Under His Wings

Ruth 2:1-23

Key Verse: 2:12 “May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”

In the previous chapter we learned how Ruth followed Naomi. Ruth said that wherever Naomi goes, she will go. Wherever Naomi stays, she will stay. Ruth said that she wanted to be the people of Naomi and to serve the God of Israel. Ruth was a gentile woman. But she became a daughter of God through faith in the God of Israel. In the past, like Ruth we were not children of God. But we became children of God because we believed in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. As Ruth became a daughter of Israel, so we also became children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. This is the key point in chapter 1.

In chapter 2 Ruth meets Boaz. Their encounter looks like an accident or by chance, but their romance is also from God’s plan and his divine providence. Boaz has the image of Jesus, the Messiah. Genealogically he is an ancestor of Jesus. Let’s see how Ruth met Boaz and what happened to them. Also let us find spiritual meaning and hidden messages behind their love story.

First, find a favor in your eyes (1-10) This chapter starts with the introduction of the man Boaz. “***Now Naomi had a relative on her husband’s side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz.***” (1) Boaz was a close relative of Elimelek, Naomi’s late husband. Boaz was a man of standing, which means that he was a wealthy and influential man in Bethlehem. Above all, he was a godly man. There are not many people who know that Boaz was the son of Rahab, a woman of faith, who had hidden the two Israel spies in her house by faith. (Jo 2) Look at verse 4. His greeting with his workers was God’s blessing, “***Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, “The LORD be with you!” “The LORD bless you!” they answered.***” (4) Boaz’s family were survivors from God’s judgment when God punished the city of Jericho. Boaz must have heard the God of Israel from his mother Rahab. Boaz loved God and feared him. His life of faith was like a precious jam in the muddy pot.

In verse 2 one day Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “***Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor***.” (2) At the time picking up the leftover grain, so called ‘gleaning’, was allowed for the poor and the foreigners. Leviticus 23:22 says, “***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. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the LORD your God***.” Our God is merciful and mindful. He is a generous God. So, he commanded the Israelites to leave some leftover grain for the poor and the foreigners. So, Ruth suggested to go to the fields to glean the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes she finds favor. Naomi agreed saying, “***Go ahead, my daughter.***” (2) So **Ruth went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.**” (3) Ruth entered the field which belonged to Boaz. It could be an accident from a human point of view. However, there is no accident or event by chance in God’s history. God’s divine plan was active behind Ruth meeting Boaz.

Look at verses 5-7. “***Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, “Who does that young woman belong to?” The overseer replied, “She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi. She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.’ She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter.***” Boaz took notice of Ruth. This was because Ruth was a stranger and a young one. But only a man of faith whose eyes were able to recognize the woman of faith found Ruth among the gleaners. I believe that God opened the eyes of Boaz to recognize Ruth, special to him. I pray that God may open our eyes to see and to find the men and women of faith like Ruth.

Boaz called Ruth personally. Verses 8-9 says, “***So Boaz said to Ruth, “My daughter, listen to me. Don’t go and glean in another field and don’t go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled***.” Boaz suggested Ruth to stay in his field for gleaning. He also promised to provide for Ruth with safety and water during her work. What a privilege to Ruth, a gentile woman! What a favor of Boaz for this poor widow! How did Ruth respond to Boaz’s favor? Look at verse 10. “***At this she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, “Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?”***  Ruth was grateful for Boaz’s favor. She knew that she didn’t deserve his favor because she was a gentile woman. When she came out for God’s mercy, God answered her prayer through Boaz. Ruth reminds us of a Syrophoenician woman who came to Jesus for his mercy.

Here we learn that those who seek God’s mercy will have favor in his eyes. Some of us may need the baptism of the Holy Spirit in doing the work of God. They should come out to seek God's mercy. Others may need wisdom to finish their work and study successfully. They need God’s mercy and his favor. Still others need God’s mercy to help their children and to get well from sickness, and so on. We all need God’s mercy in this troubled world. For the sake of God’s mercy, we need to have favor in God’s eyes. In other words, we should to be noticeable before God’s eyes. Ruth was noticeable to Boaz because she worked in his field. Boaz heard about Ruth, but he didn’t meet her until she appeared in his field. In the same way we should be noticeable before God’s eyes. We must be special to God’s eyes. Noah found favor in God’s eyes because he was different from others in his days. Do you want to be greatly used by God? You must be special to God’s eyes. The churches in Korea in 1950-80 were special to the eyes of the Lord because they cried out day and night for God’s blessing. We must appear in the presence of God through prayer and request. We must seek God’s mercy on campus. We must seek God’s mercy at home, in church, and in each mission field. I pray that you all may have favor in God’s eyes.

