

Angela Pound

Advent

The stories of several people in the Bible are woven together so closely that they are almost inseparable. We know more about their relationship than we know about them as individuals. And in an age that worships individualism, their stories become helpful models of good relationships. Naomi and Ruth are an example of this blending of lives. Their cultures, family backgrounds, and ages were very different. As mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, they probably had as many opportunities for tension as for tenderness. Yet they were bound to each other.

When we left Naomi and Ruth last week, Naomi was returning to Bethlehem with her daughter-in-law, Ruth, after losing her husband and two sons. Naomi was in a dark place. When she left Bethlehem ten years ago she was full of hope, and now in returning, she felt broken. She didn't realize that God had good plans. God refused to call her Mara, which means bitter, but instead, continued to call her Naomi, which means pleasant. Naomi exemplifies our

response so often when we are in the middle of the brokenness of this world both self-inflicted and circumstantial. His promises and accomplished will aren't deterred by our inability to see or walk in his will. Ruth portrays an outsider welcomed in to become family, pointing to the invitation extended to gentiles. Ruth's willingness to follow places her where God wanted to protect, provide, and bless. Her kindness is met with kindness.

Noami didn't know God was working to bring good out of her situation. And yet God was there working all the time. She couldn't see it. We ended last week with the barley harvest just beginning, a sign of the grace of God and new beginnings. After bleak moments in what begins the book of Ruth, we started to see a hint of light. There is hope; a sense that things are going to get better for Ruth and Naomi. And this is where we come to today.

Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem as poor widows. To provide for them, Ruth goes out to the harvest fields to gather leftover stalks of grain. In those days, during the wheat and barley harvest, workers cut the grain and tied it into bundles. According to God's law, farmers were commanded not to harvest the corners of their fields, and any grain that fell to the ground was to be left behind. This allowed widows, orphans, foreigners, and the poor to come after the workers, glean what remained, and have

food to sustain them. As it says in, Leviticus 23:22 and Deuteronomy 24:19 “When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings.”

Although Ruth found herself in an unfamiliar land, she took initiative and went to work. She wasn't afraid to acknowledge her need or to put in the hard labor required. Her task—simple, exhausting, and perhaps even humiliating—was carried out with steady faithfulness.

It says in Ruth 2:3 “As it happened, she came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.” She “happens” to find herself in a field owned by Naomi's kinsman, Boaz - another sign that God was leading. Had Ruth considered herself too proud or embarrassed to work in the fields, accepting the charity of someone else, she would have missed the opportunity to meet Boaz, which would change her life and give her the honor of becoming the ancestor of a king and the Messiah.

When Ruth stepped into the fields, God met her there and provided. If you're waiting for God's provision, consider this: He may be inviting you to take a humble first step, trusting that He will guide the rest. What action can you take in your situation that reflects a heart full of faith and

trust?

Boaz prays that Ruth will be richly blessed by the God under whose wings she has come to take refuge. God provides food for Ruth and someone to redeem her from an uncertain future. This is unexpected for Ruth. Boaz continues saying 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. Keep your eyes on the field that is being reaped, and follow behind them. I have ordered the young men not to bother you. If you get thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.”

While we have focused on the relationship of Naomi and Ruth so far, the Book of Ruth is also the story of a righteous individual, Boaz, who offered kindness, protection and provision to Ruth, in her time of need. As a righteous person, Boaz put God first in his life. Boaz was a man of power, wealth, and influence with a good reputation in the community. His first words to his harvesters are “The Lord be with you,” which they call back to him. Boaz is a good man who loves the Lord and people, and the people love him. He shows kindness to the poor. Boaz takes notice of Ruth, calling her over and speaking kindly to her. He encourages her, has told the men not to bother her, and gives her permission to drink from the men’s water jars. Ruth is a foreigner, yet Boaz shows her kindness. Jesus told us in Luke 14:12-14 the best way to give:

“He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.””

What are some of the kindest acts you have been the recipient of?

