

Ruth 2:1-3 “Providence”

Good Luck – You have probably said it – or have definitely had it said to you!

A) Luck - **Success or failure apparently brought by chance!**

B) The more you study the Bible the more you begin to realize – **NO SUCH THING AS LUCK!**

C) The things that take place in our lives take place according to the Providence of God.

God’s hand of providence is the **acknowledgement and belief** that God is at work, everyday affairs of life.

A) That God is also at work in the everyday details of normal people, ordinary like you and me.

B) **Our natural tendency would be to think that God is only interested with big things –**

1) Important pp – Kings, Presidents, nations – throw in a few famous Christians

C) **That is a view that makes God small and distant**

1) We in reality He is big enough to take care of all the big stuff going on in the world

D) And He cares enough to be involved in the day to day affairs of people like us.

1) We will see that today as the story unfolds

Last weekend we began a series of studies in the OT book of Ruth

A) **Short masterpiece of a book** – full of practical and doctrinal truth.

B) **IF** you are just joining us today – it might feel a little like **walking into the middle of a movie.**

1) **Let me briefly bring you up to speed!**

Last week we looked a Chapter 1 –

A) Written long ago a **real story –involving real people. Real situations**

B) It took place in a part of the world that is still here today in fact it is in **the news this week – Israel.**

1) A particular town – called Bethlehem.

C) **We are familiar with Bethlehem because of the Christmas story –**

1) **Shepherds in their fields**

2) **Angelic Choir**

3) **The inn Keeper – no room**

4) The Baby Jesus in the Manger scene – **LITTLE DRUMMER BOY- (Funny – No drummer boy)**

5) The three wise men

D) **THE STORY BEGINS RIGHT HERE** in the book of Ruth – **1,000 yrs before the birth of Christ**

Background and Characters

We saw last week that the time frame of the story is given to us in Ch.1v1

In the time of the Judges- Rebellion, Anarchy and idolatry.

A) Famine – Judgment – 60 miles away in Moab there is food.

B) We saw in our study last week that chapter 1 revolved around a series of Decisions.

C) A man by the name of Elimelech {God is King} was living in Bethlehem Judah.

- 1) Bethlehem = House of bread
- 2) Judah = Praise

D) So Elimelech {God is King} is living in the house of bread and the place of Praise.

- 1) But rather than trust God through the time of the famine – He decided to take his family to Moab
- 2) Psalm 108:9 Moab is my wash pot – Garbage can

Now Elimelech is married to a woman named Naomi Naomi = Pleasant.

- A) They have two sons – with cool Star trek names – **Mahlon – Chilion**
- 1) Actually their names mean Sick and tired

B) In Moab they meet two Moabite girls and get married – Orpah – fawn graceful – Ruth – beauty

If you are wondering - How did sick and tired end up with Beauty and graceful?–

A) **Billy Joel ended up with Christy B.**- It happens

B) Elimelech went to Moab for a Short reprieve but ended up staying there 10 yrs.

1) Usually the way Backsliding works – always longer and more painful.

C) While they were there Elimelech dies and His two sons die.

1) Why did Elimelech take his family to Moab? SO THEY WOULDN'T DIE!

D) God is king always dies in Moab – something dies when we compromise.

After Elimelech and her two boys die – We see another decision in the Story - Naomi's Decision return to Bethlehem

A) She has heard there that God's hand of blessing was on the pp of Israel again. –

B) Prodigal daughter makes a Decision to return – to go back to where she belongs! – Came to senses

C) Naomi encourages her daughter in laws to stay in Moab –

D) **Orpah Decision – thinks good idea** – fades off the pages of Scripture

Ruth Decision – No I am going with you – Famous speech Ruth 1:16-17

"Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people,

And your God, my God. 17 Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me."

So Ruth and Naomi journey back together – When they get to Bethlehem – warm reception – V.19 city was excited – Heaven's reaction Prodigal

A) Should be our reaction

B) They say – Naomi is that you – She says – don't call me Naomi – Pleasant

C) Call me Mara – Bitter /God has dealt bitterly with me

1) That is her perspective in that moment – she has experienced the chastening hand of God.

That is a Brief synopsis of what we covered last time – Watch or listen online or on iTunes.

As Chapter 2 begins the narrator pauses for a moment in the story to a new Character – Boaz

V.1 There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz.

A) Right away if we are unfamiliar with the story we start to wonder –

B) What part is this man Boaz going to play in the story?

We are told a few things about him – the first is that he is a relative!

