

EVERYDAY FAITH: "Nothing Just Happens"

INTRODUCTION

- **Key Idea:** Providence is the belief that God preserves His creation and works all things together for good within human history (Psalm 115:3, Ephesians 1:11).

God controls every moment, every molecule, every movement within His creation. We don't believe in luck, fate or chance. "Those are pagan ideas" (John Calvin)

THE IN-LAW (RUTH 2:1)

- We note that the **female dominance of this story is being modified**. The focus is going to change from Ruth and Naomi (chapter 1) to Ruth and Boaz (chapter 2).
- **Boaz** is a relative of Naomi's husband Elimelech. He a wonderful man. He is the kind of man who is a pillar within his society: strong, significant, substantial, a man of wealth.
- **Ruth** is not thinking of marriage, she's thinking of putting food on the table. She had most likely given up on the idea that she would be married again.

THE INITIATIVE (RUTH 2:2)

- **Ruth** is "a gutsy lady", a "go-getter." She doesn't take life lying down. After all of the challenges in chapter 1, she wakes up one morning and gets to work supporting her mother-in-law.

In chapter 1, we see Ruth's **tenderness**. In chapter 2, we see Ruth's **toughness**.

- It appears that **Naomi** may be a little depressed or down in spirit. Naomi has lost her initiative but Ruth has not. There is **risk involved**: there is danger in the fields (2:22). Nothing is guaranteed.

Our understanding of the sovereignty of God must never lead to passivity or fatalism. The **doctrine of concurrence** is a subset of the doctrine of God's providence.

THE INCIDENTAL (RUTH 2:3)

- **Verse 3** - "She happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz": this is not a coincidence but a beautiful providence.

We start with no king in Israel (Judges 21:25). We end with a child that will about a King that will be the forerunner of the King of Kings (Ruth 4:18-22). This is a masterpiece of providence. Nothing just happens in God's world. God is doing a good work in our lives.

Key Ideas:

1. **The Reality of Providence:** God works through this simple narrative to bring about the coming of Messiah through King David (4:18-22).
2. **The Realm of Providence:** The realm of providence is ordinary life: marriage, grief, loss, poverty, unemployment. There are no miracles in the book of Ruth.
3. **The Reach of Providence**
 - The Providence of their **Time of Arrival**: Ruth and Naomi arrive at the beginning of the barley harvest (1:22)
 - The Providence of the **Provision for the Poor**: God had enacted laws that were centuries old.
 - The Providence of the **Right Field**: Ruth could have gone to a field with a cruel owner.

Sermon Application Questions

June 7, 2020

PERSONAL RESPONSES

1

The doctrine of providence teaches us that “God controls every moment, every molecule and every movement within His creation.”

God is working all things according to the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11). He is working all things out for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

How does this doctrine clash with the secular ideas of “luck, fate or chance?” Do you agree with John Calvin that those ideas are pagan ideas?

How does the doctrine of providence bring perspective to how you view your circumstances today?

2

Pastor Philip warned us that the doctrine of God’s sovereignty should never lead us to embrace the ideas of passivity or fatalism.

The doctrine of **concurrence** teaches us that “God cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do.” (Wayne Grudem)

How does the initiative of Ruth shown in this passage argue against the ideas of passivity or fatalism?

Evaluate: how does the temptation to become passive affect your life? Is there any area of life that you are especially prone to be passive in?

DIGGING DEEPER

1

Take some time and reflect on some of the key passages related to this week’s sermon. Ask the Lord for help in making application of these truths to your life.

Psalm 115:3

Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

Ephesians 1:11

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

Genesis 50:20

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

1 Samuel 10:7

Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you.

Ecclesiastes 9:10

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

Galatians 6:10

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Ruth 2:1 describes the character of Boaz as a “**worthy man.**” The NIV translates this as “a man of outstanding character”.

Pastor Philip described Boaz as “a man who found his strength of God. . . a man of valor, a strong follower of Yahweh.”

2

Read Ruth 2:1-13 carefully. What are some characteristics of Boaz’s example that we can learn from this passage?

What are some ways that men today can emulate Boaz’s worthy character?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Pastor Philip noted in this sermon **the initiative of Ruth**: “There’s no passivity here. She has a plan of action. She doesn’t sit down and have a pity-party. He sets about doing something that will create an opportunity that will bring about a new day.”

Pastor Philip exhorted us to “use your initiative, have a plan of action, work hard, be humble, be smart. Be tenacious. . . it’s all here in the book of Ruth.”

1

Providence blesses initiative. Think through your own responsibilities and opportunities this day. What is one area of your life that you need to develop a plan of action for?

What will be your plan of action?

Miracles are a suspension of natural laws where God intervenes in a demonstrable way. Yet there are **no miracles** in the book of Ruth.

Instead, the book of Ruth displays God’s providence in the ordinary areas of life like: marriage, migration, unemployment, poverty, loss, grief, marriage and children.

2

In Ruth 2:1-3, Ruth went out to work in the field. Where is the sphere of labor that God has called you to be faithful in today? How can you be more faithful in this area of life?