



What A Great Day!

Ruth 2

1. Seeking Favor (verses 1-7)
2. Finding Favor (verses 8-16)
3. Enjoying Favor (verses 17-23)

March 16th, 1621 proved to be a pivotal day in the lives of the Pilgrims who traveled from England to settle in the New World on the Mayflower. Only three months before, they had finally dropped anchor in Plymouth Harbor (December 17th, 1620), just in time prepare for the harsh winter that faced them. And that first winter was difficult. Without any buildings, the women, the children and the sick were forced to remain aboard the Mayflower. Many of the men were too sick to help in the work of building the needed buildings. Of the 18 adult women who traveled to the new world, 13 of them died that first winter. In all, nearly half of the 102 pilgrims that came to America on the Mayflower died that first winter, leaving only 57 to carry on the work of survival. Things for them were looking bleak. Their numbers were depleted. They faced the threat of Indian attack. Disease was rampant. How would they survive the next year in such rugged circumstances? These questions swirled in their minds. They were walking through some dark, difficult days.

But, as I said, on March 16, 1621, their fortunes changed for the better. It was on that day that they had their first contact with a Native American. His name was Samoset. Rather than being a hostile encounter, which they all feared, it was a friendly encounter. If you remember from history, Samoset boldly walked into the midst of settlement and proclaimed, "Welcome, Englishmen!" [\[1\]](#) Such words coming from a Native American surely shocked all of them in the camp. As it turned out, this man had learned a bit of English from some English fishermen, who fished in Maine. And it was his English that played a key role in securing the fortunes of the Pilgrim settlers.

Samoset introduced these pilgrims to another Native American named Squanto, who had been kidnapped by Englishman, some 6 years before. They had tried to sell him as a slave. After 5 years in England, he was able to return to his world, but not before he learned a bit of English. His English was good enough to teach the early Pilgrims how to survive on the land, raising plants like pumpkin and squash and beans and corn – successful crops on their land. With the English skills of these men, they were able to make a peace treaty with Massasoit, a Native American chief. Without the English-speaking Native Americans, there would be no way for them to have survived. In this treaty, they pledged mutual aid and assistance, which gave them peace for forty years. This treaty allowed them to settle in safety. As a result of these providential circumstances, the early Americans not only survived, but they prospered as well. And thus, the settlement of the United States of America was able to continue.

Now, it's not like the Pilgrims fully understood the significance that March 16th, 1621 would hold in their lives. It had started out like any other day in the life of the Pilgrims. It was a day of hard work. It was a day of just trying to survive. They had no idea of how crucial the day would be to their survival. But, in many ways, the entire fortune of our nation can reflect back upon that day as the turning point. Had the Pilgrims never met Samoset, they may well have never survived. Many have pointed to these matters as evidence of God's providential working to protect the settlers.

As we come this morning to the second chapter of the book of Ruth, we will see the events of a similar day unfold for us. In fact, the chronology of chapter 2 covers one day, from morning until night. But, it was a significant day. It was a day in which the fortunes of two women were changed forever. You could argue that it was the turning point of their lives. One day, they were on the brink of starvation, struggling to survive. But, by evening, they had hope of continuing on, with provisions for the next weeks and months.

They had no idea at the time of how significant the day would be. It started out just like any other day. But, by the time the sun went down, their hope was restored, indeed, they were restored to life on that day.

Like the early Pilgrims, this day had an effect upon the nation of Israel as well. For, it is from the line of one of these women that king David was born. He restored the nation of Israel from the chaos of the days of the judges to a nation of power and prominence. Furthermore, from the loins of David came the Messiah, who has restored those who believe to life indeed.

This week, we are continuing our exposition of this great book, which has much to teach us about God and His ways. Two weeks ago, we looked at chapter 1, in which we found Naomi and Ruth in a difficult situation. They had returned together from the land of Moab. They were poor. They were vulnerable. They were in need of much help. In verse 20, we see Naomi's perspective of the situation. It wasn't good. She said to her friends, ...

Ruth 1:20

Do not call me Naomi [*which means pleasant*], but call me Mara [*which means bitter*], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?" She felt empty and abandoned and afflicted.

I can understand her feelings. More than a decade earlier, she had left Bethlehem, "the house of bread," looking for bread in Moab with a husband and two sons. While there, her husband died. Then, her two sons died. She came back with her daughter-in-law, hungry and without hope.