As I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, one was just a couple of weeks ago when a lady at ADC gave me an envelope that she said the Holy Spirit led her to give me, but she didn't know why, which when I opened it was something that helped me on my trip to BC, which I had booked the night before, but she had no idea.

Or, when I was in labour with Madi I was having a very difficult time. It was completely different than my first labour, I had a fractured foot that I couldn't walk on to get through the pain. My mom was working in the hospital and she came up to see me during one of her breaks. I wanted her there with me fulltime, but I didn't say anything, I knew she had to go back to her unit to work. But she was such a great support in the labour room, especially with her background in labour and delivery. Shortly there after she came back up but this time for good, one of the nurses said

they would take over her shift so she could be with her daughter while giving birth to her granddaughter. I don't know what nurse it was, but it was one of the kindest things I remember someone doing for me.

Or years ago someone left a pedicure gift certificate on my piano here at church, no name, but just to enjoy. They had no idea of the difficult season I was in at that point in my life.

There are many simple yet deeply kind acts people often do for others—small things that carry big impact. Such as:

- Providing a meal for someone going through a difficult season
- Sitting and listening without judgment when a person needs to talk
- Sending a handwritten note of encouragement or gratitude
- Paying for someone's groceries or meal when they're struggling
- Helping with childcare so exhausted parents can rest
- Shoveling a driveway or mowing a lawn for a neighbour
- Visiting someone who is lonely
- Offering practical help during illness—cleaning, laundry, or errands

The list goes on. Think of how you feel when someone showers you with undeserved or unexpected kindness? How can you be a part of God's provision for those around you?

Or think of how you feel when you give to people who not only can't pay you back, but do not even know who you are!

A righteous person encourages people in their walk with the Lord. Boaz doesn't just see a poor foreigner in his fields, he sees someone who has made a radical commitment of faith to the Lord by coming to Israel and taking care of Naomi. Boaz, encourages her in her walk with the Lord and Ruth felt this encouragement.

A righteous person also protects and provides. Boaz gave Ruth a meal, special permission to glean among the sheaves, and tells the harvesters to pull out extra stalks on purpose for Ruth.

God uses righteous people to bless others. As Boaz put God first in his life, showed kindness to the poor, encourage Ruth in her walk with the Lord, protecting and provided for her, we hear that Ruth gathered so much grain, she had a whole ephah, which was about thirty pounds of grain, enough food for a whole month.

So, how does this story in Ruth relate to the Christmas story. The Christmas story is about a righteous man who

offered kindness, protection, and provision to a young woman in her time of need. Joseph was a righteous man who put God first in his life. He showed kindness to Mary when he found out she was pregnant, protected her, provided for her, and because of Joseph's righteous actions, God's blessing through Jesus came to the whole world.

A man by the name of George Müller (1805–1898) devoted his life to showing that God still hears and answers prayer. Born in Prussia, Müller did not begin as a man of deep faith—his early life was marked by dishonesty and rebellion—but after his conversion in 1825, he became determined to live in a way that would *prove God's faithfulness to the watching world*.

In 1834, Müller founded The Scriptural Knowledge Institution in Bristol, and soon he opened orphan homes to care for children who had no one else. Over his lifetime he cared for more than 10,000 orphans, all without ever fundraising or asking anyone for money. Instead, Müller made a bold commitment: he would bring every need—large or small—directly to God in prayer and trust Him alone for provision.

One of the most famous examples occurred in the late 1830s, when the orphanage at Ashley Down had completely run out of food. The cupboards were empty, there was no money, and breakfast time was approaching.

Instead of panicking, Müller gathered the children, seated them at the tables, and prayed. He thanked God for the food that He was going to provide, even though there was not a single loaf of bread in the house.

As the prayer ended, there was a knock at the door.

It was the local baker, who said he had woken in the night with the overwhelming sense that the orphanage would need bread that morning, so he baked extra and brought it over. Moments later, another knock—the milkman’s cart had broken down outside the orphanage gate. The milk would spoil, so he asked if the children could use it.

