

It Just So Happened

Ruth 2

Pastor John Miller

So, in the Book of Ruth, we learned last week in chapter 1 as we pick up our story. Meanwhile, back at the ranch or back in Bethlehem, we learned that Elimelech and his wife, Naomi and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, that they had left Bethlehem and they'd gone down to Moab, which is on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. And a bit of a correction from last Wednesday night.

It actually isn't on the northeast corner of the Dead Sea, it's on the southeast corner of the Dead Sea. If you get it and look at it on a map, that was the area where the Moabites lived. And when they were dwelling there because of the famine in Bethlehem, we find out that Elimelech dies and Naomi is widowed. And then, Mahlon and Chilion, who had married two wives from the daughters of Moab, they both died. And so, these two women who was Ruth and Oprah, they were widowed as well.

So, in chapter 1, we have sorrow. In chapter 2, we have serving as Naomi and Ruth go back to the land of Bethlehem. And we got that classic passage where Naomi tried to talk Ruth into staying in Moab and remarrying there. But Ruth said to Naomi, "Where you go, I will go. Where you lodge, I will lodge.

Your people will be my people, your God will be my God and where you're buried, I will be buried." So, she was declaring her faith in the God of Israel and the God of Jehovah, the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And so, she took a huge step of faith and she journeyed with her mother-in-law, Naomi, and they've come back into the land of Bethlehem. And that's where we pick it up at the end of chapter 1. Notice at verse 22, the last phrase at the end of chapter 1, it says, "They came to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley harvest," which is around March and April.

And this is not just some happenstance. This is going to be as we're going to see the unfolding hand of a sovereign, providential God. And I mentioned last Wednesday night that one of my favorite themes in the Book of Ruth running through this book is the God's providential care, how God orchestrates the affairs of our life, how God leads us one step at a time.

And even when we find our self like Naomi and Ruth in difficult circumstances, that God can change our hearts and then God can change our circumstances. Now, you can't run away from your problems. We learned that last week. And our problems can either make us bitter or better. Naomi has become bitter and Ruth we're going to see was better.

She's going to venture in faith. But when you're in a difficult situation, maybe tonight you're facing some hardships, some trial, some challenge in your life. God is more concerned about your heart than He is your circumstances. We always want God to change our circumstance, get me a job, heal my body, fix my marriage, straighten out my kids they're all messed up. And

God is more concerned about our hearts and our attitudes.

If He fixed our circumstances but didn't change our hearts, we wouldn't be any better, right? So, you might be here tonight going, "Man, I don't know why God hasn't answered prayer. I don't know why God doesn't fix my situation. I don't know why God doesn't heal my marriage, or God doesn't do this or God doesn't do that." And maybe that God is trying to get ahold of your heart.

And I want to encourage you as we go into the second chapter, to just pause for a moment and say, "Whatever it is I'm dealing with or whatever I'm facing, God, what do you want to teach me? What do you want to show me? How do you want to change my heart? How do you want to change my perspective on life?" God wants to change your heart, not necessarily your circumstances.

I believe that once He changes your heart, then He can change your circumstances because He knows that He has you in line with His purpose and with His plan. Now, what I want to do with the second chapter is I want to give you three things that we need to do when we find ourselves facing a problem, facing a difficulty, facing a hardship, facing circumstances that are hard to understand, that are difficult or adverse. There are three things we need to do and these are basic principles for living the Christian life.

The first thing we need to do is we need to trust and obey. You might also say we need to live by faith, not by sight. We need to trust and obey. There's an old hymn that I used to love to sing as a boy growing up in church, trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to... any of you know the song, but to trust and obey. Isn't that a beautiful song?

What a great message that song text, trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. I find out about 99.9% of the time when I'm counseling people, that's my counsel. So, if you're going to come to me with a problem after church tonight, I've already given you my counsel. Just go home and eat cookies or something.

