

Wings Of Refuge

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[0 : 0 0] it's my joy to be with you again and bring god's word to you today if you have been with us over the last several weeks you know that we're going through the book of ruth and you'll remember that the book of ruth is a book about suffering it's a book about suffering because it's a book about widows which is many of us here today and it's a book about suffering because it's also a book about people who live in a land that they weren't born in which is also many of us here today but you'll also remember that it is a book for those who don't suffer as well because if we're not suffering now we will one day if we live long enough in this world and if we're not suffering now we are surrounded by people who are and so all we have to do is look in front of us and behind us and beside us and see people who are going through things that are very similar to the story that's here and so remember that god as a wise and loving father wants us to become wise as well and so he's given us this story in his word if you're with us from the beginning you'll remember it three weeks ago we met a woman named naomi naomi lived in god's land in the land of israel and yet there was a famine and so she and her husband elimelech and their two sons decided to move to the country of moab leaving the land that god has given to his people as the promised land for a land where people did not worship god but there was food and we saw that her husband's name was god is my king and 10 years later he died as well as his her two sons and so our big question was this is god still the king when tragedy strikes and we saw that in the midst of that god was still at work leading and guiding and providing for his people because at the same time that that had happened god visited his people and gave them bread and in the following week we saw that naomi returned from the land of moab to the land of israel with her two daughters-in-law ruth and orpah and naomi gave her very best arguments as to why they should not stay with her why they needed to go back and to their homeland their country of moab and yet against all odds we saw that ruth committed to naomi she committed to naomi even though it meant giving up her homeland possibly giving up the chance of remarrying someone who was her same nationality and instead she gave everything to commit to naomi and so we saw that faith commits to those who are suffering even when there's nothing to gain and remember that the motivation and the power for that was not in ruth it wasn't ultimately in her character it wasn't ultimately in what she had internally in her resources what it was because she knew that the god of israel was a god of never stopping never giving up unbreaking always and forever love and so ruth chose to show that same love to naomi making a incredible vow to go with her even to death and then if you remember last week they finally arrive at their destination they show up back in the homeland of bethlehem and all that naomi can think about is her own bitterness she reminds those around her that when she left she was full but god has brought her back empty and so we saw the temptation that when tragedy strikes it's tempting to believe that god is against us that he's opposed to us that he's forgotten us and so the question then was not is god still the king but is god still good is he still for us and we saw that even while naomi thought she was empty

she was not because god had given her ruth and he had brought her back to his land at the exact right time at the beginning of the harvest the one time that would be most helpful for her to return and be able to have some food and so it's at this point that we pick up here in chapter two we're finally out of chapter one in the book of ruth and if this has been a difficult series in terms of talking about intense suffering week after week i have good news for you chapter one was the worst of it so yeah we can say that naomi feels like she's gone from full to empty and now our trajectory from the rest of this book is going to be going from empty to full and so if you've made it through us with us through the first chapter there is hope in sight now if you'll remember two weeks ago i talked about the difference between the self-fulfillment view of life and the self-sacrificial view of life and we talked about the 10-year marriage proposal that sometimes when the going gets hard it's easiest just to leave and we saw that ruth did the very opposite thing that she made this dramatic and intense vow that she was going to commit even when it was hard and yet we know that it's one thing to make a vow and it's another to keep it it's one thing to make a vow and it's another to keep it and there's a study that was done recently that showed that there's an inverse relationship between the amount of money that is spent on a wedding ring and a wedding and the success of that marriage in other words if you focus too much on the vows and not enough on what comes after you've put things the wrong way around we're going to see that ruth comes up against that challenge here in this chapter she's made these promises she's made these great vows but now reality is going to hit because she is finally a foreigner in a land that she's never been to before and so our question is this yes faith commits but how do we sustain a life of faith how do we sustain a life of faith what does it look to live the life of faith day by day not just to make a dramatic vow but to keep it with that we are in ruth chapter two and we're starting in verse one remember that this is god's word and god has told us that his word is more precious than gold even the finest gold and it is sweeter than honey even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb and we're going to turn to it now we're in ruth chapters two starting at verse one now naomi had a relative of her husband's a worthy man of the clan of elimelech whose name was boaz 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 so she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers and she happens to come to the part of the field belonging to boaz who is of the clan of elimelech verse four and behold boaz came from bethlehem and he said to the reapers the lord be with you and they answered the lord bless you then boaz said to his young man who is in charge of the reapers whose young woman is this and the servant who is in charge of the reapers answered she is the young moabite woman who came back with naomi from the country of moab 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

