

The Bride's Journey

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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. of wise falling hurt fungi behold began the end, for ever to be retent.

The last was promised from thyself. And praise be to thee that we would grow to such prayers, for the people that were thirsting and hung carrying out for thyself.

[4 : 26] To give thee, who never let the other things of this world in hand, and that they continually seek to try it to host thyself. For thou art the ones who made them into what they are today, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And thou art what anoint us, that thou hast bestowed from our fallen people, and thou hast taken them from what they wear, to what they never believe and to what they are.

In this be to thee that we were not left in the darkness state, we just have fallen left us, that we believe that we are not enlightened people, that we see things now we never saw them before.

May it be to thee that thou art the one who give us a state, that Prince of State, that thou art so. May it be to thee that we cannot push thee at any time in the day of night, and ask of thee that thou art still as that which are hearty signage.

Lord. For we believe you'll to watch the ■■ of you believe in earth as one that as the earth is dry.

[5 : 41] And if you look forward to your handset, that thou art still us that we refuse us today. For we will also trust you that you are also seeing you.

And you will have to be our to thank you for all that you are standing for us. For it was the great that you would have to be done with the hell of a sinful gift. And there was no one with guides for them.

There was no one with servers for them. And there was no one with a sense of the great. And there was no one with the conversion heaven, making a procession from this time.

It is to be that you were taken from a place that was unknown to us. But in our existence we did not know ourselves. We did not know thyself.

But now the enlightenment that we believe we have received from thee. We see thee as the one who is high and up to death. The one that is closer to us than ever before.

[6 : 42] And the more we go out into this life, the greater we. We seem to really think that we stand and pray to thee of myself. For would I be returned with nothing?

And praise thee to thee as ever of the one who worked out a work of salvation. On behalf of the holy people. For would I be so proud of no greatly that they would be found in thyself.

For would I be well for the things of this world. And take thee for the state and condition of this world. And praise thee to thee as those that come.

And in the day of thy power. And may thyself know to our people. Who know she is thee. O Lord, the afters to let us live.

O Lord, the Lord, the God in this life. For that was the one who loved the fallen people. That was the one who gave our us to the good of his hands. Good to come to him.

[7 : 38] And praise thee to thee as the hope that we have been saved. That we are no more for such. Praise thee to thee that we were not left to our hope. But that thou just come.

Reveal thyself to us. And revealing thyself to us. Reveal thyself to us. Reveal thyself to us. That we were under thy wrath and my crotch. For there was nothing in us. That would make thee accept us.

And so Lord, praise the ministry. That we were ever accepted by thee. But praise thee to me for that. Praise thee to the hope that we would gain. That thou was the one who came.

And gave us all that could be done for us. And given to us. And we would all good ask thy blessing on this meeting. That thy word would live. Be found in sitting into our hearts.

And believe, O Lord, that thy word was made precious to us. And that thy word was blessed to us. And that there is a lay out bold and prescriptive. That are precious to us.

[8 : 36] And grant, O Lord, that that would continue. For we are still found in time. And we do not know where long we are after in time. For we are all in for that journey from which we will not return.

But praise me to thee that of this journey. Believe that thou are good. And that thou hast a savior of us. And thou look after us. And that thou look after us. Praise thee to thee for a given hope.

That from the time comes the early doctrine. That we will be filled with thyself. For we believe that thou hast made us into that peace. And that thou hast a savior of the quality of time.

And that thou will eventually be 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 material of the heavenly hosts. And that in many, many, many voices. After have been changed through the ■■■■■ Beat, O Lord. And so that there will be silence. How can we silence, O Lord, and Step encourage you to come.

[9 : 36] And that thou hastfort and warm them up toxy. For thou hast■■■ in which weapons are tested. And captained through the years." How can we silence your Lord, and then have given us a new tongue. As you would follow me and■■■ide with thenament at the nicest and mar italian. Then we are■■■ and those who are ■■■ly and the■ ethical and manger s ■■■ingake the same deeds? That thou hast Dentrak is there or any hoof offer die SOL letting clear things. Methodmes of thy quienes soale animals both gave.

And thiel entrdessus the process of a lost. And those who are looking for a Woah!! O Lord, for all I give my own people, that please be to thee, as thou art the one who comforted all, and as thou art the one who give my own people, which is my own cause, and no longer be done into the things of this world.