My sermon in chapter 1 was appropriately entitled, "Dark Days." Indeed, they were "Dark Days" in Naomi's life. Life had not turned out the way that she had planned. Rather than being the wife of a successful man, living a comfortable, "pleasant" life, she lost her husband. She lost her two sons. She was living a painful, "bitter" life. From her perspective, she left Bethlehem "full" – having a husband and two sons. However, she now felt "empty" – having buried all of them in Moab, and returning with her daughter-in-law. But, what Naomi didn't realize was the treasure that she brought back from Moab.

In chapter 3, verse 11, Ruth is called "a woman of excellence." In chapter 4, verse 15, Ruth is called "better ... than seven sons." And Ruth was going to be the one who would restore Naomi's life (4:15). And, as we will see this morning in chapter 2, Ruth would be the one through whom great blessing would come to her. But, Naomi didn't know this. In her mind, she was going through some "Dark Days."

But, in chapter 2, it will all change. In fact, it will all change in a matter of one day. The events of chapter 2 all take place in one day. My message this morning is appropriately entitled, "What a Great Day!" Let us read Ruth chapter 2, ...

Ruth 2

Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the LORD be with you." And they said to him, "May the LORD bless you." Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab. And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while."

Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. "Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw." Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?" Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. "May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge." Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left. When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. Also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."

So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. She took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took it out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied. Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz." Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead." Again Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives." Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.'" Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that others do not fall upon you in another field." So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

All of chapter 2 takes place in one day, with the exception of verse 23, which is a summary verse, covering several months, which helps to prepare the way for chapter 3. In the same way, the verse at the end of chapter 1 is a summary verse, which prepares the way for chapter 2. Look at chapter 1, verse 22.

Ruth 1:22

So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Indeed, this is what happened in chapter 1. Naomi had left Bethlehem. But, now, she returned with Ruth, her daughter-in-law. They came to Bethlehem. But, one more piece of information is included that's not included in chapter 1. It's the very last phrase of the verse. It tells us when they returned to the land. They returned "at the beginning of the barley harvest" - that is, somewhere around the first of June. This fact

prepares the way for chapter 2, as we shall see in a moment.

In the first verse of chapter 2, we get another fact that helps prepare the way for the events of the chapter. We read, "Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz." (2:1). As my oldest two like to say, "Now, that was random." It seems as if this comment comes out of nowhere. It isn't really any part of the narrative. But, it's for us, as readers, to get an advanced warning on exactly how the help for Ruth and Naomi will come. It's a literary device called "foreshadowing," where we get to see the big picture of what's going on, even before Ruth and Naomi realize it. It's like our little secret into the lives of Ruth and Naomi.

The great blessing on this day will come from a man named Boaz. He is here identified as a wealthy man. He is also identified as a relative of Naomi's husband, though Ruth didn't know this at the time. In many ways, he will be like Samoset, who will rescue Ruth and Naomi from their distress. Indeed, they were in distress, as much as the early Pilgrims were. They were in a place of vulnerability. They were two women in a man's world. They were in a place of poverty. They had no source of income. They were in a place of desperation. In fact, they were in danger of starving for lack of resources. In order to survive, they needed help. Neither of them knew how it would come. But, they felt the need of doing something. In verse 2, we read of Ruth's plan, ...

Ruth 2:2

And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor."

These words swing us into my first point. Here's my first point, ...

1. Seeking Favor (verses 1-7)

Ruth was aware of the law in Israel during those days. Leviticus 23:22 says, "When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field nor gather the gleanings of your harvest; you are to leave them for the needy and the alien. I am the LORD your God." And Deuteronomy 24:19 says, "When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan and for the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands."

In other words, when the farmers in Israel would go out to the field to harvest their crop, they were to leave some of the crop in the field. It was to be free for the alien, the orphan, and the widow to come and take for their sustenance. We don't do this today. As I had opportunity to drive around Rockford in recent weeks, I have been paying particular attention to the harvesting methods employed by our local farmers. I noticed that hardly a stalk of corn was left remaining in any field that I looked at. Every stalk of corn was taken down. Every ear of corn was claimed.

But, it was different in the days of Ruth and Naomi. The farmers in those days were instructed to leave a portion of their crop unharvested for the poor and needy to come and take for themselves. This was a part of Israel's welfare system. It was a way for the people of Israel to provide for the poor. In many ways it was a much better system than what we have, because it caused the poor to get up and do something to earn a little money for themselves. In doing so, the poor would be given the dignity of working for their own sustenance. And so, every harvest, the poor and needy would be hanging around the field, waiting to claim what the harvesters would leave behind. In our modern context, it would be a bit similar to when you see the men walking up and down a busy street, collecting aluminum cans that others have tossed from their cars as they drive by. The cans are then redeemed for a couple of cents each.

