

## **“As It Turned Out”** (Ruth 1:14–2:4)(1.16.22)

Ruth 1:14–2:4 (NIV84)

<sup>14</sup>At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her.

<sup>15</sup>“Look,” said Naomi, “your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.”

<sup>16</sup>But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.<sup>17</sup> Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.”<sup>18</sup> When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

<sup>19</sup>So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, “Can this be Naomi?”

<sup>20</sup>“Don’t call me Naomi,” she told them. “Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter.<sup>21</sup> I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has

afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.”

<sup>22</sup> So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

**2** Now Naomi had a relative on her husband’s side, from the clan of Elimelech, a man of standing, whose name was Boaz.

<sup>2</sup> And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, “Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor.”

Naomi said to her, “Go ahead, my daughter.”<sup>3</sup> So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.

<sup>4</sup> Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, “The Lord be with you!”

“The Lord bless you!” they called back.

**The word of God for the people of God.**

LET US PRAY.

Title: **“As It Turned Out”**

INTRODUCTION:

Some of you know that I posed a question on Facebook this week: How many times do you find the words "luck" or "coincidence" in the Bible? Dee found one instance of the word chance in Ecclesiastes 9:11. I find it ironic that it was 911. In the context of that verse, it seems that chance equals luck.

It is not that the concept of randomness was unknown in biblical times. In first Samuel, there is a test suggested to determine if something is from God or merely chance. So, if you push the point, I will concede the concept of chance is twice mentioned. Of course, King Solomon throughout Ecclesiastes is wrestling with the meaning of life.

So, zero occurrences of the word coincidence. Zero occurrences of the word luck. Twice the word chance is used to convey luck...in the whole Bible. Think about it. Do you find that perplexing? Do you find it comforting?

Well, in large part this is a central issue in today's text. That is where the title of the sermon comes from. **As it turned out**, she [Ruth] found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech. In the ESV, we read: and she [Ruth] **happened to come** to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech.

Ruth was a foreigner newly arrived in Bethlehem. There were no signs announcing "Boaz's Farm." Naomi had not told her where to go. Ruth made decisions based on trying to find someone who would show her favor. Somehow, Ruth ended up in the right place at the right time and found a promising place to do some gleaning!

### BODY:

- Arriving in Bethlehem (mentioned 3 times!!!)
  - Epiphany, we celebrated the arrival of the Magi
  - Naomi:
    - Can this be Naomi?
    - pleasant versus bitter (full vs empty)
    - Complaint or acknowledgement?
  - the barley harvest was beginning (sign of promise)
    - barley vs. wheat
    - Bethlehem means house of bread

- John 6:35 (NIV84) Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”
- We pray for our daily bread. Jesus is the manna from heaven. Both come from heaven. The first for temporal life. The second for eternal life.
- Remember the miracle of Jesus feeding the five thousand with five loafs of barley bread
  - Each of us needs to go to Bethlehem: choose rightly
- Orpah – two perspectives
- Ruth
- The covenant she declared speaks of new birth (vs 16-17)
- John Wesley’s Covenant Prayer page #607
- Outside The Promised Land there is death and emptiness disguised as a full life
- At the end of chapter 1, what does Naomi have?
  - **She has Ruth.** Daugther.

- She has her community.

In a recent article in "Christianity Today" by Tyler J. Vanderweele and Brendan Case of the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University surveyed research relating church attendance with personal health and human flourishing. They find that "religious service attendance powerfully enhances health and well-being."

The article states, "a number of large, well-designed research studies have found that religious service attendance is associated with greater longevity, less depression, less suicide, less smoking, less substance abuse, better cancer and cardiovascular-disease survival, less divorce, greater social support, greater meaning in life, greater life satisfaction, more volunteering, and greater civic engagement."

Specifically, when compared with those who never attend religious services, regular attenders have 33 percent reduced risk of death, 84 percent reduced risk of suicide, 29 percent reduced risk of depression, 50 percent reduced risk of divorce, 68 percent reduced risk of "deaths of despair" for women and 33 percent reduced risk of such deaths for men, 33 percent reduced risk of adolescent illegal drug use, and 12 percent reduced risk of adolescent depression.

The authors found “regular service attendance helps shield children from the ‘big three’ dangers of adolescence: depression, substance abuse, and premature sexual activity. People who attended church as children are also more likely to grow up happy, to be forgiving, to have a sense of mission and purpose, and to volunteer.”