God had answered the prayer *before the prayer was over*.

And this is exactly where Müller’s story intersects so vividly with Ruth 2.

Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem with no food, no security, and no idea how they would survive. As Ruth stepped out to glean in the fields, she did so with no guaranteed outcome—just trust that God would somehow make a way. But Scripture tells us that Ruth “happened” to end up in the field of Boaz (Ruth 2:3), though nothing about that moment was accidental. God had already gone ahead of her. Boaz was already in place. Favor was already prepared. Provision was already on the way.

Müller’s life—and especially the bread miracle—shows the same truth:

Before the need arises, God is already working.

Before Ruth stooped to gather grain, God had stirred Boaz's heart.

Before Müller prayed for breakfast, God had awakened the baker in the night.

Before the children sat at an empty table, God arranged the milkman's breakdown.

Ruth needed grain.

The orphanage needed bread.

We need God's provision in countless unseen ways.

And in every generation, the same God responds with faithfulness.

Ruth's faith and Müller's faith point us to a God who sees what we lack, prepares what we need, and invites us to trust Him completely.

Both lives preach the same message:

Walk forward in obedience, pray with confidence, and trust that God is already in tomorrow's field and already working behind today's closed doors.

There is also a story of a single mother named Marisa who had moved into the community after escaping an abusive relationship. She arrived with two young children, one suitcase, and just enough money to stay in a motel for three nights. She didn't know a soul. She didn't have a job. She didn't even have a car - just a hope that life could

somehow start over. On the second event, while walking her kids past a little country church, she saw a light on inside. She stepped in - not to ask for anything but because she said the warmth of the building made her feel “safe for the first time in months.” The pastor happened to be there preparing Sunday’s sermon. He listened to her story, prayed with her, and promised only one thing: “God sees you. And He provides in ways we never expect.”

The next morning, the pastor mentioned her need to a farmer in the congregation who owned several acres - land that literally sat just behind the church. He said, “I always need help during harvest. I can’t pay much, but I can pay something.” It wasn’t glamorous work, but it was honest, and it was enough.

By the end of the week, the farmer hired her full-time, helped her find a place to stay, and eventually passed along an old truck he no longer used. When asked later why he did all that, the farmer simply said, “When God lets someone glean in your field, you take care of them.”

Years later, Marisa told the church, “I came here with nothing, but I found God’s peace in a sanctuary I wasn’t even looking for and His provision in a field I didn’t know existed.”

An unknown author wrote, “The beauty of the story of Ruth is that it reminds us that nothing is wasted in our lives. If

we pay attention to the fact that there is a greater story that our life points to, nothing is wasted.”

The story of Ruth—and the stories of Boaz, George Müller, Joseph, and Marisa—remind us that God’s peace often comes wrapped in His provision. Sometimes it arrives as grain in a field or bread on a table; other times it appears through a kind word, a generous act, or the compassion of a stranger at just the right moment. But Christmas shows us this truth in its fullest form: **God’s peace came to us as a Person—Jesus—sent into the world to meet our deepest need.**

God’s peace is not merely the absence of trouble; it is the assurance of His presence. It is the quiet confidence that He sees us, knows our needs, and has already moved toward us, just as He did in Bethlehem. In Christ, God provided not only help for our struggles, but hope for our souls.

As we celebrate the birth of the One who came to bring peace on earth, we are invited to reflect that same peace by becoming instruments of His provision for others.

Whenever we choose kindness, generosity, or courage on behalf of someone else, we join the heart of the Christmas story—God stepping toward the broken, the weary, and the wandering with love that restores, protects, and provides.

This Christmas, may we enter the season with eyes open to

those God places in our “fields,” ready to offer the peace we ourselves have received through Jesus, God’s greatest gift.

Before Communion:

Boaz prays that Ruth will be richly blessed by the God under whose wings she has come to take refuge. God provides food for Ruth and someone to redeem her from an uncertain future, just as God provides food for our souls and a Redeemer who is the only source of peace. We come now to the table of the Lord.