Now, as good as this sounds for a system of welfare, it also brought with it many problems. You have the vulnerable people of the land looking to take from the fields. How easy it is for the workers to resent the poor and insult them and mistreat them (Ruth 2:15). The place of the fields during the harvest could easily be a place of danger for the weak who came in among the fields. How easy it is for the workers to take advantage of them (Ruth 2:9, 22).

Out in the country, there is no law around to enforce the proper treatment of the poor. This is especially the case in the days in which "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25) as in the days of Ruth and Naomi. And yet, despite all of these dangers, Naomi tells Ruth, "Go, my daughter." Such permission to go is an indication of the desperation that these women faced.

But, I want for you to notice here Ruth's perspective on these matters. She says, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor" (verse 2). What was she looking for? She was looking for favor. She was Seeking Favor (verses 1-7).

That is, she was seeking grace. She was seeking a place where one would give her what she didn't earn or deserve. The Hebrew word here is the word from which we get the name, "Hanna." It means "grace." It means "unmerited favor." It means "undeserved kindness." And this is what Ruth was looking for. As an alien from Moab; as a widow of Mahlon; as an orphan from her parents, that's all that she could ever expect.

Now, by way of application here, I want for you to think about your relationship with the Lord. We stand before the Lord, just like Ruth stood before the potential land-owners. She had nothing to bring that would cause any of the land-owners to owe her anything. She couldn't claim her heritage, as she was a Moabitess. She couldn't claim her riches, as she was poor and destitute. She couldn't claim her family line, as the men were all dead. Rather, she was coming with nothing. She was coming seeking favor. And that's how we come to God.

Nothing in my hands I bring,
simply to the cross I cling. [\[2\]](#)

In fact, if we bring anything, we bring that which might turn us away from God.

Foul I to the fountain fly,
Wash me Savior, or I die. [\[2\]](#)

This was Ruth's perspective as she went out to glean. "I'm not going out claiming anything. I'm going out looking for grace. I'm looking for someone 'in whose sight I may find favor'" (verse 2). In verse 3, we see the providential hand of God moving in Ruth's life. She had planned her way, but the LORD was directing her steps (Prov. 16:9).

Ruth 2:3

So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

First of all, you need to understand a bit of how this worked. They didn't have big combines like we have today. Instead, they harvested the barley one stalk at a time. As you all know, I'm heading off to Nepal in about 2 weeks. Last time I was there, I had an opportunity to preach at a little village, where few Americans have ever been. To get there, we took a 2-hour hike up the mountain. Along the way, I happened to see someone harvesting wheat. I was fascinated, because I had never seen anyone harvest by hand.

The Nepali's that were with me were amazed that I had never seen such a thing. They said, "How do you harvest the wheat?." I told them that big trucks came and went through the entire field, harvesting as they went. But, there was no way such a truck could get up so high on the mountain. Such is a bit like they harvested in Ruth's day. They walked through the field, picking up the wheat and wrapping it into bundles. In the process, some of the wheat would drop to the ground. The gleaners could come and pick up the leftovers in the field.

Now, the key to verse 3 isn't the gleaning. It's the field in which she gleaned. It was the field of Boaz. The way this is written calls attention to the providential working of God. On the one hand, it comes across as total chance that she would happen to come upon the field of Boaz, as verse 3 says: "and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz." But, remember verse 1? Verse 1 prepared us to realize that this was surely the fingers of God that led her to this place. When we come to the end of chapter 2, we will see Naomi acknowledging God's active role in her life. Indeed, the entire story of Ruth describes the providential working of God.

Verse 4: Enter Boaz. So far (in verse 1, we have heard that he is wealthy and that he is a relative of Naomi's husband. Here in verse 4, we begin to see his character.

Ruth 2:4

Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the LORD be with you." And they said to him, "May the LORD bless you."

The first thing that you see here is a man who loves the LORD. He blesses his workers with a divine blessing. The second thing that you see here is a man who walks in integrity. His workers answer back to him with a blessing of their own. Such words testify to their respect for the man. The third thing you see here is a man who cares for his workers. They know that his words are more than mere religious talk. They know that his words are full of meaning. It only makes sense then that in verse 5, he would notice Ruth in the fields.