verse eight 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 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 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 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 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 then she said i have found favor in your eyes my lord for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant though i am not one of your servants please pray with me as we come to this portion of god's word dear father in heaven we thank you as always that you have not left us as orphans alone in a merciless universe but that you come and you speak to us and you don't just speak to us but you speak to us in ways that we can understand and so we ask that you would do that this morning that you would send your holy spirit and that you would speak clearly to us we ask this not because we have earned it but because your son has and so we ask it in his name amen remember i said that it's one thing to take a vow and it's another thing to keep it and ruth has taken this incredible vow to be with naomi and there are two things that came up at the very end of chapter one in our last verse verse 22 that i did not point out to you last week and i'll point out both of them to you but only one of them i'll point out now and that is that ruth for the first time has a longer name than she's ever had before do you notice that she has a longer name she's not just ruth anymore all up until verse 22 she's been ruth and now suddenly it changes she is ruth the moabite and we see the same thing in chapter 2 verse 2 and ruth the moabite said to naomi and why this change hasn't ruth always been a moabite we know that naomi traveled from israel to moab and in a sense she has always been a moabite so in one sense nothing has changed but in another sense there's been a very dramatic change because she is for the first time living as a foreigner in her own land she's naomi but in israel she's naomi or excuse me in her own land she's ruth but in israel she's ruth the moabite and so the author is highlighting here that reality is setting in for the commitment that she's made it's one thing to make an incredible vow it's another thing to finally arrive in a foreign land now some of us live in a foreign land many of us have traveled to a foreign land and all of us know the difficulties of being in a place that's not your home there are customs you don't know there are things at the grocery store you don't recognize there are signs you can't read but perhaps most important of all is there are people who can instantly tell that you don't belong and are ready to take advantage of you that's the reason why god is so passionate in

the old testament about cares for the foreigner and the widow and the orphan is because god is concerned about people who are the most vulnerable and so we see the position that ruth is in she is in the most vulnerable position possible in the land of israel she could have gone back to her homeland and been safe but here she is a moabite without resources for food potentially without any man to care for her and so she goes out here in verse two let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him and whose sight i shall find favor if you're familiar with the old testament you know that one of god's provisions for widows in the destitute was that they could do something called gleaning which is to say that they could go to the field of a wealthy landowner who was taking in the harvest and they could follow after people who were harvesting and if ears of grain fell to the ground if they were missed they could come and pick up what was left and so it was one way for those who were poor to still be able to eat one commentator compares it however to recycling aluminum cans that this is hard work that did not always give much yield that while god had provided this provision ruth is in a very difficult position she's a foreigner in a land that's not her own she's been left to glean as her way of surviving and not insignificantly she's left with uh naomi this woman who we saw last week is so self-focused and bitter that she can't see anything other than her own pain and so the same question that she has is the question of this section is she going to find favor you see what she says in verse two let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight i shall find favor what's going to happen to ruth she's made this commitment she stepped out in faith knowing that god was a god of steadfast love and now she finds herself in the midst of the reality of the situation she's now experiencing the consequences of the vow that she has made and so is she going to make it it's true for us as well this morning there's those of us who have made commitments to live the life of faith we've done what god's called us to do and then reality sets in maybe you're someone from two sermons ago you're someone who's committed to the vulnerable and the weak and the suffering and yet as you walk along it suddenly you realize whether it's someone in your family or someone in your community this person is a lot like naomi they're bitter they're self-focused they're hard to interact with change comes not fast but slow and suddenly the reality begins to set in how do you sustain the life of faith maybe you love the self-sacrificial view of marriage and so you made vows to someone committing that you were going to live that life you were going to live the life of self-sacrifice no matter what it took you were going to commit to them for the rest of your life and then as you began to have arguments and try to talk about hard things you realize that your spouse had no interest in that and every time you brought up a conflict they just withdrew and wouldn't engage with you and suddenly you find yourself wondering whether that vow was such a good idea after all maybe you came to a church thinking that this was going to be the place where you were going to finally find community and life and growth and yet as you stayed more and more month after month you realize that there were people at the church that you really didn't like and some people had a different view of what the church should be than you did

