

引言 INTRODUCTION

The last time we saw that Ruth followed Naomi back to Bethlehem. A gentile woman made the God of her mother-in-law her own God. Now two widows returned to Judah. What would happen next? How could they make a living? As we shall see, God began to bless Ruth when she committed her life to Him. God accomplished that through human and environmental factors. God is doing the same thing in our lives. We are under the protection of the Heavenly Father of love. He can accomplish His will through unexpected things. My wife was in the hospital two weeks ago due to gall stones. It was the Thanksgiving week. There were special gatherings I had to attend. My older son was back home from college. Like many of you, I was in a scrambling mode. To say the least, my wife picked the wrong time to fall sick! However, I was so grateful that Howard was our guest speaker two Sundays ago. I was supposed to translate for him. But then brother Deng delayed his trip to visit home. Therefore, I asked him to serve because he is a much better interpreter than me. Thank God for His mercy, my wife had a successful surgery and a smooth recovery. Many of you showed love through your prayer, caring words and food. Who could have predicted that all those events happened in the same week? It is God who pieced together various elements that no one could foresee or control. He can achieve His Providential plans through seemingly accidental events. Our proper response is to give thanks to Him. You may be struggling with some challenges today. Put your trust in God. Wait on Him. He will open the right door for you at the proper time. God did the same things in Ruth.

解釋 EXPLANATION

We will study this chapter by focusing on the characters of two persons, Ruth and Boaz. We shall see what we can learn from them.

Ruth did all she could to survive. Let us begin by reading verses 1-3: **1 Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. 2 And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." 3 So she set out 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 clan of Elimelech.** We mentioned a few weeks ago that the Old Testament Law commands the Israelites to show grace to the poor people in the society. Landowners should allow people to pick produce from their fields. Ruth asked Naomi for permission to do just that. Ruth proved to be a **submissive** person under her mother-in-law and under the custom of the land. The season for harvesting barley had just started. It is around April to May in the western calendar. It so happened that Ruth went to the field of Boaz, who was a close relative to her father-in-law. That relationship is crucial to the development of later plots. Verse 1 describes Boaz as a worthy man. The word can mean wealth or strength. More than likely, rich people are also powerful. Ruth followed the rules to find food. She did not beg on the street and waited for people's mercy. But she used her hands to provide for herself and Naomi. You may have met people who complain all day what they do not have and what they cannot do.

A whinner will never be a winner. Seize the resources and opportunities God gives you and make the best of them. Submit to God wherever He puts you. You may have to begin from a humble job. Work hard and work your way up. Only people who labor will get a salary.

Boaz showed up at the field that day. Listen to his greetings with workers in verse 4: **And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, “The Lord be with you!” And they answered, “The Lord bless you.”** Boaz appeared as a **respectful** landlord. Boaz did not go straight to the foreman and asked how things were going. He took the time to greet his employees. That small gesture shows that he cared about his workers as much as their work. Who would not love to work for a boss like that? Some of you are supervisor at work or even the owner of your business. How do you treat your subordinates? Can they tell that you are a Jesus follower even before you tell them? Show them that God loves them through your actions. They report to you but you also have a Supervisor in heaven to report to. Boaz greeted his workers by saying “The Lord be with you!” It was a common way to say hi among the Jews. It may sound like a simple “how are you?” But it reminds people that God is the ultimate source of blessings. Today, people make remarks such as “have a good day” casually to each other. As Christians, we may consider bidding farewell to people with “the Lord bless you!” We say it sincerely, hoping that God’s grace may come to them.

Soon afterward, Boaz saw a stranger picking grains in the field. He asked the foreman who that lady was. He replies in verses 6-7: **6 ...“She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. 7 She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.’ So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest.”** By then, Boaz had heard stories about Naomi and Ruth. Bethlehem was a small town. In those days, people passed information around through words of mouth. The foreman testified that Ruth was a **hard-working** woman. That is another virtue we see in Ruth. At that time, harvesting was done by hand. Men handled the more physical task of cutting the stalks with a sickle, then women would carry the crops to the threshing floor. Ruth followed the other ladies and picked whatever left on the ground. It is a tedious job. Ruth put in her effort under the sun. After all, that was the only means to find food for her. Ruth was working against the clock. Once the harvest was over, she would have to wait till next year. I am sure people everywhere admire diligent workers. Teachers appreciate motivated students and bosses love to reward employees who go beyond their duties. Complete your assignments with joy and not with a grudge. Work hard in your work. Be a contributor to your team. God puts you in that position to shine for Him.