Whatever you're going through, whatever you're dealing with, trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. Let's read verses 1 to 3. It says in verse 1 that Naomi had a kinsman of her husbands. He was a mighty man of wealth of the family of Elimelech. Now, the name Elimelech means in him is strength.

And so, she had this relative, and his name was verse 1, Boaz, Boaz, which means as well strength or some have a mighty man of well, some have a mighty man of war. Boaz is the hero of the story. Ruth is the heroine of the story, and Boaz is the hero of the story and probably plays a more leading role than anyone in the Book of Ruth because Boaz becomes a picture or a type of Jesus Christ.

He is an Old Testament individual that prefigures the redeemer, Jesus Christ. Now, again, the Book of Ruth so beautifully ties in with Christmas because one of the main purpose is Jesus came into the world was to what, to redeem us right, to redeem us from sin. He, Jesus is the redeemer and to be the redeemer, He had to be the kinsman redeemer. In the Hebrew, it is the

Go'el, the kinsman redeemer. And next Wednesday night, don't miss it.

We're going to go into all the background and concepts of what it means to be the redeemer, the Go'el, the kinsman redeemer. Marvelous is Boaz pictures, the person of Christ and Ruth pictures not only the believer but the church of Jesus Christ you might say. And so, Boaz becomes a picture of Jesus, our redeemer. Now, it says in verse 2 that Ruth of Moabite has said unto Naomi... I want you to notice who initiated this. Naomi didn't say to Ruth, you got to get out there.

You're younger than me. You're healthier than me. You can work hard and I can't. So, go out there and get to work so that we can have something to eat. Now, Naomi and Ruth were both widow.

They were poor and they were destitute. They probably got back to the house they lived in, but they didn't have any food. They didn't have any money. They didn't have any crops. They didn't have any barley or wheat and so they needed to get going to get some food.

So, Ruth, the Moabite said unto Naomi, "Let me now go into the field and glean ears of corn or actually barley after him whose sight I shall find grace." And she said unto her, "Go my daughter." And then, I love it, verse 3, she went and she came and she gleaned in the field after the reapers and her hap, King James, her hap, or it just so happened that she was to light upon the part of the field that belonged to Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech. Man, this is where the story starts to get pretty excited. So, Ruth says to Naomi, "Let me go into the field and glean some ears of the corn after whose sight I shall find grace."

And her mother-in-law didn't say, "Okay, I'll pray for you, or okay, Lord bless you, or okay, Lord be with you." Naomi is still somewhat bitter, no mention of God, no mention of prayer, no word of encouragement. She just said, "Okay, go." I can see her sitting in the living room and watching soap operas or something behind a TV tray or something. "Okay, just go."

But she's going to go from bitter to blessing. And guess whom God is going to use to change her heart, her daughter-in-law. Why? Because her daughter-in-law, Ruth trusted and obeyed. She lived by faith. She put feet to her faith.

Remember that. You might want to write that down, if you're taking notes. Put feet to your faith. If you really believe in God, then you'll get out there and you'll do something. Now, I want to talk to you a little bit about the concept of how God guides us and how we discover the will of God and how God leads our lives.

First of all, I want you to notice that Ruth didn't sit idle. She didn't just sit there and bemoan their plot and their lot and life and, "Oh, this is miserable, and oh, my husband died and everything's bad. And I don't know what to do," and just wring her hands. She said, "I'm going to get busy. I'm going to get working.

I'm going to get doing something." I believe for us to experience God's leading and God's

directing and God's even providential care in our life, we need to do something. First of all, we need to trust and obey, but we need to just do something. We can't just sit idle. It's impossible to steer a parked car.

You can have a car parked and their motor is off and you can get in and you can turn the wheels and it's not going to go anywhere, right? For you to begin to steer a car, it has to start moving. So, if God's going to direct your life, if God's going to lead your life, you need to step out. And this was a courageous thing for Ruth to do. She was a woman and she's going to go out into this strange country.