and as you explained your vision for what you hoped the church would become they were not quite as excited as you were before too long there were conflicts between you and other people in the church and while you were excited while you had made vows of membership you're wondering how do you sustain the life of faith how do you stay in when the going gets hard maybe you have a job that's difficult that you believe that god has called you to and you have work that's powerful and purposeful and yet you're not sure how much longer you can do it because you can feel the fingers and the hand of burnout on your shoulder and so you say pastor this is great you've talked about god's never stopping never giving up unbreaking always and forever love and i understand that jesus died for me 2 000 years ago and that's great but what about today right now in 2018 what does that mean for me now as we've seen before in this book the questions it raises are also the questions it answers ruth here is in a difficult situation and so she says let me go and glean and see if i can find favor and then in verse 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 is of the clan of elimelech now we found out in verse 1 about this man named boaz apparently he's a worthy man which can mean a variety of things but what we know about boaz in this situation most likely this is speaking about his character and we find out quickly when he appears what kind of character he has because he gives an unusual greeting he says in verse 4 the lord be with you so this is a godly man he's a man who's godly because he cares about the things that god cares about he cares about the vulnerable and the suffering he's also a man who's able to help because he has enough wealth to have a field but let's go back to verse 3 she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to boaz this is not something that happened in the hebrew it sounds something like this she chanced to chance we might say it was a complete coincidence and yet this is perhaps one of the greatest understatements in all of the old testament the narrator has already told us about this man in verse 1 and so she happened to is an ironic statement in other words there is nothing in this that has anything to do with chance there is nothing that has anything to do with chance she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to boaz in other words when ruth stepped out in faith living the life of faith god brought her to the right field when ruth stepped out in faith keeping the vow that she had made god brought her to the right field but she doesn't just come to the right place she comes at the right time verse 4 and behold boaz came from bethlehem and he said to the reapers the lord be with you and then he goes on to inquire about this new woman who's in the fields she's the young moabite here it is again this is the third time now that we found out that she's a foreigner she's come with naomi from the country of moab 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

[20 : 21] 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 in other words you're not just going to be another gleaner you're going to stay close to my staff you're going to be the first one behind them when the grain falls you're going to be the gleaner of gleaners you're going to have special access to my fields have i not charged the young men not to touch you as a foreigner who's the most vulnerable you're going to have my special protection and when you're thirsty go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn and so in a situation where women would be the ones typically drawing the water you are going to go to my special water reservoir and the men are going to draw it for you and so Ruth stepping out in faith comes to the right place at the right time and it just happened or maybe it didn't because God here our question before our first week was is God at work in the dark and now our question is this is God at work behind the scenes is God at work behind the scenes is his faithfulness to us not just his faithfulness 2,000 years ago but his faithfulness now the answer is yes we see here in Ruth that God is continuing to be faithful to his people he's not just at work in the dark but he's at work behind the scenes and when God's people go on God's mission

God writes the check and cashes it when God's people go on God's work and God's mission God is the one who writes the check and cashes it I'll give you a story from my own life this does not compare at all to the story of Ruth in terms of magnitude but all of us have situations if we've lived long enough where we've had to do something risky and challenging we're wondering if God's going to show up if he's going to come through we know the right thing to do we know what God's called us to do and yet we're not sure if or how he's going to provide so about a little over a year ago I was in seminary I was graduating soon and I knew that I needed a job and I was talking to various churches I happened to be talking to this one church that was in southwest Colorado Springs and they were only hiring half time and it became clear during my last semester in seminaries

I talked to various churches that this was the place that God was calling me to and yet I wasn't sure what was going to happen I wasn't going to make enough half time to be able to support myself I knew that I needed another job I didn't have a place to live I was moving to a state that I had never been to before except once on a road trip on the way to Utah for a few hours and so I committed I came here and I visited you all I preached in April of 2017 and it became clear that I was going to come here and yet I committed not knowing exactly what was going to happen not knowing where I was going to live not knowing what other kind of job I was going to have and it just so happened that before I went to seminary I was a Latin teacher taught elementary Latin which is something that not many people do it's rare to find someone with experience teaching elementary Latin and it just so happened that Colin Mullaney who's the director of the Vanguard School here in Colorado Springs was coming to Cheyenne Mountain and it just so happened that for at least a year or more in advance they had decided that that year the year that I was coming it just so happened that they were going to start an elementary Latin program and they'd been looking for someone who had experience because the starter program they didn't want to bring in someone who had not done it before and they had many applications come in but it just so happened that none of those applications were from someone who had taught elementary Latin before and it just so happened that Jim Alexander found out about this job from Colin and it just so happened that I applied and it just so happened that before I moved out here and 20 minutes after my interview they called me back and offered me the job and I tell you this story not about me this is not about me and my faith

I had plenty of anxiety and fear about what was going to happen moving out to Colorado they didn't hire me because I was an amazing Latin teacher they hired me because it just so happened that they didn't have anyone else who had previous experience doing this thing that I just happened to do and then it just so happened that before I knew that I was coming here there was a landlord a five minute walk from here who decided that he was going to finish his basement and make it a place to live before he moved to New York State and it just so happened that the trotters were out of the country and willing to let me crash in their house until I found a place to live and then it just so happened that I got connected with this basement and it just so happened that I moved in so the point is this that God comes when his people are on his mission many things just happen because God provides for his people on his mission