Next, we must bring our humble request like Ruth and the Syrophoenician woman. We must be persistent in seeking God’s mercy. We must not stop our prayer until our prayer reaches to the throne of God. Remember Hannah, mother of Samuel, in the Bible! She was noticeable before God’s eyes because she appeared in the house of the LORD and prayed for a son day and night. (1 Sa 1:9-20) God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Amen! Remember that God desires mercy and he wants to show his mercy to those who come to him.

Second, under God’s wings (11-16) How did Boaz respond to Ruth’s humble request? Look at verses 11-12. “***Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge***.” Boaz highly valued Ruth’s decision of faith in following Naomi. Boaz blessed Ruth to be repaid and rewarded by God for what she had done. It was a great blessing for Ruth to meet Boaz, who encouraged her, her decision of faith. I pray that God may send many men and women of encouragement who value and bless our life of faith.

Boaz said to Ruth that she came to take refuge under the wings of God of Israel. Psalm 91:4 says that under his wings you will find refuge. “*He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*” When Ruth followed Naomi, she came under God’s wings. Ruth found refuge in the God of Israel. God will cover her with his feathers. Indeed, God showed his mercy through Boaz. Those who are under God’s wings feel safe and secure. They will be protected from their enemies and danger. So, Psalm 91 says, “*Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty....You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day...*” (Ps 91:1,5) Boaz promised to protect Ruth from any men and he provided food for her.

Boaz has the image of Jesus, who is our Savior and shepherd. Jesus said, “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*.” (Mt 11:28-29) Under the wings of Jesus we find rest for our souls. This is because he is gentle and humble like Boaz. As Ruth found favor in Boaz’s eyes, we also find favor in Jesus’ eyes. As Ruth took refuge under Boaz’ care, we also take refuge under Jesus’ care. Boaz suggested Ruth not to go to other fields, but to stay in his field. In the same way, Jesus asks us not to go to others, but to stay in him. He said, “*Remain in me and I will remain in you. Then you will bear much fruit.”* (Jn 15:5) People go out to other place thinking that they can find rest there. But we must stay in Jesus’ field. We must remain in Jesus. Amen!

Look at verse 13. “***May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord,” she said. “You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servants.***” Ruth again appreciated Boaz’s favor. Now Boaz invited Ruth to his table to eat together. “***Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.***” (14) This reminds us of Jesus who visited his hungry disciples at the Sea of Galilee and invited them to a breakfast. (Jn 21:12) “*Come and have breakfast*.” His disciples’ cold and hard hearts were heated by the love of Jesus. This also reminds us of Jesus’ invitation to sinners in Revelation, “*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.*” (Rev 3:20) Amen! Jesus invites all of us to take refuge under his wings. He also invites all of us to eat and drink with him. Let us come to Jesus and eat and drink, and be united with him. Amen!

Third, Ruth’s obedience (17-23) After eating with Boaz, Ruth stayed in his field and gleaned until evening. After threshing the barley, she carried it back to town and reported to Naomi what had happened in the field. Ruth said that it was Boaz who had shown his favor. Naomi said to Ruth, “***The LORD bless him! “He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.” She added, “That man is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers***.” (20) Naomi praised God who had guided Ruth to meet Boaz, one of her guardian-redeemers. A guardian redeemer is also called a ‘kinsman-redeemer. A guardian redeemer is the one who has the obligation to redeem a relative in serious difficulty. A guardian redeemer brings back a family member, or property or married a widow, and looks after the orphans for the sake of the deceased close relative. We’ll talk about a guardian redeemer in the next chapter. In verse 22 Naomi told Ruth, “***It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him, because in someone else’s field you might be harmed***.” How did Ruth respond to Naomi’s suggestion? Look at verse 23. “***So Ruth stayed close to the women of Boaz to glean until the barely and wheat harvesters were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.***” Ruth obeyed Naomi. She took her refuge under Boaz’s wings as she had been told. God works through the woman of obedience like Ruth. When God called the Virgin Mary with the message of birth of Jesus Christ, she obeyed the angel’s message. She said, “*I am the Lord’s servant. May your word to me be fulfilled*.” (Lk 1:38)

We are the modern gleaners who seek for God’s mercy. What is world mission? It is to bring the unbelievers (the gentiles) under God’s wings so that they may have rest for their souls. It is bringing the weary and the burdened to the house of God to find rest for their souls. In today’s passage we studied the beautiful love story between Ruth and Boaz. Behind this story we learned God’s mercy and care through Boaz, whose image is revealed as Jesus. As Naomi said, “*He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.*”, God continues to show his kindness to us. As Ruth did, let us appear in the field of God, seeking his mercy. Let us shelter under his wings so that we may secure our safety and find rest in Jesus. May the wings of God’s mercy cover you, your family, and our ministry. Amen!