She was an alien, she was a foreigner, and she was a despised Moabites and she was a widow. And she had everything going against her strange woman in a strange land, but she just rolled up her sleeve. She goes, "I'm going to go out and I'm going to glean in the fields here." Now, a little background on this idea of going out to glean in the fields. In the Old Testament, in three places in Leviticus 19, in Leviticus 23 and in Deuteronomy 24, in those days, they didn't have Social Security, in those days, they didn't have welfare, in those days, they didn't have the government, DOLE.

You couldn't get assistance or food stamps. But what God had done in His love and care for poor people, God had instructed them in those verses that I gave you, that when you were reaping your fields, as harvest time and you're going to go out and reap your fields, that you are not to reap the corners of the fields. Now, when you reap them, they didn't drive big combines. They'd pick up everything. They had to go out by hand.

And what they do is they'd have a sickle and they would cut the wheat, they would grab the wheat with their left arm and they would cut it with their right arm. And then, they would grab a handful and they would throw it into a pile. Then, they would reach down and they would grab it and they'd cut it with a sickle. So, it was all harvested by hand, but God actually instructed them. That when you go out to harvest your fields, leave the corner of your fields.

Now, this is why God told him to do that so that people who were poor and people who needed hungry and people who needed help, they could come into the fields and they could reap the corners of the fields. Now, God said, the only thing they can do though is they can only take out of the field what they can carry. Remember in the New Testament, when Jesus was walking through the wheat fields with the disciples and they were plucking the ears of the corn.

They were rubbing it in their hand, popping it in their mouth, chomping on it. Ancient granola I call it. They would rub it to separate the chaff from the wheat. They'd pop it in and just pop it. So, they weren't breaking the law, but they were doing it on the Sabbath day.

And the Pharisees freaked out because this is the day you're not supposed to work on. So, they were harvesting, they were threshing, and you're not supposed to do that, but God cares about the poor. That's the message. God actually cares for poor people. People are always bashing the God of the Old Testament.

By the way, same God in the New Testament, God of wrath, God of anger, killing people. Well, He's also saving people and He also cares about the poor and the widow and the fatherless. And they could go into the field and they could reap the corners. And if they dropped anything while they were harvesting, we're going to see it in the story. If they dropped anything, God actually instructed them not to go back and pick it up to let the poor people come and they were to be able to pick it up.

So, Ruth is acting upon her knowledge of the word of God, the God that she had just come to believe in, and she put feet to her faith and she stepped out. And notice she says, "I will go out and reap in the field and the sight of whose eyes I shall find grace." And you're going to begin to see this unfold how Boaz shows grace to Ruth, even as God shows grace to us. But God also leads us and guides us and directs our life. Notice it in verse 3, so, she went and she came and she gleaned in the field after the reapers.

Now, if you would have seen Ruth on her way in Bethlehem, out to the fields, there were many, many different fields and they didn't have signs on them saying who they belonged to. If you would've asked Ruth, "What field are you going to glean in?" She would've said, "Ah, ah, ah, I don't know." I don't know if she would've said, ah, ah, ah but she would've said, "I don't know," something like that. That's what I would say, ah, ah, ah.

I don't know. She goes, "I don't know. I'm just trusting God." She would've said, "I don't know. I'm just trusting God." Have you ever been walking down life's highway and said that?

I have. "Where are you going, John?" "I don't know. I'm just trusting God." Some people think that as a pastor, I have a red phone in my office and God calls me every day and tells me what to do. "Oh, it's the Lord.

Okay, Lord, what's on the schedule for today? Where do you want me to go? What do you want me to do? If anybody has a question, can I call you back? Yeah, okay." I don't know about you, but I've never had God speak audibly to me.

I've never had Him write anything in the sky. And there's been so many times in my life that I've been troubled and I've prayed. And I've got, "What is your will? What direction do you want me to go? What do you want me to do?

Lord, what is your will in this important decision?" Even as a pastor, I find myself, I make decisions that affect so many people. And I pray and I say, "God, please give me wisdom. Help me to know what you want me to do and how you want me to do it." And if you're here tonight and you're in that situation, you don't hear God saying, "This is the way, walk in it."