Boaz could have let his foreman monitored the situation and left the scene. But he took the time to meet with Ruth. Hear their conversation in verses 8-10: **8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. 9 Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn.” 10 Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?”** Boaz addressed Ruth as “daughter” perhaps because she was much younger than him. He granted Ruth the permission to work in his field. He also advised her to stick with the other female workers so that they could keep an eye on her. He understood that a poor foreigner could easily become a target for prejudice. Boaz also gave Ruth the freedom to drink as much

water as she needed. In every way, Boaz demonstrated that he was a **gracious** person. He went beyond the requirement of the Law. He gave Ruth his personal approval to pick grains from his field. Ruth was surely touched by Boaz's compassion. She did not know what to expect when she went out to gather food. Perhaps she was not welcome due to her background. She might only get a handful amount of food. Then she had to venture into another field the following day. But now she was guaranteed her safety and her provision. The last verse of the chapter says Ruth continued to pick grains from Boaz's wheat field after the harvest of barley was over. The whole duration would be two to four months. That was how God provided food to the two widows.

Boaz's response in verses 11-12 explains why he treated Ruth with kindness: **11 But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. 12 The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!"** Everything Boaz heard about Ruth was positive. She took good care of Naomi and followed her back to Judah. Ruth's **good reputation** speaks volume about her. Suppose you are taking a new class or you are transferred to a different department in the company. People who have never met you will welcome you if they have heard a good reputation about you. Your conducts reveal your character. It is something built upon habits based on deliberate choices. What do people say about you? You can choose to work hard or hardly working. You can choose to be friendly or mean, positive or critical, helpful or indifferent. No matter what kind of person you used to be, you are a new being in Christ. Do not blame your genes or the environment. You can rely on God and become more like Jesus. Pray to God: "Lord, give me patience when I'm on the edge. Help me to be gentle when facing rude people. Grant me kindness to repay hostility with love." God is living in you if you are His child. Submit to Him and let Him live through you.

Ruth came to a new place. The future was full of unknowns. Her mind must be full of anxieties. Boaz proved to be an **encouraging** person to her. He reminded Ruth that she did not only come to a foreign country. She also entered into God's nation. Her relocation was not only geographical but also spiritual. Once Ruth committed herself to Jehovah, she would be under His protection. Much like a mother bird covers her young ones under her wings, God would spread His arms over all who seek refuge in Him. God used Boaz as an agent of grace. Boaz even gave special instructions to his workers in verses 15-16: **15 ... Boaz instructed his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. 16 And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her."** Boaz exercised his authority as a landlord to make Ruth's job lighter. She followed the servant girls and looked for stalks in the field. Little did she know that the men ahead of her secretly dropped produce on the ground. Sometimes, that is how God works. You fulfill your obligations as usual. God sends some secret helpers to ensure you a favorable outcome. You can be a secret angel to others too! You see a classmate or coworker who needs help. Instead of walking over and offering assistance, you complete the task secretly. God will surely remember your act of kindness. Boaz was an encouragement to Ruth, the new girl in town. You can take the initiative to help a new person in the classroom or office to readjust to a new environment. Every now and then God brings newcomers to our church too. You can make them feel like home. It can be as simple as showing them where the bathroom or classroom is, telling them where to get a drink and silverware at meals or even giving them a tour around our facilities.

After a full day of work, Ruth harvested about 22 liters worth of grain. When Ruth arrived home, Naomi asked where she worked. Listen to their conversation in verses 19-20: 19 ... So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz." 20 And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" Naomi also said to her, "The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers." Naomi's comments verify that Boaz was a merciful person. Two verses later, Naomi advised Ruth to remain in Boaz's field. That would ensure her safety and wellbeing. Boaz was more than a close relative, he was a redeemer. Some Bible translations render the word as "kinsman-redeemers." This term will show up again in the last two chapters of the book. The role of a redeemer is to reclaim a privilege that otherwise would be lost. Elimelech and both of his sons had passed away. There was no male descendent in the family to inherit the land. The Old Testament Law does not allow people to buy and sell land. Therefore, if no one claim Elimelech's property, it would be left idled forever. A common way to resolve the situation is for a widow to remarry a man that is closest to her late husband. This man is called a "redeemer." The first son born to this couple will inherit the land from the deceased man. The regulations are recorded in Deuteronomy 25. We will revisit this practice in later messages. At this point, Ruth might not know this custom. She just continued to be a submissive daughter-in-law and an obedient outsider.