“It is important to note that these benefits accrue to people not based on what they believe, but on what they practice. As the article puts it, “Our research suggests that religious service attendance specifically, rather than private practices or self-assessed religiosity or spirituality, most powerfully predicts health. Religious identity and private spirituality may, of course, still be very important and meaningful within the context of religious life, but their effects on health and well-being don’t seem to be as strong **as those of regular gathering with other believers.**”

They go on, “Something about the communal religious experience seems to matter. Something powerful takes place there, something that enhances health and well-being; and it is something very different than what comes from solitary spirituality.”

“Religious communities are crucial sources of social connection, but perhaps equally important is their

role in directly teaching that suicide or abusing drugs and alcohol is wrong. As social psychologist Jonathan Haidt has put it, '**religions are moral exoskeletons.**' They provide 'a set of norms, relationships, and institutions' that protect individuals from their own worst instincts and from giving in to self-destructive temptations."

Church attendance is a key tool in combatting loneliness, depression, and the isolation that this Covid pandemic has forced upon us. Worship participation not only grows our faith, it helps restore a healthier society, both individually and collectively."

- This week, I downloaded an information package called "5 Pastor Resources for re-engaging moms and young families in your community." It starts with these comments: "Pastors are tired. Moms are tired. Everyone is tired. Now is when the church shows up in creative, larger-than-life ways. We know that Biblical truth, **Christian fellowship and outreach to our communities has never been more important.** We have a unique opportunity to invite the young generation of parents back into local churches. As we look ahead to a time post-pandemic, moms are positioned as the gateway to connecting families."



As the first chapter of Ruth ends, Naomi is back home in Bethlehem. She has her faith. Naomi has her God. There is a promising future. You and I are part of that future as the Body of Christ.

- In chapter 2 we see Ruth as a dutiful daughter
  - She is living out her newly declared faith
  - The role of gleaning: Leviticus 19:9–10 (NIV84)<sup>9</sup>“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest.<sup>10</sup> Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God.
- Finding favor/mercy (KJV)
- We meet Boaz
  - Introduction: a man of standing (prominent, strength, worth, worthy) (vs 2:1)
  - Just then or BEHOLD
  - The first words we hear from his lips (the LORD be with you!)
  - The reapers reply – The LORD bless you!

➤ Sovereignty continued

○ Proverbs 16:9 (NIV84) In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps. Proverbs 19:21 (NIV84) Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.

○ Miraculous helicopter crash: The medevac chopper crashed Tuesday around 1 p.m. near Drexel Hill United Methodist Church in Delaware County on its way to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia from Maryland. Officials described the incident as a "controlled landing" as the pilot managed to avoid utility lines and other hazards on the way down. The helicopter hit the street and bounced, then toppled over, sliding into some bushes near the church, witnesses said. A stop sign on the corner of the street was broken in two, according to the Associated Press.

"This was a miraculous landing," Upper Darby Fire Chief Derrick Sawyer said. "We're blessed. We're blessed as a community. We're blessed as a fire service, police department and emergency management. We are totally blessed."

○ One witness did say it was a miracle in the Lord, but this was the exception. Miraculous

suggest supernatural; so, how is God not publicly glorified?

- God is always rescuing and redeeming

## CONCLUSION:

From my devotional yesterday: "The more clearly we see the sovereignty of God and depend on His providential care, the less perplexed we will be by life's calamities.

He does not lead me year by year, nor even day by day;

But step by step my path unfolds; my Lord directs the way. —*Unknown*"

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word! What more can He say than to you He hath said—To you, who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

"Fear not, I am with thee—O be not dismayed, for I am thy God, I will still give thee aid; I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, upheld by my gracious, omnipotent hand.

"When thru the deep waters I call thee to go, the rivers of woe shall not thee overflow; for I will be with thee thy troubles to bless, and sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

“When thru fiery trials thy pathway shall lie, My  
grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply; the flame  
shall not hurt thee—I only design thy dross to  
consume and thy gold to refine.

“The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I  
will not, I will not desert to his foes; that soul, tho  
all hell should endeavor to shake, I’ll never—no,  
never—no, never forsake.”

Amen and amen. Let us pray.