You just like, you just don't know what to do. You know what you have to do, trust and obey. For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. So, what does Ruth do? She just goes out and she goes, "Well, that's a good-looking feel and that's a good..." maybe she saw a field where there are a lot of poor people in it.

And she thought, "Well, maybe the owner of that field is nice. Maybe the man who owns that field cares about poor people. So, that's where I'm going to go." And there's a little expression in this verse, verse 3 that has so much truth packed into it is my King James Bible translates it, her hap. Or modern translation might have, it just so happened.

Isn't it amazing how God leads us on, I can't believe what happened. I can't believe what God did. And I know this sometimes we'll make a bad decision or a wrong decision. But I believe that if we trust God and we obey God and we do what God has revealed in His word, and we focus on our relationship to God and our attitude before God, I believe with all my heart that God will take care of us. And that God will lead us and that God will guide us.

And if I'm speaking to anyone here tonight that is facing a major decision or perplexed about the will of God for your life, trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding in all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will do what? He will direct your path. Or in the Hebrew it says, He will make your path straight. All the way my savior leads me. You know where you get messed up, you get messed up when you don't trust and obey, you see, I'm going to take things into my own hands.

God hasn't provided. God hasn't spoken. God hasn't entered your prayer. I'm going to connive. I'm going to scheme. I'm going to lie.

I'm going to do this or do that. I know it's not God's will. I know the Bible says not to do this, but I'm going to do it anyway. You're not trusting God. You're not obeying God and you're not going to experience the blessings of God leading you and guiding you.

I often say to young people, I say, "If you want an amazing journey in your life, you want to be blessed beyond your wildest imaginations. Trust God with all your soul, all your strength, all your mind. Follow Him in absolute obedience, surrender your life to Him and follow Him, and it will be an amazing journey." Some of you know that from experience. So, Ruth didn't know where she was going.

She didn't know what she's going to do. She just goes out there and she picks a field. But it just so happened that she lands on the field belonging to Boaz who was the kindred of Elimelech. And just a little thought here, if Ruth had not landed on that particular field, Jesus would not have been born in Bethlehem. We wouldn't be singing at Christmas.

Oh, little town of Bethlehem. Do you know that Ruth is going to be in the lineage of Jesus, the Savior of the world? She's a Moabite. She's widowed. She's destitute. She just says, "Oh, I'm going to trust God.

I'm just going to step up. I'm just going to pick a field and trust God to take care of me and provide," and she steps out. And little did she realize that there'd be a whole book of the Bible written about her in her name. And little did she realize that she would be in the direct lineage of the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. She's going to have a baby boy named Obed and Obed is going to have a son named Jesse and Jesse's going to have a son named David, and David's

going to have a son named Jesus.

Can you imagine that? You know the big doors swing on little hinges? And you might be discouraged right now thinking, "Nothing ever good happens to me, and I don't know what's going to happen to my life and I don't know what the future holds." If you will take a step of faith and trust God and obey God, God has plans beyond your wildest dreams. He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all you could ever ask or think. Amen?

John Miller:

Trust Him. I don't know if I can trust Him. You can trust Him. I believe that when we trust God, God proves himself strong on our behalf. And I love the way God leads us supernaturally naturally. And I love the fact that God doesn't always reveal everything to us.

God didn't show up to Ruth and say, "Ruth, you got to go out and glean and I'll want you to go to the field of Boaz and build Boaz and you're going to be the great-grandmother of Jesus and this is all going to work out and it's going to be really cool. So, get going." "Okay. Yeah, that sounds great." We would like it if God would show up to our house and tell us, "You're going to marry this guy.

Yes, gal. You're going to have these kids. You're going to live here. You're going to make this woman. You're going to have this house. You're going to retire.

This is all going to be happening to you." "Okay. Praise the Lord. I can trust you now." But when we pray and say, "Lord, what's your will?" And there's silence.