結論 CONCLUSION

God can achieve His Providential plans through accidental events. Ruth had no idea what would happen in her future life. However, once she committed herself to Jehovah, her future would be in God's hand. All along, the author describes things as if they occurred by chance. For example, the season for harvesting barley just began when the two women arrived in Judah. Of all the fields, Ruth happened to stop at Boaz's land. Out of the blue, Boaz checked on his property that very same day Ruth started working. As it turned out, Boaz was a redeemer of Naomi's family. Did everything happen by chance? Of course not! God had been working behind the scene. The same is true today. We make wise decisions based on Biblical principles. God orchestrates people and things to achieve His plans. Our life is not a series of unrelated and meaningless incidents. God is working in us and through us every day. That should give us confidence and peace. God will continue to lead us if we follow Him. He also wants those who do not know Him to come to realize that He is the one true God. He invites people to come under His protection in love.

引言 INTRODUCTION

上次我們看到路得跟隨拿俄米回到伯利恆。一個外邦婦女接受她婆婆的神成為她的神。現在兩個寡婦回到猶大。接下來會發生什麼事？他們如何生存？我們將要看到的，當路得將自己的生命交託給神時，神就開始祝福她。神透過人和環境因素工作。神也在我們的生命中做著同樣的事。我們被慈愛的天父所保護。祂可以透過意想不到的事情來實現祂的旨意。我的太太兩週前因膽結石住院。那是感恩節的一週。我必須參加一些特別的聚會。我的大兒子從學校回來過節。和你們許多人一樣，我也覺得手忙腳亂。我太太選了一個不適合的時間生病！然而，我非常感激 Howard 弟兄在兩週前來講道。我本來要為他翻譯。但後來鄧弟兄延後他回家的行程。因此，我請他作翻譯，因為他的功力比我好太多了。感謝神的憐憫，我太太的手術成功，也順利康復。也感謝許多教會成員表達關心。他們為我們禱告、問候和送食物。誰能預料到所有這些事情都發生在同一週之內？是神將無人能預料或控制的因素湊合在一起。祂可以透過看來是偶然的事件來達成祂的計劃。我們正確的回應是感謝祂。今天你可能正在面臨一些困難。你要相信神並等候祂。祂會在合宜的時間為你打開適當的門。神在路得身上也做了同樣的事。

解釋 EXPLANATION

我們會把重點放在路得和波阿斯兩個人的品格上面。我們將看看我們能從他們身上學到什麼。

路得為了生存想盡辦法。讓我們先來看第 1-3 節：**1 拿俄米的丈夫以利米勒的親族中，有一個人名叫波阿斯，是個大財主。2 摩押女子路得對拿俄米說：「容我往田間去，我蒙誰的恩，就在誰的身後拾取麥穗。」拿俄米說：「女兒啊，你只管去。」3 路得就去了，來到田間，在收割的人身後拾取麥穗。她恰巧到了以利米勒本族的人波阿斯那塊田裏。**幾週前我們提到，舊約律法規定以色列人向社會上的窮人施恩。地主應該允許人們從他們的田裡撿農產品。路得請求拿俄米允許她那樣做。事實證明，路得是個**順服**她婆婆和當地習俗的人。大麥的收割季節才剛開始，那大概是四月到五月左右。路得碰巧到了波阿斯的田去，他是路得公公的親戚。這個關係對於後來故事的發展非常關鍵。第 1 節說波阿斯是個大財主。這個字也可以翻譯為有能力。有錢人很可能也是有權力的人。路

得遵守規則去尋找食物。她沒有在街上討飯，或是等候別人的施捨。她用雙手養活自己和拿俄米。你可能遇過一些只會抱怨的人，他們覺得自己什麼都沒有、什麼也不能做。只會埋怨的人永遠不會成功。要抓住神給你的資源和機會，並充分利用它們。無論神把你放在哪裡，都要順服祂。你可能需要從卑微的工作開始。盡你的本份，努力向上。只有勤勞的人才會拿到工資。