A) Word Relative is Kinsman – or Hebrew Goel

Aa) This word is translated 68 times in OT either redeem or redeemer

B) In Numbers 25 as well as in Leviticus 25 we read about the year of Jubilee

C) The year of Jubilee took place every 50 years

1) We are told that every 50 yrs in the year of Jubilee all Properties purchased by wealthy individuals during hard times were to revert back to their original owners

D) In the year of Jubilee all debts were cancelled

1) It was God's safe guard against greed & friction between the rich & the poor.

But 50 yrs was a long time to wait & be with out your land – especially if you if you are a farmer

A) So the Lord made another provision – THE KINSMAN REDEEMER!

Bb) The closet kinsman in your family had the right at any time to buy back a Property...

1) That had been lost in Bankruptcy, poor business practices or mismanagement.

C) Such a person was called the Goel – The kinsman redeemer!

There were 3 Criteria for being the Kinsman redeemer.

#1 He had to be the nearest Kinsman

#2 He had to be Able- financially afford it

#3 He had to be Willing.

In v.1 we see that Boaz fits two of the Criteria –

A) He is a Kinsman – {but **we will find out he is not the nearest kinsman** – {problems}}

B) **And He is ABLE** – He is a Man of wealth

That phrase means several things:

A) Man of war – fighter – Man of wealth – good Business – he has the means

A Man of wherewithal – He gets things done.

B) We will see those traits in Boaz as the story unfolds.

The name Boaz means standing in Strength

A) Indeed, Boaz **STOOD IN STRENGTH**
He **STOOD TOUGH** in time of famine

B) He **STOOD TRUE** in a time of filth (Judges told - *Every man did that which was right in his own eyes*)

1) Boaz remained faithful to the Lord

C) He was **such an impressive man**, that when his **great great** grandson Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem,

1) He named one of the two great pillars in the Temple after Boaz,:

2) **Pillars were symbols of Strength**

D) What part is this Boaz character going to play in this story! Is He willing to be the Kinsmen redeemer? {Read ahead – come back next time.}

For the remainder of our time today –

I want us to see an illustration in this story of how the Providential hand of God works in the everyday affairs and actions of our lives

v.2 picks up the Narrative - **So Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor."**

And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

3 Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

Imagine if you would Ruth waking up for the first time in Bethlehem.

A) I wonder if it took her a minute to figure out **where she was** – what was going on.

B) I have experienced that on missions trips – long days of travel – exhausted wake up – where am I? – Africa

C) I recall waking up one time – freaked out because there **was a hand on my face** – I couldn't move it

D) I can imagine Ruth waking up – where am I – surroundings are not familiar – {Oh yea – Bethlehem

She has come –intending on settling for a normal ordinary life.

A) There are no visions of grandeur – nothing exciting about this.

Aa)Hard life in front of her – two widows, nothing to show , who knows where they are living at this point – someone's guest house

B) Ruth determines – I need to do something to help us – I need to be resourceful – I am going out into the fields today.

1) This is often the first step to discovering God's will

C) So she comes out of the bedroom – finds Naomi – sitting at the kitchen table having a cup of coffee

1) looking sad – maybe wondering – what have I done – why am I here – what are Ruth and I going to do – how make it

Ruth says to her Ruth 2:2

2 So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor."

Harvest time in a rural community was exciting – they had waited 9 months for the crop to grow – time of harvest came – exciting –

A) Meant Cash – food – nourishment – provision

B) Imagine several years of famine and how grateful they would be to smell the smell of fresh grain

C) Lev 19, 23 and Duet 24 – God made provision for the poor – and that played into harvest time.

The Lord provided another compassionate law which stated that a poor person could go into the fields during the time of harvest

A) And Gather whatever was left behind by the reapers – so the poor could eat if they were willing to work

B) Reapers were not allowed to circle back for a 2nd run through. What was left was for the poor!

C) Opportunity for those blessed to bless others!

But notice that the provision involved endeavor

A) Those who were poor & needy had to be willing to work

B) The Harvesters were not standing outside the field with buckets of grain so the poor and needy could just come and take.

1) No – they created an opportunity for those who were willing to work for provision to come and do so.

C) The concept – **Will work for food** is Biblical –

Jesus said – You will always have the poor- God is ingenious in his care for the poor

A) He set up a system where the poor are not **demeaned** by being forced to take a hand out.

B) No God set up a system that gave them the opportunity to be resourceful –

1) Maintain their dignity – rather than be demeaned.