Lord, come on, I need some direction here. And you speak through the heater duct or something? Chuck Smith tells the story. This just popped in my brain. But he used to tell a story that when he was in Bible college in the dorm next to him, there was this guy that used to just pray over and over and over, "God, I need you to direct me.

I need you God. What's your will for my..." and he said that he would pray so loud, he'd keep him up at night and was driving him crazy and the guy was just calling out to God. And then, finally, they actually ran a hose out their window down into the guy's house. And when the guy was praying one night, they actually said through the hose, "Africa," and he heard that word, Africa. Now, this turns out good.

This is a true story too. And so, the guy felt, "Okay, God, you called me to Africa. And he went to Africa and became a missionary and was used of God in an amazing way. I can't help but believe that if they hadn't run the hose into his room and said Africa, he'd still be there going, "God, what's your will? God, what's your will?

God, where do you want me to go?" "Just go to Africa, dude. Go somewhere. Go to Barstow." That's what I mean by just take a step of faith. You want God to use you.

There's a children's ministry here at Revival. You go, "Rebuke you, Satan, get behind me." There's plenty of things you can do. I was thinking Billy Graham was going to call me. Just take a step.

Trust God, move out in faith, obey God and make sure that your heart is right with God. Make sure that you're focusing on your attitude. People come to me and I got this problem. I got this problem. Can you pray for me?

And I'm thinking, "The problem may be brought by God to change your heart. Your problems may be brought on by God to change your heart." I'm not going to pray that God changes necessarily your sin. I'm going to pray that God teaches you what He wants you to learn and changes your heart and gets you in line with His purpose and then get out and do something. Just trust Him.

Just take a step of faith. And we sometimes hear people say, "You know, God spoke to me and God showed me His will." And the truth is we walk by faith, not by sight. We don't always hear God's voice. We don't always know God's will.

First thing you do is you start with the will of God revealed in the Word of God. Focus on that. Align yourself with everything that God has declared to be His will for you in His word. And then, take a step of faith and God will begin to guide you and lead you. It just so happened that she landed on the field that belonged to Boaz, and because of that we have the Christmas story.

God did a marvelous thing. And I believe that if we trust and obey, God will lead us as well. Now, here's the second thing we need to do when we find ourselves in adverse circumstances and don't know where to go. We need to rely upon God's grace. We need to rely upon God's grace.

In verse 4, so behold Boaz came from Bethlehem. So, Ruth is out there gleaning in his fields. She has no idea who Boaz is, and she has no idea whose field it is. And Naomi has no idea what's going on, but she's out there. And Boaz this mighty man of wealth.

He comes along probably a little later in the morning and he said unto his reapers, the Lord be with you. And they answered to him and said, the Lord bless thee. When you love it on Monday morning when you went to work, your boss said to you, "Lord bless you. Oh, and the Lord bless you." What a great work environment.

Then, said Boaz unto his servants that was set over the reapers, "Whose damsel is this?" Hard to put the emotion that he felt when he said that into words. I believe that this was love at first sight. I believe that when Boaz saw Ruth, he went, "Whoa, who is that girl gleaning in my field?" And the sermons that were said over the reapers, this begins our love story.

They answered and they said, "It's the Moabite's damsel." Now, you can almost detect a little of apology in their voices like, "We're sorry, Boaz. She's just a Moabite, the daughter-in-law of Naomi. And she's come here to reap in the field. So, she's a Moabite damsel that came back

with Naomi out of the country of Moab."

And she said to us, "I pray you let me glean." In verse 2, "Let me go to the field and glean ears." And now verse 7, let me glean and gather after the reapers." So, she was industrious. She was moving and gather after the reapers amongst the chiefs.

So, she came and she had continued even from the morning until now that she carried in the little house. Then, Boaz said unto Ruth... now for the first time we have Boaz speaking directly to Ruth. And it begins this unfolding love story of redemption. Now, remember, God is going through Boaz, extend grace to Ruth and then to Naomi, even as God has extended grace unto us. So, Boaz says unto Ruth, "Hearest thou not, my daughter?