Ruth 2:5

Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?"

He knew his fields. He knew his workers. But, he had never seen this woman before. So, he hears the explanation, ...

Ruth 2:6-7

The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab. "And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while."

Verse 6 tells who she is; verse 7 tells what she is; verse 6 speaks of her identity; verse 7 speaks of her character. She is the one from Moab, who returned with Naomi. Verse 6 seems to assume that everyone knows about Naomi's situation: she came back without husband or sons, with only a daughter-in-law, one of the Moabites. The servant speaks as if Boaz knows the story, which is completely to be expected in the small town of Bethlehem.

But more important than her identity is her character. Notice how Ruth approached those in the fields. The servant reported to Boaz that she said, "Please let me glean and gather after the reapers." I don't know if this was a common custom or not - to ask permission to glean. According to the law, she certainly didn't have to ask. She had every right to glean in the fields. But, it speaks of her character to ask permission. Had she been turned down, I doubt that she would have insisted upon her rights. Rather, she would have travelled to another field. Remember, she was seeking for favor. She wasn't demanding her rights.

But not only is she humble. She is also a hard-worker. "She has been out there the whole time. She has only been here, getting refreshment, for a little time." It speaks of her work ethic. Certainly, she was seeking favor. But, she didn't sit back and expect the favor to come to her. Rather, when favor came, she used her privilege to work hard to provide for Naomi and herself.

This also speaks of how we come to the LORD. We come to Him by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. We come to Him, only

because of His mercy to us. But, we don't merely come to the LORD and expect Him to bring us the sheaves. Rather, we come, thankful and grateful that we have been given the privilege to serve the LORD.

By God's grace, in verse 8, we see Ruth, ...
2. Finding Favor (verses 8-16)

The favor shown Ruth comes from Boaz, who goes over the top in kindness to her. Look at verse 8, ...

Ruth 2:8-9

Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw."

This is abundant grace. In no way was Boaz required to do any of this for Ruth. Many field owners would instruct a gleaner to glean in another field, but not Boaz. He said, "Do not go. ... but stay here" (verse 8). Many field owners would instruct the gleaners to wait until the harvesters are done reaping, but not Boaz. He said, "go after ... the servants" (verse 9). Many field owners wouldn't do anything to instruct the workers in the field to protect the gleaners, but not Boaz. He "commanded the servants not to touch [Ruth]" (verse 9). Many field owners wouldn't allow the gleaners to share in the water with the servants, but not Boaz. He said, "When you are thirsty, go ... and drink" (verse 9).

Ruth was overwhelmed with the grace she received. Look at verse 10, ...

Ruth 2:10

Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

Such ought always to be our response to grace.

Amazing Love, how can it be?

That thou, my God, shouldst die for me? [\[3\]](#)

Alas! And did my Savior bleed and did my Sov'reign die?

Would He devote that sacred head for sinners such as I? [\[4\]](#)

When favor comes your way, there is no reason to be proud. Ruth says, "Why would you take notice of me? I'm a foreigner." She knows her place. She knows that she has nothing to claim before this man. She said, "Why me?" We could easily ask this of God, couldn't we? "Why, O God, would you take notice of me? I'm a sinner. You are holy. I don't deserve to receive such blessings from your hand."

Ruth's question is answered in verse 11, ...

Ruth 2:11-12

Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."

Why did Ruth receive such favor? Because she was humble. Because she had chosen to serve the LORD. Because Boaz thought that such humility ought to be rewarded with kindness. He had a soft spot for those who sought refuge in the God of Israel. Such is what God does with us. He rewards humility with grace.

In our small groups, we have recently looked at the story of the Pharisee and the tax-collector. The Pharisee was proud and righteous, praying proudly for all to hear: "God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get." (Luke 18:11-12). But, the tax-collector was a humble man. He stood face down, some distance away from the temple. He thought himself unworthy to lift his eyes to heaven. Rather, he beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" (Luke 18:13).

And when the judgment comes in, it was the tax-collector who went down to his house justified, rather than the Pharisee. And then, Jesus told us the principle by which God works. "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11). And in this case with Ruth, the humble was exalted. She knew that she didn't deserve anything, which is what she repeats in verse 13, ...

Ruth 2:13

Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

And you might think that that was enough. But Boaz continues to lavish her with grace. Look at verse 14, ...

Ruth 2:14

At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left.