C) The poor could be provided for to the degree they were willing to be resourceful

D) Ruth has somehow heard of this system –

Ruth takes initiative – she is not looking to Naomi – to give her something – she is taking initiative

A) Not looking for Naomi to provide – for her – she is not expecting Naomi to get out in the field with her.

B) She realizes that at Naomi's age that would be really hard –

1) No she is committed to taking care of Naomi – she is ready to get to work

C) Ruth **is willing to be ostracized – as a foreigner –**
1) she is willing to risk sexual abuse at the hands of laborers – in order to fulfill her obligation to Naomi

D) When Ruth said: **Where you go I will go ...your pp Your God** – that meant something to her.

E) She is taking initiative here to make something happen.

Ruth wasn't going to sit around waiting for God to drop a package out of the sky

A) She is not waiting for **an audible voice** – she is taking initiative – doing what she can do – and trusting God to lead her

B) Insight in how to discover the will of God what does it involve?

Always involves prayer – 4 practical things

#1 Common sense – Common sense said – “I need to do something.” I can't just sit here.

#2 Careful thinking {What can I do? – They have this program – gleaning
I need to go and get a job

C) Common sense – Careful thinking – led to

#3 Sensible action – I will go into the fields and hope to find favor.

1) **Saying – it is easier to steer a moving car!** –

Cc) Sometimes God is just waiting for us to get moving – Do the obvious –

D) Take care of what is right in front of us!

Common sense + careful thinking + Sensible action + #4 Sound advice

A) Ruth asked Naomi – Should I do this – Naomi said – go – yes

B) She sought the advice of those close to her- she found the will of God in the sensible advice and encouragement of those who cared for her the most.

C) How do we discover the will of God?

1) Common sense + careful thinking + sensible actions and by listening to the sound advice of those who love us the most!

Naomi's response

V.2b And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

A) Almost detect a sense of regret in her voice – Still dealing with her bitterness

B) I wish it wasn't this way – wish it was different - Ruth is heading out doing the equivalent of picking up aluminum cans

C) But Naomi is appreciative of Ruth wanting to take responsibility!

D) **So Ruth goes out**

V.2 hoping to find favor

v.10 Why have I found favor?

v.13 May I continue to find favor!

v. 19-23 Overwhelmed by favor!

V. 3 is where this really gets intriguing!

3 Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

A) **Just so happened** – we read that and we think that it means that she just stumbled upon – she got lucky – what a coincidence

B) We might say: "As luck would have it"

C) The writer is making it clear that unbeknownst to both of these women – she ends up in the field of Boaz – a kinsmen

D) What at first looks like chance – we come to discover is the Providential hand of God working in the lives of these ordinary pp.

There are so many things in our lives that we can look at and think – that just so happened – coincidence

A) You had to go to college – 3 choices – you picked choice A – met your wife.

B) You randomly pick a seat on a plane – end up with a Divine appointment

C) **Met Denise – took a job at CCV – Youth Pastor –**
1) Denise had just finished Bible College – decided to stay for the summer – help at the Camp –

First task – Family camp – Needed a Worship leader – Just so happened – Patty

A) Just so happened there for the day – Just so happened she knew Denise

B) Asked her – sure – awesome!

C) My relationship with Sue – praying – God was saying friends

D) My first conversation with Denise- Life story

1) She said – Find out – do it.

Richard comes up – Go down – the movie

A) The Break up

B) Denise breaks up –

C) My mom – Now in years past – I would have run from such a statement made by my mom!

1) Learned my mom was wise – She prayed a lot – she knew God's voice

D) Her words had be intrigued

E) What I didn't know until we were later engaged is that Denise's mom – told her the same thing.

My point – neither one of us were just sitting around – I want to be married – God show me the one!

A) Ladies – some guy you don't know says that – RUN

B) No the providential hand of God moves as we are doing what is right in front of us.

C) Making Decisions – taking initiative

Now when I speak of the providence of God, I am, I'm speaking of two doctrines that must be held together because they are friends,

A) That being that **God is both sovereign and good.**

B) **The Bible tells us in many places that God is Sovereign and Lord,** which is a euphemism for sovereign,

C) **When the Bible says that God is sovereign, that means that he is the highest authority; that he rules and reigns; that there is no one beyond God;**

God is over Satan, and demons, and life, and death, and heaven, and hell, and the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the beasts of the field.

A) God is in everything, from the overarching grandiose rule of all creation, to the outcome of Elections ...and to the simplest daily events of your lives.