那天波阿斯到他的田裡。請聽第 4 節他與工人的對話：**波阿斯正從伯利恆來，對收割的人說：「願耶和華與你們同在！」**他們回答說：**「願耶和華賜福與你！」**波阿斯表現得像一位**尊重別人**的主人。波阿斯沒有直接去找工頭詢問工作的進度。他花時間問候他的員工。這個小小的舉動表明他不只關心他們的工作，他也關心他的工人。誰會不喜歡為這樣的老闆工作呢？我們中間有些人是當主管，甚至是雇主。你如何對待你的下屬？他們能否從你的行為看出你是個基督徒？你可以藉著行動向他們表達神的愛。他們向你匯報，但你也要向天上的主管匯報。波阿斯問候他的工人說：**「願耶和華與你們同在！」**這是猶太人打招呼的常見方式。這聽起來可能像是一個簡單的「你好嗎？」但它提醒人們，神是祝福的最終源頭。如今，人們會隨意地互相說：**「願你有美好的一天」**。作為基督徒，我們可以考慮在與人告別時說：**「願主祝福你！」**我們真誠地說，希望神的恩典臨到他們。

不久之後，波阿斯看到一個陌生人在田裡撿穀物。他問工頭那位女士是誰。他在 6-7 節回答：**6 ... 「是那摩押女子，跟隨拿俄米從摩押地回來的。7 她說：『請你容我跟着收割的人拾取打捆剩下的麥穗。』**她從早晨直到如今，除了在屋子裏坐一會兒，常在這裏。」

那時，波阿斯已經聽說了拿俄米和路得的故事。伯利恆是一個小城鎮。那時候，人們透過口傳來交換消息。工頭見證說，路得是個**勤奮**的女子。這是我們在路得身上看到的另一個美德。那時，收割是靠雙手完成的。男士們用鐮刀把莊稼割下來，然後女工會把農作物搬到打穀場上。路得跟著其他女士，撿起地上剩下的穀物。這是很花體力的工作。路得在大太陽底下默默工作。畢竟，這是她尋找食物的唯一方法。路得盡量爭取時間。收成結束後，她就要等到明年了。我相信任何人都喜歡勤奮的工人。老師欣賞積極進取的學生，老闆樂意獎勵優秀的員工。你必須帶著喜樂而不是埋怨完成你的任務。在工作中有美好的表現，為團隊帶來貢獻。神把你放在那個位置上，讓你為祂發光。

波阿斯本可以讓他的工頭監督情況並離開現場，但他卻抽時間去見了路得。請聽第 8-10 節他們的對話：**8 波阿斯對路得說：「女兒啊，聽我說，不要往別人田裏拾取麥穗，也不要離開這裏，要常與我使女們在一處。9 我的僕人在那塊田收割，你就跟着他們去。我已經吩咐僕人不可欺負你；你若渴了，就可以到器**

皿那裏喝僕人打來的水。」10 路得就俯伏在地叩拜，對他說：「我既是外邦人，怎麼蒙你的恩，這樣顧恤我呢？」波阿斯稱路得為「女兒」，也許是因為路得比他年輕得多。他允許路得在他的田裡工作。他還建議她和其他女工待在一起，這樣她們就可以保護她。波阿斯明白一個貧窮的外邦人很容易被人欺負。波阿斯也讓路得可以隨意地喝水。波阿斯在各方面都顯示他是個恩慈的人。他超過了律法的要求。他親自批准路得從他的田裡撿穀物。路得肯定的被波阿斯的憐憫所感動。當她出去收集食物時，她不知道會發生什麼事。也許因為她的背景，她不會受歡迎。她也可能只能找到有限的食物，然後第二天她必須去到別人的田裡。但現在她的安全和供應都得到了保證。這一章的最後一節說，大麥收割結束後，路得繼續在波阿斯的小麥田裡撿食物。整後時間可能維持二到四個月。這就是神為兩個寡婦預備食物的方式。

波阿斯在 11 至 12 節的回應可以解釋他為何善待路得：11 波阿斯回答說：「自從你丈夫死後，凡你向婆婆所行的，並你離開父母和本地，到素不認識的民中，這些事人全都告訴我了。12 願耶和華照你所行的賞賜你。你來投靠耶和華—以色列神的翅膀下，願你滿得他的賞賜。」波阿斯聽到關於路得的一切都是正面的。她細心照顧拿俄米，並跟隨她回到猶大。路得的好名聲指出她的為人。假如你要修一門新課程或是你被調到公司的另一個部門。從未見過你的人如果聽過你的好名聲，他們自然會歡迎你。你的行為顯示出你的品格。一個人的品格是建立在他的選擇和習慣之上的。人們怎麼評價你？你可以選擇努力工作或懶散。你可以選擇友善或難以相處、積極或批評、樂於助人或冷漠。無論你以前是個什麼樣的人，你在基督裡已經成為一個新人。不要歸咎於基因或環境。你可以依靠神並變得更像耶穌。向神禱告：「主啊，當我覺得不耐煩時，請祢賜給我忍耐的心。幫助我在面對粗魯的人時保持溫柔。請祢賜給我恩慈，以恩報怨。」如果你是神的兒女，神就住在你裡面。順服神，讓祂從你的生命活出來。