Not only did she get security from Boaz (don't go to another field), not only did she get protection from Boaz (the servants won't touch you), not only did she get help from Boaz (drink from our water), but, here, she gets lunch as well! She sat right alongside the reapers! She received what every other worker received! She ate roasted grain for lunch. In fact, Boaz was the one who was serving her. And when she finished, she had some left over that she would bring home in a doggy bag to give to Naomi (verse 18).

And now you might think that it was enough. But, it gets better! Verse 15, ...

Ruth 2:15-16

When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. Also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."

Boaz was showing Ruth great favor. Not only was she able to glean in his field, but the servants were commanded to help her in the process, leaving sheaves, that she might merely pick them up. Furthermore, the workers were prohibited from speaking badly of Ruth in any way. There were to be no insults, no rebukes. Only kindness. What a blessing! I do believe that this was beyond Ruth's wildest imaginations.

But, such is a great picture of God's grace to us when we believe in Christ. It's far more than we deserve. That's what makes it grace. It's far more than we think we will get! And Ruth gleaned the entire day. Look at verse 17, ...

Ruth 2:17

So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley (i.e. about half a bushel, ... some 30-40 pounds of barley).

Now let's move on to my last point.

3. Enjoying Favor (verses 17-23)

Verses 18-23 take place at home, when Ruth can report all that she enjoyed throughout the day. Look at verse 18, ...

Ruth 2:18

She took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took it out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied.

Picture the scene. Ruth has been gone all day. Naomi didn't know where she was. It may well have been that she faced great danger and hardship in the fields. And Ruth comes home with 30-40 pounds of barley. That's like coming home with 30-40 pounds of aluminum cans. Hanna has been collecting them. I've been helping her; she's not there yet!

Furthermore, Ruth was able to give Naomi her leftovers from lunch! Obviously Ruth had been successful in her endeavors. She had set out in the morning seeking favor. Sure enough, by evening, she had found favor. Now was the time to enjoy it!

Now, it doesn't say this, but I picture these two women rejoicing at the grace that Ruth received that day. They are hugging each other. They are sort of hopping around in each other's arms, much like girls do when someone gets engaged. They are laughing and smiling and crying, enjoying God's favor upon their lives. A few weeks ago, I put forth a little phrase that we, as a church, might rally around. Rock Valley Bible Church exists to enjoy His grace and to extend His glory. These two women give us a picture of what it means to enjoy His grace. It means that we see God's grace in our lives. It means that we rejoice in God's grace to us.

The conversation continues in verse 19 with the natural follow-up question.

Ruth 2:19

Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."

Now, you have to catch the drama here. Ruth could easily have said, "Boaz is the name of the owner of the field where I worked today." But, all of the suspense would have been gone. Instead, it is "the name of the man with whom I worked today is ... Boaz." If this were a movie, it would be drawn out a bit here, with a dramatic pause and perhaps a stutter or two: "... Boaz." The camera would focus upon Naomi's face. Her eyes would grow. Her grin would increase. Joy would increase upon her face. Because, it was at this point that Naomi came to understand the smiling face behind the frowning providence.

Look at the first half of verse 20, ...

Ruth 2:20

Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead."

Now, there is some question here grammatically as to whether or not the kindness here is referring to the LORD or to Boaz. In other words, does it read this way: "May Boaz be blessed of the LORD, because he, that is Boaz, has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead." Or, does it read this way: "May Boaz be blessed of the LORD, because he, that is the LORD, has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead." I believe that the latter is the case. It is the Lord who has not withdrawn his favor, that is, His lovingkindness. This word is a major word in the Bible. It can be translated, "mercy." It can be translated, "love." It can be translated, "loyal love." This word speaks of God's faithfulness.

And Naomi now understood some of the ways of God. Chapter 1, verses 20 and 21 show us that yes, the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me, yes, the LORD has witnessed against me, yes, the Almighty has afflicted me. But, the same God has now brought the smiling face. "The LORD has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead."

It's at this point that Naomi sees how this day was a great day. Not merely in the daily provision of food. But, she understands what it may mean in the future provision for their lives. Again, this is foreshadowed in the last verses of the chapter, ...

Ruth 2:20-23

... Again Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives." Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.'" Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that others do not fall upon you in another field." So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Next time we will see how Boaz played an important role in their lives, being their redeemer and restoring Ruth and Naomi to life.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 17, 2010 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plymouth_Colony

[2] "Rock Of Ages", Augustus Toplady

[3] "And Can It Be That I Should Gain", Charles Wesley

[4] "Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed", Isaac Watts