethlehem. The very moment, not when the barley was being planted or tended or growing, but at the very beginning of the barley harvest.

You can only glean at harvest time. And out of all the fields that were being harvested at that time, Ruth had to come to the field of Boaz. And what comes to mind are the words that we sang this evening.

A good man's footsteps by the Lord are ordered aright. Now at that stage, I don't believe that Ruth knew Boaz.

[47 : 31] Nor does she know where God is providentially leading her. And who was overlooking the field that very day but Boaz. You see, everything is so minutely ordered from God's side.

The Lord is steps ahead. It's another example, I believe, of the counsel that Moses gave to Joshua prior to relinquishing his duties and facing death.

And you remember what he said to Joshua amongst other things. It is the Lord who goes before you. How comforting to have the Lord go before you.

All of this, I believe, is related to offset what Naomi claimed about the sovereignty of God. Remember how her thought process is stated.

Tells how she viewed her providence. The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. He has brought me back empty. She believes in a sovereign God.

[48 : 43] But as the writer continues her story, we are given a totally different picture. For things are shown in a very different light.

Not as Naomi sees. God is working in a detailed way in both their lives for good. Perhaps some of you have heard the name.

Edward Lorenz. He was a mathematician. And he was also a weatherman. He worked on the development of computer models that could map and predict weather patterns.

And he noted in his studies that the butterfly effect is delivered from the metaphorical example of the details of a tornado.

The exact time of formation. The exact path that is taken. The exact path that is taken. Influenced by minor perturbations such as a distant butterfly flapping its wings several weeks earlier.

[50 : 00] In other words, what Lorenz was teaching is this, that the tiniest things sometimes have seismic implications. And that is, I believe, part of the lesson here.

Who could have predicted that a stranger, and not any stranger, but Ruth the Moabite would glean in a particular field on a certain day at a particular time.

And yes, who could have said that this was to lead to privileges and blessings that would be in the lives of Naomi and Ruth?

They couldn't see it. But God is a sovereign God. And he works all things according to the counsel of his own will for his own glory.

And as one of the divines of the past, John Flava said, the providences of God are like Hebrew words.

[51 : 03] They can only be read backwards. They can only be read backwards. And perhaps that is how, with hindsight, we look back.

Can you trace the hand of God in your own providence? Perhaps some things you can, and other things you cannot.

I'll just give one example. On the 8th of August, 1982, just over 39 years ago, a very nervous, inexperienced, pre-Divinity student conducted two services in this congregation.

Did he see then that he would in retirement be doing supply in that very congregation? I did not.

And there are so many things in our lives that we do not see, that are minutely ordered by God. In the Christian life, there are no insignificant details.

[52 : 24] We may think they're insignificant. We know that our times are in God's hands. We know that every one of our days is ordained for us, written in God's book, before any one of these days comes to be.

We know that God is working His purpose. But as year succeeds year. And so we know that seemingly random things, even the happenstances that happen to us, may prove to have significance for the glory of God and for the good of His people that we never could have imagined.

That is, I believe, a precious truth, full of comfort. Perhaps especially when we struggle with questions of guidance, as Christians often do.

We try to anticipate what's going to happen next. And I think that's partly why we love stories like the Book of Ruth. Because the narrator is always hinting at what's coming next.

We don't have that privilege in our own lives. There is so much that is hidden from us.

[53 : 43] We worry about tomorrow. We are unsure what we need to do next. We make plans. We make plans. But the fact is, the future is out of our control.

And sometimes we stress and we fret about how to be prepared. We often don't know what to do for the best.

We don't know, perhaps, at times, how we're going to make ends meet. And it's exactly there that Ruth's example is so useful. She and Naomi, they don't know how they're going to make ends meet.

They have no long-term survival plan. Ruth, the new believer, she does the next thing. She can't see what another year might bring. She can't even see tomorrow.

But what she does do is follow the pattern set out in the Word of God for the destitute, for the widow, for the sojourner in the land.

[54 : 52] She has no access to extra revelation to tell her about tomorrow and the day after and the day after that. So she follows the course that the Bible indicates.

She does the next best thing that she knows to do in faithful obedience to the clear precepts of the Word of God.

And the sovereign God into whose hands she has entrusted her life overrules and guides her steps. That's the secret, you know, of Christian contentment.

You don't need to know about tomorrow. You need to know how God would have you live today. You need to attend to the clear teaching and guidance of the Scriptures.

Do your duty today. Trust the whole weight of tomorrow to the hands of God, God governs all things in sovereign grace for the good of those who love Him.

[56 : 03] It was living in precisely that way of thinking of dependent trust that enabled the Apostle Paul to write, I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

I know how to be brought low. I know how to abound in every circumstance. I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need, and can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

That was Ruth's way of thinking too, it seems. Trust the providence of God for tomorrow to the next thing in quiet faith today.

Well, we learn much about the minute ordering of divine providence. It's utterly sure. It's utterly dependable. You can rely on this God.

The main character, God. The minute ordering of divine providence for the good of those that trust in Him.

[57 : 14] Amen. May God bless to us that meditation on His truth. Let us conclude by singing in Psalm 72 and at verse 12.

Psalm 72 and at verse 12. For he the needy shall preserve when he to him doth call the poor also, to him that hath no help of man at all.

The poor man and the indigent in mercy he shall spare. He shall preserve alive the souls of those that needy are, both from deceit and violence.

Their soul he shall set free, and in a sight right, precious and dear, their blood shall be. These verses for he the needy shall preserve.

didn't intend to follow. Those women who've Scout■■■■ familiar with divine providence for the 21st century and people that trust in Him, they haven't asked their minds to be.

[58 : 33] They to lead us all along theAmerica and dedicated Im ■■■, No help of man at all.

The human and the indigent, In mercy he shall stir.

He shall whisper, Our lightest souls, Of those that need thee are.

Both from the sick and by your hands, Their soul he shall set free, And in his sight bright, Peck he has, And here let the child be.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God the Father, Fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit, Rest on and abide with you all, Now and forever.

[60 : 05] Amen. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.