路得來到了一個新地方。未來充滿了未知。她的心裡一定充滿了不安。事實證明，波阿斯是個善於鼓勵她的人。他提醒路得，她不僅來到了異國，她也進入了神的國。她的搬遷不僅是地理上的，更是屬靈上的。路得一旦委身於耶和華，就會受到祂的保護。就像鳥媽媽用翅膀保護小鳥一樣，神也會向所有尋求庇護的人張開雙臂。神使用波阿斯作為施恩的使者。波阿斯甚至在第 15-16 節特別吩咐他的工人：15 ... 波阿斯吩咐僕人說：「她就是在捆中拾取麥穗，也可以容她，不可羞辱她；16 並要從捆裏抽出些來，留在地下任她拾取，不可叱嚇她。」波阿斯運用他身為主人的權力，減輕了路得的工作負擔。她跟著一些女工，從地上尋找食物。她沒有想到前面的男士們偷偷地把農產品丟在地上。有時候，這就是神工作的方式。你像往常一樣履行你的義務，神差遣一些秘密助手來幫助你。你也可以成為別人的秘密助手！你看到需要幫助的同學或同事。與其你

走過去伸出援手，你可以地偷偷地幫他完成任務。神一定會記念你的善行。波阿斯對鎮上新來的女孩路得來說是一種鼓勵。你也可以主動幫助教室或辦公室的新人適應新環境。神常常帶領新朋友來到我們的教會。你可以讓他們有賓至如歸的感覺，例如告訴他們衛生間或教室在哪裡，在吃飯時告訴他們在哪裡拿飲料和餐具，甚至帶他們參觀我們的設施。

經過一整天的忙碌，路得收集了大約 22 公升的穀物。當路得回到家時，拿俄米問她在哪裡工作。請聽第 19 至 20 節中她們的對話：19 ... 路得就告訴婆婆說：「我今日在一個名叫波阿斯的人那裏做工。」20 拿俄米對兒婦說：「願那人蒙耶和華賜福，因為他不斷地恩待活人死人。」拿俄米又說：「那是我們本族的人，是一個至近的親屬。」拿俄米的評語證實了波阿斯是個仁慈的人。兩節經文之後，拿俄米建議路得留在波阿斯的田裡。這樣便能確保她的安全和好處。波阿斯不只是一個同族的人，他還是至近的親屬。「至近的親屬」這個稱呼會在後面兩章中再次出現。至近的親屬的義務是贖回可能會喪失的特權。以利米勒和他的兩個兒子都早已去世，家族中沒有男丁可以繼承土地。舊約律法不允許人們買賣土地。因此，如果無人繼承以利米勒的財產，它將永遠空置。解決這種情況的方法是寡婦與已故丈夫最近的親屬結婚。這對夫婦所生的第一個兒子便可以繼承過世的人的土地。這些規定記錄在申命記第 25 章。我們會在以後的信息中再次提到這個做法。在這個時候，路得可能還不知道這個習俗。她只是繼續做一個順服的媳婦和外邦人。

結論 CONCLUSION

神可以透過看來是偶然的事件來達成祂的計劃。路得不知道她的未來會發生什麼事。不過，一旦她把自己委身給耶和華，她的將來就在神的手中。一直以來，作者都把事情描述得好像是巧合發生的。例如，當兩位女士到達猶大時，正好開始收割大麥的季節。在所有的農田中，路得剛好去到波阿斯的田。就在路得開始工作的同一天，波阿斯突然跑去檢查收割的進度。然後波阿斯恰巧是拿俄米家至近的親屬。一切都是偶然發生的嗎？當然不是！神一直在幕後工作。神在今天也是如此工作。我們根據聖經原則做有智慧的決定。神精心地安排人和事物來實現祂的計劃。我們的生命並不是一連串沒有關連、毫無意義的事件。神每天都一直在我們裡面並透過我們工作。這些真理應該給予我們信心與平安。如果我們跟隨神，祂就會繼續帶領我們。祂也希望那些不認識祂的人知到祂是獨一的真神。祂邀請人們接受祂愛的保護。