Go not to glean in another's field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, go after them, have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art thirsty, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn." Then, she fell on her face, verse 10, she bowed herself to the ground, and she said unto him, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

She was amazed that Boaz would even take notice of her. And Boaz answered and said, verse 11, unto her, then fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband. And how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and your art come unto a people which thou knowest not up to now. So, the Lord, verse 12, recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord of Israel, notice this is verse 12, under whose wings thou has come to trust. Then, she said, verse 13, let me find favor in thy sight, my lord, for that thou hast comforted me, and for all that hast spoken friendly unto me.

So, the idea means you've spoken to my heart, you've encouraged my heart. You've spoken friendly unto thy handmade thou I'd be but like unto one of thy handmaids. And Boaz, verse 14 said unto her at mealtime, excuse me, "Come thou hither, and eat of the bread." He's inviting her to lunch. They don't mess around.

He wants to take her to lunch. Come to my house and let's have some lunch. And so, she sat down beside the reapers and she reached and he... and excuse me, he reached her parched corn. So, he actually baked some corn for her and she did eat and she was full. It sufficed and she left.

So, he invited her to lunch. They had lunch and there was stuff left over. And so, she gets a little takeout box and she takes it home. She's very thrifty and takes it to her mother-in-law, Naomi. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, verse 15 saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves.

She doesn't have to just go out and glean in the corners of the field. Let her come up close to the reapers and gather there and don't reproach her." And then, in verse 16, "And let fall also

some of the handfuls of purpose for her and leave them that she may glean them and rebuke her not." I love that statement. Drop some grain on purpose.

This dude is love-struck. Before he met Ruth. It's like, "Yeah, don't miss anything. Hey, you dropped something, pick that up. That's money there. Come on.

Let's get it all up." And then, he sees this beautiful woman like, "Oh, take care of her. Don't touch her. Hey, let her come up to have some more. And when she's up gleaming, just go drop some on purpose for her.

I don't want her to go to any other field. I want her in my field." This dude was already scheming. This is biblical scheming. He was stoked on her. He's going to do all he can to make Ruth his bride. Now, I want you to notice how Boaz pictures, Jesus.

First of all, Boaz took the initiative. Yes, Ruth was in his field, but Boaz saw her and went after her and spoke to her. Jesus said, "You've not chosen me, but I've chosen you." What a marvelous truth to think that God saw me in my need, in my plight. And God came to me. And God spoke to me.

And God pursued me. And God set His love upon me. We love Him because He what? First loved us. Amen. And we didn't deserve it. That's grace.

You notice how Ruth responded to Boaz's kindness as he pursued her and took the initiative and he spoke to her. And then, in verse 9 he said, "I'll protect thee. I've told the men not to touch thee and then I'll provide for you. If you're thirsty, you come and you drink." So, Ruth, in verse 10, falls on her face.

She bows herself to the ground and she asks this unbelievable question. She says, "Why have I found grace in your eyes that thou should just take knowledge of me?" Every Christian could say the same thing. "Why, oh, God, have I found grace in your eyes that you should take knowledge of me? Why me? Why did you save me?"

If you're sitting in church tonight and you're a child of God and you know the Lord and you have eternal life, you should be blown away to think, "Why me? I don't deserve this. I don't deserve the least of His favors, or that God would take notice of me. And that God would set His love upon me. And that God would speak to me.

And that God would forgive me of my sins. And He would give me the Holy Spirit. And He'd give me the hope of heaven. He put joy in my heart and He'd give me purpose and direction. It's like, "Why me?"

So, here's what you do when you're living your life. You walk humbly and dependence upon the grace of God. Never lose that. Never lose a sense of humble, dependence upon the grace of God. I do not deserve the least of God's favors and blessings.

If you think you're hot-stuffed tonight, take heed lest you fall. If you think God chose you because you're special, God chose you because of who He is. He's a God of grace. You didn't have to perform to get God love you. He already loves you.