B) God rules and reigns, God is over all, and God is the one who is the highest ultimate authority.

C) God is Sovereign

The also Bible describes God in many places as being Good!

A) It speaks of the goodness of God!

B) In God's own self disclosure of himself in Exodus, he says, "I'm slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, mercy, and forgiving of sin."

C) God is good. God is loving. God is patient. God is merciful. God is compassionate. God is kind.

D) Some of you would say, "Yes, but there's so much evil in the world."

1) Well Satan is bad. Demons are bad. Mankind is bad. But God is good.

God is Sovereign and He is Good!

A) And these two truths must be held together at all times.

B) If you cling to one and not the other you end up with a very insufficient and dangerous view of God.

C) If you only believe that God is sovereign, but God is not good, you will know that God is in control,

D) But you will think that he is cruel, that he is mean, that he is unjust, {god's of Greek mythology

That is the way that Hyper Calvinist often Portray God –

1) Everything is his will – Raped – robbed – God willed that to happen

Listen God is a loving father, he's not a rapist.

A) God doesn't sit in heaven and decree rape, or the abuse of a child, or the murder of an innocent.

B) God is sovereign and good God!

1) His being sovereign, doesn't that mean that everything that happens is God's Will!

C) There are things that happen everyday that are not His will

1) We call them sin.

You cannot say that everything that happens proceeds from God's will as if God wanted sin.

A) You can't do that. **Because as we read scripture, God gets angry. God weeps. God grieves. God mourns. Over sin**

B) Jesus cries, sheds tears, what does that indicate? Everything is not in obedience to God.

C) **To say that it is** would make God out to be Morbid and Schizophrenic

Evil things that happen are the result of rebellion; and sin; that's NOT what God wanted.

A) God in His sovereignty has given man free will and free choice – Result? Sin entered the world

B) Rebellion continues to this day!

See we need to distance ourselves from a view of God's Sovereignty that is deterministic and static

A) Not much different from the Muslim- Everything is the will of Allah

B) **Whatever will be will be**

C) Nothing we do matters – You can jump off a 40 story building and you will be caught by Angels and safely put on the ground if it is the will of God for you.

1) **NEWS FOR YOU – IT IS NOT-** Prepare to hit the ground real hard

So belief in the sovereignty of God is not Determinism

A) Not a means where by we can view ourselves as pawns being moved arbitrarily on a divine chess board

B) Or that we **are somehow like puppets** being moved by strings that God holds in his hands completely void of **our own intuitions and will.**

No the Bible lays before us this Divine Paradox

A) It leaves us to wrestle with the fact that we have real choice we are free moral beings

B) That we have real responsibilities and choices

C) That the providence of God doesn't override Human decision and action

Think this through:

A) How did Ruth end up in the field of Boaz? – She woke up that morning and said I will go glean –

B) Whose choice was that? Ruth's

1) Why go there out? Naomi's encouragement

How was it that she should glean in the field of a guy named Boaz?

A) Because Boaz had determined that this was to be the week that they would harvest his field – who decided that? Boaz did

B) Ruth said I am going to go find a field –

1) Naomi said – You go girl

C) Boaz says it is time to harvest my crop

D) These become the tools and instruments of God’s providential care to orchestrate His plan of redemption.

Brings about this union that eventually leads to the birth of Jesus the Messiah.

A) God’s providential care and Sovereign plan are being expressed through the **outworking of our free human choices decisions and responsibilities.**

C) See the same thing in the life of Joseph – **You meant it for evil – but God meant it for good to save many!**

1) All things are working together for good – His plan and purpose

What that means is this God is big enough that even when there is sin, and folly, and rebellion, God is big enough to work it out for good, and He does.

A) He works out all things for good. God wastes not one tear. God wastes not one suffering.

B) God wastes not one hardship, **because God is not just sovereign. God is good.**

C) So this story gives us a vivid depiction of the Providence of God.

1) He is working behind the scenes and in the midst and on the way – to bring about His Plan.

D) What are we to do – Like Ruth – we discover his will by taking initiative – doing what is in front of us

Through - Common sense + careful thinking + Sensible action + #4 Sound advice

A) Trusting that when we make a mistake – when we take a wrong turn – yes consequences

B) But God is working all things together for Good For a plan – that we might not understand in the moment

C) But will might make sense to us – years down the line –

1) And maybe not until we get to eternity.

Embrace today: God is Sovereign – But God is also Good!

He loves you and is working in your life – His plan and purpose –

Rest in that today!