God provides for his people on his mission and so the point of this story is not me I don't tell you this story about my great faith because I didn't have it I had fear and anxiety but I tell you this story about our great God who leads and guides and provides for his people and as he did it with Ruth and Naomi he does it now that just so happened now Ruth also had to step out in faith we see here that she takes tremendous initiative she's the one who says let me go and glean she's the one who works from morning until Boaz shows up with just a short break and Boaz is the one who has heard the report of her faithfulness to Naomi and so is it

[27 : 30] God's sovereign provision or is it us going out on his mission it's not an either or it's both we go out on God's mission in faith as he provides and leads and sustains and it's not that we earn God's favor that would be that's legalism the idea that we can earn something from God but it's that we're united to Christ and so that if we're in Christ whatever is true of Jesus is true of us as well and so the favor and the provision that God shows to his son is the same provision and favor that he shows to us the provision and favor that he shows to his son is the same provision and favor that he shows to us and so some of us need to be reminded of God's provision for us as we continue doing what's hard and others of us need to be reminded that God has called us to do what is hard some of us need to be reminded of God's provision to continue what we're already doing in his mission and some of us need to be reminded to go out in his mission that we're not just waiting for God to act a perfect example would be

Nehemiah Nehemiah is charged with helping reform the nation of Israel and rebuild the walls after they return from exile and there are several points in the book where Nehemiah does two things he prays and then he puts on a sword because he knows that God's enemies are planning to attack and so he doesn't just pray he puts on a sword and he doesn't just put on a sword he prays and so it's always both it's always God providing for his people who are on mission and his people following him in that mission told you I was going to point out one other thing about verse 22 that I didn't tell you last week and I will but first let's go to the very end of this section verse 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 what does it mean that Ruth has taken refuge under the wings of God verse 22 it says so Naomi returned and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her who returned from the country of Moab and then verse 6 she is the young

Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab now what's wrong this is like one of those pictures where you're trying to figure out what doesn't make sense Ruth isn't returning she's never been to Israel before as far as we know so why are we told twice that Ruth returns to a place she's never been to before it's because she has made God her God remember she told us in verse 16 and 17 your people shall be my people and your God my God and so the land of Israel is now her home even as a foreigner who's never been there so what does it mean to hide under the wings of God it means that being a foreigner in God's land is better than being a native anywhere else to be a foreigner in God's land is better to be a native anywhere else because this is where she can come to hide under the wings this is the sphere of God's blessing this is the place of God's provision the place of his mission for her she's hidden herself under the wings of God for us there's not a promised land to return to instead we have the church that as we wonder about how to continue in the life of faith we have God's sovereign provision for his people who are on mission and part of that provision is where you're at right now there's many it just so happened but it just so happened that you came here this morning to this church in the church there are people like Boaz who can help there are people that I can offer you practical advice there are people that can gather around you and so as we ask the question how do we sustain the life of faith we see that it is God who works and acts and provides he provides for his people who come and hide themselves under the shelter of his wing and so it's not just what happened 2,000 years ago it's not less than that and it's more than that because of what happened 2,000 years ago because of Christ's death for what we deserved and because of his resurrection because he did not deserve it we are united to him he's made us into his people and so we have union with Christ whatever is true of Christ is true of us here as a people that God's favor towards his son is his favor towards us and so he follows us and guides us and provides for us as we go on his mission on Friday

I took a little trip onto Fort Carson as I do from time to time and I was reminded of what many of you see every day as you drive onto the fort you get to see the warrior ethos which perhaps is routine for many of you for me I every time try to read it and remember it if you're familiar with it you know it starts out this way I will always place the mission first I will never accept defeat I will never quit and I will never leave a fallen comrade now my understanding is that that is what soldiers would say themselves to the army but it's a little bit different in God's kingdom because we don't say all of the parts of the warrior ethos what God is saying is this that he is the one who fulfills it that when we place his mission first he will never leave his fallen children when we place God and his mission first he will never leave his fallen children and so we can sustain the life of faith because it is God who picks us up please pray with me dear father in heaven we thank you that you are a loving gracious heavenly father that when we walk the life of faith with you we are doing what would be impossible if you are not in it and with us and yet you are so we thank you for that we ask that you would be present with us this week as individuals and as a church that we would gather around each other supporting and caring and loving each other as you have loved us we ask these things not because we have deserved them but because we are united with Christ and that what is true of him is true of us and so we ask it in his name amen