He already set His love upon you. He's already chosen you. He's redeemed you by His grace. And you should be able to say with Ruth here, "Why have I found favor in your sight? Why would you set your love upon me?"

And in verse 11, when Boaz answered and said unto her, the word answered there literally means he raised his voice. He was getting so excited. It's like, "Oh, I've known all about you. I heard about all the good things that you did and how you left the home of your nativity and that you came and you followed your mother-in-law, Naomi, and you've become a believer in the Lord of Israel." Notice verse 12, "May God reward you, the Lord God of Israel under whose wings you have come to trust."

When you trust in God with all your heart, God will take care of you. And so, Boaz satisfies her hunger as Jesus satisfies our hunger. He speaks kindly to her, verse 13, he feeds her and satisfies her as Jesus satisfies the hunger of our soul. And then, he drops the handfuls of purpose for her. But here's my third and last point, and we'll just read it and we'll wrap this up.

Verses 17 to 23, not only do we trust and obey, not only do we rely upon God's grace, but we need to live in hope. We need to live with hope. And our hope needs to be focused on Jesus Christ. So, all the change that took place in Naomi's heart and the circumstances that changed for Ruth and Naomi were all centered in a person. They were centered in Boaz, all of our hopes are centered in a person.

They're centered in Jesus Christ. So, verse 17, so she gleaned in the field until evening, and she thresh it, she beat it out, they would use a stick to thresh the wheat. And she had gleaned. And it was about an ephah of barley which is a bushel are enough for two women to last for a whole week. And this would almost be impossible for one woman to be able to gather that much up in her arms.

And remember I said that you could only carry out of the field what you could carry with your arms. You could go in and eat in the field until your heart's content, but if you're going to carry it away, you had to be able to carry it in your arms. And so, she took it up, verse 18, and she went into the city, into her mother-in-law. And when her mother-in-law saw that she had gleaned, she brought forth, she gave her that she had received after she was satisfied. In other words, she brought her the box of food from the lunch date with Boaz.

And "Look, Naomi, there's some leftover food from my lunch with this guy." And her mother-in-law said unto her, "Where have you gleaned today?" She was actually blown away. She didn't know so far what is going on and where wroughtest thou blessed is he that took knowledge of thee." She doesn't know it's Boaz yet.

And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought. She said, "The man's name

with whom I wrought was Boaz." And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, "Blessed be the Lord God, which have not left His kindness to the living and to the dead." She's already thinking that God is going to redeem them, redeem the land and work through this, Go'el, Boaz the kinsman redeemer. And Naomi said unto her, "The man is near of kin unto us, one of our kin's men."

Now, I like the King James translation there. "He's near of kin." She said, "He's kinfolk." She got excited. She knew that he could be the redeemer. And I'll talk about that law of redemption more next Wednesday night.

So, the man is near of kin. Verse 21, and Ruth the Moabite has said, "He said unto me, also, thou shalt keep fast by my young men until they have ended all my harvest." And Naomi said unto Ruth, her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that they'll go out with his maidens. And then, they meet thee not in any other field, don't go any other field, stay in this field." So, she kept fast by the maidens of Moab.

So, she gleaned unto the end of the barley harvest and of the wheat harvest and dwelt with her mother-in-law. So, Naomi now this older mother-in-law, she becomes the matchmaker and she starts counseling Ruth about how to snag Boaz. And Boaz is scheming on Ruth and she's like, "Hey, you got to stay in this guy's field. There's something going on here." But you begin to see as God works in the circumstances we see here that Naomi's heart is changing.

She's going from bitterness to blessing. And the minute she sees the wheat, as Ruth comes home, she sees all this wheat and barley. She goes, "Praise God. Where you've been today? What field have you gleaned in?"

She goes, "Oh, his name was Boaz." She goes, "Boaz." And I am sure she's thinking, "Not only is He near of kin, He's good-looking and He's wealthy. He was one of the number one top available bachelor's in Bethlehem." She's like, "Sister, this is going to be awesome."