O Lord, who does for those blessings, and take heed of it, for trouble is always, yes, God, Christ, 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'm old, yet have I never seen the just man left, nor that a seed for bread have beggars been.

[11 : 05] He is ever merciful, lends a seed, and lends a seed is blessed, therefore depart from evil, and do good and well forevermore.

These verses, a good man's footsteps by the Lord are ordered aright. a good man's footsteps by the Lord are ordered, and in the way wherein he was, the p♥, he recognizes the once in the way.

he falls, and 1933■■■ he I have been young and now and old, yet have I never seen.

Then just not love nor body sin for bread and beggars be.

He said, O merciful and blessed, it's in His blessed fire.

[13 : 12] Depart from the land of you 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 the book of Ruth, chapter 1, at verse 22. 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 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, the returnee, Arba, 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.

[15 : 48] 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.

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.

[16 : 55] Remember in the New Testament, the first appearance of the risen Lord was to the sorrow in 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. 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 was set before us in the book.

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

[18 : 09] 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?

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.

[19 : 07] 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, 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, you were so filled with pride.

[20 : 31] 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 and the mundane and even apparently random details of the story.

Because it's 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.

[21 : 54] 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.

And that brings me to my second main point. Main character is God. The minute ordering of divine providence. The author draws our attention to the unfolding providence of God.

it's 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.

[23 : 12] 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 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.

[24 : 44] But maybe not how he would provide. And Ruth displays evidence of the grace of faith as she faces tribulation in her life.

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 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.

[26 : 04] 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.

At the beginning of barley harvest. 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 plowing in the lives of these two women. By that I mean the Lord had been preparing them for a time of reaping.

[27 : 08] 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 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've been there. Or perhaps you feel that you're still there this evening. It's not a comfortable place.

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

[28 : 16] And her daughter-in-law is a reminder if nothing else, of how as a family they had strayed from the Lord.

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 had 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 martyrs 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 : 43] Behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and 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. The normal course of events, I don't think that is what you would expect from the workforce.

[30 : 59] 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 well.

There is a new beginning as it were in the life of the people. That's 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 write hard things against ourselves. 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.

[32 : 13] 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.

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 of God.

[33 : 32] Through 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. 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 know 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, 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.

[35 : 14] 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 the 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.

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?

[36 : 33] 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. 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.

[37 : 43] 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.

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 in working together for good under the hand of God in the lives of Naomi and Ruth.

[39 : 15] 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 field and glean years of corn and so on.

In other words, please let me go to the field 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?

Are those aware of what is written in the book of the law? 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.

[40 : 36] That is what God commanded the people of Israel to do. There was no welfare system.

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.

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.

[41 : 42] 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.

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 glennies up, 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.

[42 : 59] So the law that prohibited her from glenny 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.

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.

[44 : 28] 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. 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.

[46 : 12] As if he wants us to see how that is taking place here. She happened to come to this part. 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.

[47 : 27] Now at that stage, I don't believe that Ruth knew Boaz, nor does she know where God is providentially leading her. And who was overlooking the field in that very day but Boaz.

You see, everything is so minutely ordered from God's sight. 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.

God's God's God's God. As the writer continues her story, we are given a totally different picture.

[48 : 49] for things are shown in a very different light. Not as Naomi sees. God is working in a detailed way in both her lives for good.

Perhaps some of you have heard the name Edward Lorenz. He was a mathematician and he was also a weatherman. 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 influenced by minor perturbations such as a distant butterfly flapping its wings several weeks earlier.

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.

[50 : 15] 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 Flaville said the providences of God are like Hebrew words 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.

[51 : 35] 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.

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

We know 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.

[53 : 07] 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.

We worry about tomorrow. We are unsure what we need to do next. 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.

[54 : 11] rest. 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's 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.

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.

[55 : 18] 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 who governs all things in sovereign grace for the good of those who love him.

God will be to the Lord. 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.

[56 : 40] That was Wolfe's way of thinking too it seems. Trust the providence of God for tomorrow to the next thing and 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.

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 his sight right, precious and dear their blood shall be.

[58 : 06] these verses for he the needy shall preserve. near the him and a version O Thank you.

All those that bear the embrace, and where he ses, set free, and in his sight bright let me hear us, 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. Amen.

Amen.