I love it. In the next chapter, she says, "Take a bath and spruce yourself up because you're going to go work your magic with this guy," that's not in the Hebrew. I didn't know what else to say. It's a cool story though. But in all of this, it was all the hand of God.

It was all the hand of God. As I read this today and meditate on this today, I couldn't help but reflect as I have so much in the last three years of my life as I left the church that I formally pastored for 39 years. And the Lord called me to revival. And I think about the agony and the praying, "God, I want to know your will. I want to know where you want me to go."

It was one of the biggest decisions I'd ever made. I haven't told the congregation this, but I remember when I got the call from the board here at Revival that they wanted me to come. And I knew my wife was in the next room and she's praying, "Lord." She was scared to death that the Lord was sending us off. And I remember getting that call.

And I literally got on my face in my study and I wept. And I said, "God, don't forsake me." I

prayed like I haven't prayed in years. I said, "God, don't forsake me. Don't forsake me. Go with me. Lead me, guide me. Your will be done because this is scary. This is really scary because I'm stepping out and trusting you to guide me and to lead me." And what an awesome thing it is to live by faith. Amen?

I wouldn't be here. And as difficult as that decision was, and I didn't hear... God didn't speak to me and say, "Revival." He didn't say, "Menifee." I wouldn't have known where that was. All I knew is that I felt that God was leading and God was guiding and it was scary.

But I took a step of faith. And I look around at how good God has been and what God has done and all the blessings. And some of the people that I said goodbye to struggled with that. People that I'd loved for years and years and years and years. Not all, but there were some people that weren't happy about that and they were upset with me.

And it was difficult. But one of the things I took notice of is there were people that were encouraged and inspired and emboldened to live by faith. They were emboldened and encouraged by the fact that Kristy and I took a step of faith and followed God's leading. And they thought, "If John can do it, I can do it. If John can take a new direction and God can provide for Him, God can open a new door, then I can do it."

It's like this. Let me give an illustration. Have you ever gone exploring down roads that you've never been on before? Isn't that cool? Now, some people don't like that. I got a pastor friend that loves to drive, drives a little faster than he should.

He's got liberty to speed, but he loves to take off on crazy drives and crazy roads and go where he's never gone before. And how many times I've been riding with him and it's like, "Where are we going?" "I don't know, but I've never been down this road." "Well, how far are we going to go?" "I don't know.

We're going to check it out." And then, he starts making these turns and it's like, "Wow, this is cool. Wow. Where are we going?" "I don't know, but we're just going to follow this road." That adds spice to life.

Some of you have been going down the same road your whole life and you've never taken a venture down any other road. You want to spice it up a little bit? You want to add some excitement to your life? Say, "Lord, lead me. Lord, guide me. Lord, help me to break out of my comfort zone and follow you.

Go where I've never gone before." When Kristy and I went to Tennessee a few months ago. I'd never been to Tennessee. I didn't know my way around Tennessee. We got in Nashville.

We grab a rent a car. We head out to Clarksville, and it's like, "Wow, I don't know where we're going or what's going on. But look at it. This is awesome." It was all new people, new places, new experience.

And I think that God wants our lives to be like that. And sometimes we just settle for status quo. Same old, same old, same old thing, same old stuff. And there's something to be said for being faithful where God has placed you. But there's also something to be said for every one of us to say, "Lord, I'll trust you.

Never been here before, but I'm going to trust you. Never done this before, but I'm going to trust you. Never gone down this road before, but I'm going to trust you." And then, I believe that you'll discover. It just so happens that you're going to land in a place beyond your wildest dreams that God's going to do for you, exceedingly, abundantly, above all you could ever ask or think.

But you got to do three things. Number one, you have to trust and obey. Number two, you have to be relying upon His grace. And number three, you have to focus on Jesus who is your hope. Keep your eyes on Jesus Christ.

And then, I believe all of life becomes an adventure and becomes an excitement of where God leads you and how God directs you. Amen?

Let's pray.